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GENDER, RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND ISLAM:
INTERFACES WITH TRANSNATIONAL AID
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GENDER, RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND ISLAM:
INTERFACES WITH TRANSNATIONAL AID ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGER

By

Kari Bergstrom Henquinet

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ABSTRACT

GENDER, RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND ISLAM: INTERFACES WITH TRANSNATIONAL AID ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGER

By

Kari Bergstrom Henquinet

This dissertation takes an actor-oriented approach to examining translation, reformulation, and rejection of transnational gender and rights-based development interventions in rural, south-central Niger. These actions are contextualized in complex power relations and social hierarchies around gender, age, kin, class, religion, race, and nation in CARE-Niger, UNICEF-Niger, the Nigerien government, and two rural Nigerien towns where CARE and UNICEF intervene. This research explores how CARE and UNICEF personnel, partners, and aid recipients reinforce and challenge social norms and hierarchies through constant negotiations with patriarchy, Islam, “tradition,” and multiple conceptions of rights. Rights are commonly understood in Niger as reciprocal, relational, and hierarchical rather than individual and equal. Thus, CARE and UNICEF programs are often reformulated to endorse Nigerien conceptions of rights and patriarchy. However, reformulations differ between CARE and UNICEF largely due to unique organizational structures and cultures, and among individuals of different social positionings affiliated with CARE and UNICEF. Additionally, the ways in which actors translate, reformulate, and reject rights and gender problematize any clear distinctions between “local” and “global.” Rather, a complex picture emerges where all actors draw on particular transnational, national, and regional discourses, resources, and linkages in processes of translation, reformulation, and rejection.

Furthermore, this dissertation connects material circumstances and ideological notions of gender roles and relations through examining 1) changes in Niger resulting from structural adjustment programs and increasing privatization, highlighting the contrasting ways that CARE, UNICEF, and Nigeriens in general have adapted, 2) social change around gender roles and relations in rural, south-central Niger, affected by land scarcity, shifting household economies, the rise of wife seclusion, the growth of Islam, and male labor migration, and 3) the effects of class and (neo)colonial relations on development discourses of CARE, UNICEF, and the Nigerien state, particularly concerning women and gender.

Data collected and analyzed include 1) semi-structured interviews with a random sample of households in aid recipient towns and with key employees and volunteers in UNICEF-Niger, CARE-Niger, and the Nigerien government, 2) field notes from aid recipient towns and CARE and UNICEF events, and 3) relevant current and archived documents.

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2007

DEDICATION

To Jeff, Mom, and Dad for all of their love and support

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

ACTN	<i>Association des Chefs Traditionnels du Niger</i>
AFMN	<i>Association des Femmes Musulmanes du Niger</i>
AIN	<i>Association Islamique du Niger</i>
AFN	<i>Association des Femmes du Niger</i>
CCC	<i>Communication pour un changement de comportement</i>
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIDES	<i>Centre d'Information et de Documentation Economique et Sociale</i>
CONGAFEN	<i>La Coordination Non-Gouvernementale et Associations Féminines Nigériennes</i>
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAD	Gender and Development
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRSH	<i>Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines</i>
MARP	<i>Méthode Accélérée de Recherche Participative or Méthode Active de Recherche et Planification Participative</i>
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PAC	<i>Programme d'Actions Communautaires</i> (World Bank Program)
PN 51	Project Number 51 (CARE's Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security Project)
PPN	<i>Parti Progressiste Nigérien</i>
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SBI	UNICEF's Integrated Basic Services
UFN	<i>Union des Femmes du Niger</i>
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAD	Women and Development
WED	Women, Environment, and Sustainable Development
WID	Women in Development

PART I

SETTING THE SCENE FOR GENDER, RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT, ISLAM, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NIGER

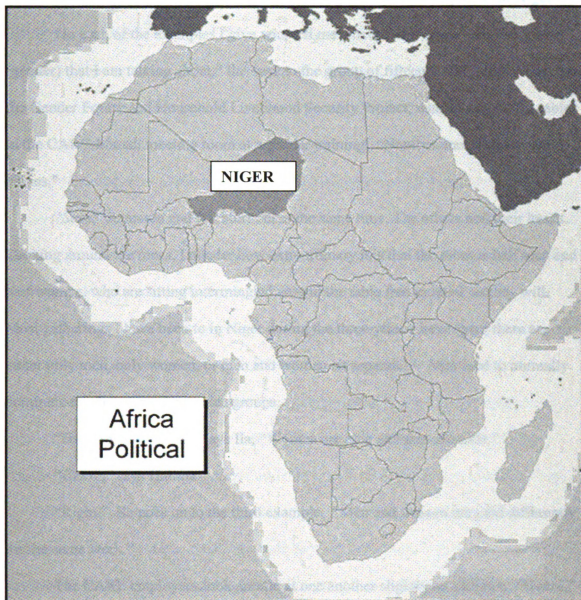


Figure 1: Locating Niger in Africa¹

¹ From <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers/curriculum/m8/activity3.php>

Chapter One
Introduction
Translating and Reformulating Gender, Rights, and Development in Niger

“In each of the examples I give you, tell me whether it is ‘*sexe*’ (sex) or ‘*genre*’ (gender) that I am talking about,” Ila² says to the group of fifteen CARE employees from the Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security Project, who sit around the table in the CARE-Maradi meeting room at a gender training. “Number one, women have babies.”

“*Sexe*,” Ramatou and Ali blurt out at the same time. The others nod their heads. Looking around the room, I ponder how extraordinary it is that the room is half men and half women, who are sitting intermingled around the table free to speak as they will. Most gatherings I have been to in Niger during the three years I have spent there are either only men, only women, or men and women sit separately. Men tend to normally dominate the discussions in mixed groups.

“How about this one,” says Ila, “Women are nice and men are rude.”

“*Genre*,” says Halima.

“Right.” Ila goes on to the third example. “Men and women are paid differently for the same work.”

The CARE employees look around at one another slightly bewildered. “*Genre*,” someone says. “No, *sexe*,” I hear from the other side of the table. The group struggles for a minute or so.

Rashidou explains his position, “People say that it is natural to pay women less.”

“But it is not right! This is something that can change,” says Amadou.

² All informants’ names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

As the group continues to debate, it becomes clear to me where the confusion over this example originates from. “Doing gender,” to them, is an active engagement in improving the lives of women. In contrast to the first two examples which are not demeaning to women, the third example clearly illustrates an injustice that they want to respond to. But does the answer have to do with sex—women get paid less than men because people believe men and women are innately biologically different? Or does it have to do with gender—this is a situation that could and should change?

Amina goes on to give her definition of *sexe* and *genre*. “*Genre* is that which can change, and *sexe* is that which cannot change. For example, a boy’s voice deepens at puberty, and he starts to grow a beard. This is *sexe*.”

Daouda pipes up, “But you know women who smoke can get lower voices as they grow older, and some women grow facial hair.”

I smile, pleased to witness that these categories are being thought through carefully and debated. And I am intensely interested in continuing to unravel what “gender” means to these development professionals in a West African Muslim society. CARE began mainstreaming gender in 1999, and continues to engage its staff in trainings and workshops on what this means for their development work. Yet I know that there are many other social forces at play besides CARE in understanding gender roles and relations in this context.

The conversation on sex and gender continues in French³, even though everyone present speaks Hausa fluently. Talking about gender, sex, and development is difficult in the Hausa language, as these concepts do not easily translate.

³ Quotes above are paraphrased translations from French.

Several months later, I have the opportunity to meet an employee of the Ministry of Social Development, Population, Promotion of Women, and Child Protection who collaborates with UNICEF. I ask her what she can tell me about the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Niger, which is upheld along with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as guiding principles of UNICEF's work and was ratified by Niger in 1999 with reservations⁴. Surprisingly, she has no knowledge of the CEDAW, although she tells me that she has been trained on the CRC. As she said this, I remembered my initial conversation at the beginning of my fieldwork with a gender specialist in the UNICEF-Niamey office. CEDAW and CDC form the base of UNICEF's work, he told me, which is in concordance with official UNICEF documents I have read and with what another long-standing UNICEF gender specialist in Niamey told me. This was not the first time I observed a gap between what the higher levels of UNICEF say and the understanding people have on the ground who are carrying out UNICEF's work in aid recipient communities. But why this contradiction? And why was I unable to find many dynamic discussions on gender or human rights among UNICEF employees and their government partners like those that were happening with CARE staff in the Maradi *Région*? How can two transnational aid organizations doing development work, mainstreaming gender, and integrating a rights-based approach to development in the same part of Niger be so different in reality?

⁴ Niger also acceded to the Option Protocol in September 2004, after this conversation took place.

Central Research Questions

This dissertation is a study of CARE-Niger, UNICEF-Niger, and two rural towns in Niger, one where each organization intervenes. The central research questions taken up are:

- How do CARE and UNICEF compare and contrast in terms of organizational culture and structure as two transnational aid organizations working in Niger that have mainstreamed gender and use rights-based approaches to development, particularly focusing on selected sites in Maradi *Région* and Madarounfa *Département*?
- How are gender and human rights policies and programs of CARE and UNICEF understood and translated, reformulated, or rejected by Nigerien employees, partners, volunteers, and rural aid recipients of CARE and UNICEF, taking into account their gender, class, religious, and other identities as well as cultural beliefs/practices and economic/political contexts?

Comparing and Contrasting CARE and UNICEF

CARE and UNICEF are both transnational aid organizations doing similar types of activities, including women's microcredit, literacy training, and helping women obtain small animals; both are attempting to integrate contemporary development approaches and discourses such as gender mainstreaming and a rights-based approach. However, their organizational structures and cultures differ considerably. CARE is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that receives funding from governments as well as the private sector. UNICEF, in contrast, is a fund and subsidiary body of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. It is an intergovernmental organization (IGO) rather than an

NGO, and is financed by voluntary contributions from a broad range of donors, including governments, other IGOs, private sector groups, and individuals (Beigbeder 2001).

As a UN Fund, UNICEF looks largely to conventions and other guidelines of the UN to define and shape its work. UN documents, world conferences, and summits also have a powerful impact on development discourses outside the UN. CARE is very much engaged in these discourses, but it is not tied so exclusively to the UN to define its work. Rather, CARE draws on multiple sources of development expertise. Note the contrast in Figures 2 and 3 in terms of references to specific UN documents and bodies in UNICEF's mission statement versus general development concepts in CARE's.

CARE International's mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from our global diversity, resources and experience, we promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility. We facilitate lasting change by:

- Strengthening capacity for self-help
- Providing economic opportunity
- Delivering relief in emergencies
- Influencing policy decisions at all levels
- Addressing discrimination in all its forms

Guided by the aspirations of local communities, we pursue our mission with both excellence and compassion because the people whom we serve deserve nothing less.

From <http://www.careinternational.org.uk/about/>

Figure 2: CARE Mission Statement

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress.

UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities.

UNICEF responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children and those who provide their care.

UNICEF is non-partisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.

UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities.

UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

From http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html

Figure 3: UNICEF's Mission Statement

Another important contrast is that CARE currently hires and trains most of the people who carry out its work in Niger, while UNICEF works collaboratively with the government, which has been considerably downsized as a result of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) since the 1980s. CARE determines programs and policies based

mainly on conversations between hired employees, donors, and (to a lesser extent) aid recipients. While this process in CARE often produces culturally sensitive strategies and an organizational culture of vibrant discussions where many voices are valued, it has minimal links with the democratic government of Niger. By contrast, UNICEF works with a democratic government, even though the government is suffering from SAPs. Thus, the different organizational structures and cultures of UNICEF and CARE and the actors operating within them demonstrate in this study the diverse ways in which gender, human rights, and development policies and programs can play out on the ground.

Gender and Rights in Niger

“Gender” and “rights” are part of an English or Western vocabulary and a transnational discourse on development. However, too often the assumption is made by development practitioners that these concepts smoothly translate into other languages and cultures. In Niger, as elsewhere, they do not. The insistence on using French instead of Hausa by CARE or UNICEF employees while discussing these issues is evidence of this. For some development concepts such as “empowerment,” the English term is simply used. For gender and rights, the French terms “*genre*” and “*droits*” are commonly used among CARE and UNICEF employees. In the Hausa language—the first language of most people in the Maradi *Région* and the lingua franca of Niger—there are terms and concepts that resemble but do not exactly translate what is meant by the English or French terms “gender/*genre*” and “rights/*droits*.” The differences can be subtle, although extremely important to explore.

Thus in speaking of gender and rights in Niger, one must look at discourses in multiple sites—where they meet, where they differ, where their histories lie, and how

they are understood and practiced today. In reality, there is often little common understanding of gender relations and rights discourses between the rural towns where I did research and the discourses used at higher levels of UNICEF, CARE, and other transnational aid organizations. Most people in these towns are not aware of government legislation on rights and have their own reformulations of how rights and gender issues fit into CARE and UNICEF's programs. Their ideas on these issues are largely informed by current Islamic teachings in Niger and Northern Nigeria, the material surroundings in which they find themselves, and remnants of historical beliefs, practices, and experiences. Furthermore, CARE, UNICEF, and partnering government employees as well as CARE and UNICEF aid recipients and volunteers sit at a crossroads between Nigerien languages and cultures, and transnational discourses. These actors translate and reformulate meaning between them. And these translations and reformulations vary from organization to organization and from individual to individual. Chapters Four, Five, and Six take up these issues in more depth.

Transnational Ethnographies: Problematizing the Global and the Local

With globalization and growing transnational linkages, anthropologists have been forced to rethink traditional anthropological studies which historically have tended to be in-depth ethnographies in single, rural settings and often in developing countries. Appadurai urges scholars to reimagine what a field site is “in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion”— “ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques” (Appadurai 2001:5). Scholars have invoked numerous images to describe such flows and connections across the globe including “disjunctures” (Appadurai 2001), “friction” (Tsing 2005), or “fragments,” (Merry

2006a:29; Tsing 2005). Certainly even when choosing a bounded geographic site to study (e.g., a city, neighborhood, or small town), a researcher cannot view this social milieu apart from international and transnational connections—NGOs, international relations, tourism, migration, television, and other such influences on day-to-day living. Anthropologists have in recent years called for multi-sited (Arce and Long 2000:26; Clarke 2004:279-288; Mahler 1998:94; Marcus 1995) or de-territorialized (Merry 2006a:28-30) ethnographies that better capture these kinds of connections. Although my fieldwork was carried out in Niger, the focus of my study is far from being simply national or regional. Rather, it is a sort of multi-sited ethnography that traces transnational aid interventions for Nigeriens at various levels of CARE and UNICEF.

Multi-sited ethnographies of globalization or transnationalism can also problematize the categories of “global” and “local” by revealing how they are intertwined in complex ways. Distinguishing the “global” and the “local” has become a familiar framework for talking about globalization and transnationalism (Arce and Long 2000; Smith and Garnizo 1998), although the terms have also churned up plenty of criticism and debates (Marcus 1995; Robertson 1995). Implied in the concept of the global is often a sense of unsituated universality as well as a certain position of power and privilege in the world. By contrast, the local is often understood to be particular, situated, and historical; it is sometimes also called the “grassroots” and associated with the poor. Marcus, however, points out that in multi-sited ethnography “the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something monolithic or external to them (1995:102). Similarly, Mohanty calls for feminist scholarship in which “the local and global...exist simultaneously and constitute each

other” (2003:242). Recent ethnographies on human rights and gender (Booth 2004; Englund 2006; Merry 2006a) have also begun to challenge such distinctions, pointing out how the global and universal are indeed a part of particular sites and histories.

Sally Engle Merry (2006a) illustrates how the global is also local through her ethnographic description of the monitoring process for the CEDAW. Through describing the complex negotiations between actors at UN sites in creating and implementing so-called “universal” principles in what is often presumed to be a “global” space, Merry demonstrates that such principles and spaces are created in particular transnational sites by particular actors. Interestingly even though Merry recognizes that the terms global and local are problematic (for example see Merry 2006a:212-214, 2006b:39-40), she never lets go of these terms in her analytical framework (2006a; 2006b). Rather, the “localization of human rights” remains a key issue framing her research (2005:223-225; 2006b:39), although the contexts she is exploring in Fiji, Hawai’i, China, Hong Kong, and India clearly draw on a complex mix of transnational, national, and regional discourses on gender and rights.⁵

Approaching human rights from another angle, Harri Englund ethnographically examines human rights and democracy in multiple sites in Malawi. Englund argues that “the very idea of human rights discourse may, despite its universalist pretensions, assume a highly particular content” (2006:146). Through his focus on translation of human rights in Malawi and to a lesser extend Zambia, Englund reveals that human rights tend to be

⁵ Merry uses the term “local” in different ways throughout her work. For example in one piece, she defines “local” as referring to “social systems smaller than the nation, but not necessarily as small as villages or face-to-face communities” (2005:216). However elsewhere she suggests that global and local can often be a “stand-in for social class,” and are not particularly useful terms as actors in her study are indeed both local and global (2006a:212-214). Yet localization of transnational ideas of rights (2006a:20, 179) is a key issue that is examined in this same work.

defined certain ways by elites while voices of the poor are excluded. Such elites, namely activists and politicians in Malawi as well as foreign donors, have embraced a very particular and narrow translation of human rights that focuses on individual freedoms. Such a translation, Englund argues, is in the interest of elites as it ignores social and economic differences and rights. So human rights, which often pass as global and universal, are in this study translated in certain ways that serve certain political interests. Englund's study resonates with Judith Butler, who speaking of feminism and human rights, warns that:

Translation by itself can also work in full complicity with the logic of colonial expansion, when translation becomes the instrument through which dominant values are transposed into the language of the subordinated, and the subordinated run the risk of coming to know and understand them as tokens of their "liberation." [2000:35]

Indeed, Englund's study provides ethnographic evidence for how a careful look at translation can reveal that the seemingly global and universal are in fact quite particular.

Karen Booth argues in *Local Women, Global Science: Fighting AIDS in Kenya* that the work of the nurses she studied in Kenyan clinics treating HIV/AIDS is both local and global at the same time, although she specifies what she means by global. The global, in her study, is not meant to mean universal, but rather that which "transcends traditional national and regional boundaries," including "a way to identify, explain, and even resolve problems shared by people living in different parts of the world" (Booth 2004:7-8). In this way, Booth calls her study a "global ethnography" (204:12). It seems that Booth's "global" could be a synonym for "transnational." The term "local" is less clearly defined in her work, however. It is invoked periodically, seeming to refer to the field site in which she is working in Kenya (for examples see Booth 2004: 112-113, 115-

116). While Booth focuses on how nurses and the clinics where they work are at the same time local and global, one must also wonder in what ways might the patients coming to the clinics also challenge distinctions of local and global?

This question leads us to an area that remains underexplored in ethnographies focused on transnationalism and translation of gender, rights, and/or development. Indeed, many of the rich histories around these notions tend to be glossed over amidst lengthy analyses of neocolonial or neoliberalism policies and practices of the UN, development institutions, the World Bank, and the like. While I do not mean at all to discredit the very real impact of such powerful ideas, institutions, and actions, I do aim to produce an ethnography that integrates these with a rich analysis of the histories of and voices speaking about gender, rights, and development that I encountered in Niger. In so doing, this study resonates with scholars' call to study globalization and transnationalism from "below" (Appadurai 2001:3; Smith and Guarnizo 1998), capturing a view of everyday people's attitudes, beliefs, and practices about transnational engagements. Such a view reveals complex webs of power and knowledge that extend well beyond categorizations such as local and global.

Rather than categorizing certain sites and actors in my study as either global or local, I argue that each is situated in time and space, while also being connected to other particular groups and places in the world in particular ways. I demonstrate this through studying actors affiliated in various ways with two transnational aid organizations in multiple locations in Niger. Those who some may be tempted to label the "local" or the "grassroots" (for example Nigerien aid recipients and volunteers in my study) are continually negotiating and reformulating ideas and practices about gender, rights, and

development through interactions with development professionals, politicians, and religious leaders in and out of Niger, as well as with neighbors, friends, kin, and others. In other words, all the actors in my study are engaged in transnational negotiations and reformulations, although in different ways. Furthermore, as I will describe below, the material surroundings in which these actors live and their varying access to resources are critically linked to ideological formulations of gender, rights, and development.

Studying Power and Negotiations: Actors and Structures

One way of getting at complex webs of power and knowledge is through an actor-oriented approach. Most anthropological studies are concerned with actors in some sense as ethnographies examine actors' practices and beliefs in certain socio-historical contexts. What then distinguishes an actor-oriented approach? I draw mainly on the work of Long (1992a, 1992b), Arce and Long (2000) and Nyamu-Musembi (2005) as a basis for understanding an actor-oriented approach. Arce and Long argue that what makes this approach distinct is that it 1) analyzes local "power configurations and knowledge interfaces," or "'battlefields' of knowledge and power wherein a multiplicity of actors engage in struggles over meanings and practicalities of livelihoods, values, and organising processes," and 2) develops "theoretically grounded methods of social research that allow for the elucidation of actors' interpretations and strategies, and of how these interlock through processes of negotiation and accommodation" (Arce and Long 2000:24, 8, 26; Long 1992a:5). Arce and Long have invoked this approach in studies of development as a framework that takes a balanced account of structures and actors (Long 1992:4). In studying human rights and development, Nyamu-Musembi (2005) also calls for an actor-oriented approach. She is interested in looking beyond abstract principles

(such as universal human rights or gender equality) to “concrete experiences of the particular actors involved in and who stand to gain directly from, the struggles in question” (2005:41). Furthermore, she questions how such principles can endorse or challenge social hierarchies. Similarly Mahler writes, “Actors may participate simultaneously in transnational activities that both challenge *and* contribute to hegemonic processes” (1998:72). My research explores the ways in which actors associated with CARE and UNICEF’s gender and rights-based development interventions in Niger do just that as they reformulate, translate, and reject policies and programs of these transnational aid institutions. These actors are involved daily in complex negotiations and power struggles at multiple levels around patriarchy, Islam, “tradition,” and rights.

Furthermore, an actor-oriented view of rights can also help to shift the parameters of rights debates away from dualisms (Nyamu-Musembi 2005). In other words, recognition of many histories and systems of rights helps pull one outside of the polarizing debate over universalism and cultural relativism to see multiple frameworks. Furthermore as has been demonstrated elsewhere, scratching the surface beneath the history of human rights in the UN since the 1940s, one sees the debates and disagreements that exist over political and civil rights versus social, economic, and cultural rights, not to mention other specific rights of indigenous peoples or women (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Udombana 2000). Why is there a need to draw up these separate rights documents if rights are indeed universal? An actor-oriented look at rights in this dissertation contributes to this already complex debate, further pulling us away from a dualistic framework towards a more complex, multilayered, and situated understanding of rights.

An actor-oriented approach also brings forth the complex and multiple identities that people inhabit and negotiate on a daily basis, including the central ones of gender, religion, class, race, sexuality, and ethnicity. Although my study inquires particularly about gender, emphasizing actor's perspectives demonstrates that identities other than gender are also prominent in determining social hierarchies. Oyěwùmí argues that age is more central than gender historically in Yoruba social organization and hierarchies (1997). In my study, gender remains of central importance to social hierarchies, although so do age, class, kin group, and education. The latter four, however, are less a focus of CARE and UNICEF than gender is.

In my study, I combine an actor-oriented approach with the work of Saba Mahmood (2005) to clarify structures and agency. Mahmood points out that feminist and secular-liberal thought tend to narrowly define agency as resistance, based on the assumption that an autonomous will exists in individuals (2005:2-14). Drawing on the work of post-structuralists Foucault and Butler, however, Mahmood argues that, "agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms" (2005:15). Furthermore, the ways in which one inhabits norms can serve to consolidate or destabilize a power regime (Mahmood 2005:20). Mahmood goes on to explain that the activities and operations that women who participate in the piety movement in Egypt that she is studying:

perform on themselves are the products of authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable. The kind of agency I am exploring here does not belong to the women themselves, but is a product of the historically contingent discursive traditions in which they are located." [Mahmood 2005:32]

Similarly, the reformulations and resistance in my study are negotiations of discursive traditions and not assumed to be actions of an autonomous self will that exists separate from these.

Merry's work (2006a) is useful in emphasizing the role of structures in adopting a human rights subjectivity. More specifically, Merry links the legal system with an individual's rights consciousness under this system. For example if a woman knows that the legal system will support her in making a certain rights claim, she is more likely to see herself as a rights-bearing subject and make such a claim (Merry 2006a:184-192). In Niger, I explore formal and informal structures that frame the kinds of rights and roles men and women have. These structures include not only legal, but also religious, marital, economic, development, and political domains.

Therefore, my study emphasizes structures that actors/agents are produced by and operating within while at the same time bringing to the forefront these actors' negotiations within multiple fields of power. As the details of the study unfold, my discussions of actors' reformulations of and at times resistance to certain powerful discourses coming from CARE, UNICEF, the government, transnational financial institutions, religious leaders, and others regimes demonstrate how these negotiations take place.

Studying Translation and Translators

The data and conclusions gathered using an actor-oriented approach depend on *which* actors the researcher focuses on. Particularly in studies of transnationalism, the field site is potentially so expansive that one must somehow limit the parameters of the study. Booth, Englund, and Merry have chosen to focus significant portions of their

studies on the role of intermediaries as translators of ideas about human rights, health, and/or gender. For Booth (2004), these are Kenyan nurses; for Englund (2006), these are translators of human rights terminology and documents as well as those working in human rights civic education and legal aid; and for Merry, these are a wide range of transnational social movement activists (2006a:195-212, 222), legislators (2006a:206-212), social workers (2006a:195-212), development professionals (2006b:43), and scholars (2006b:45). Such intermediaries are understood to navigate between the global and the local, the transnational and the national or regional, and/or elites and the poor. They accept, reject, appropriate, reframe, interpret, and/or translate the concepts of human rights, gender, or other discourses from UN agencies, various transnational NGOs, foreign policies, and other transnational and international sources.

Merry, who lays out an explicit framework for studying translators, uses the term “vernacularize” (Merry 1997, 2006a, 2006b) to discuss how ideas from transnational sources are “adapted to local institutions and meanings” (Merry 2006b:29). While this means reframing a concept to resonate in a particular culture, to vernacularize does not involve changing its fundamental meaning (Merry 2006b:49). Vernacular rights, Merry argues, maintain “basic assumptions about the values of choice, autonomy, equality, and the protection of the body” (Merry 2006a:216). “Indigenization,” Merry adds, does shift the meaning of a concept as it is made resonant with cultural norms (2006b:39). However, Merry argues that in her research human rights ideas were not fully indigenized because of connections to the transnational legal order, states, funders, and “local communities” (2006a:225, 2006b:49). It is precisely these issues of vernacularization and indigenization in translation processes that I explore in this dissertation. To illustrate

where Merry and I differ in our studies of translation of transnational concepts of human rights and gender, I use the following example from her research.

Merry offers as an example of vernacularization the replication of a U.S. batterers' treatment program in Hong Kong. While maintaining certain aspects of the US model, the program in Hong Kong integrates Chinese concepts of masculinity in discussions of domestic violence among men who batter their wives. Chan, a social worker and scholar who has been developing the program, has come to understand the importance of the ideas of face and *yi* (rightness) in why domestic violence occurs.

Paraphrasing Chan, Merry writes:

The idea of a "yi husband and following wife" means that men are to be committed to and responsible for the marriage relationship and expect their wives to be obedient and submissive. When marital relations do not follow this pattern, men sometimes become violent. [2006b:45]

Further referencing Chan, she continues to explain that "a man's face is affected by the actions of his wife" and men often resort to aggression as a strategy to save face (Merry 2006b:45). While these comments provide insight into why a man in Hong Kong might beat his wife, Merry never explains the *process* by which such patriarchal values are negotiated with concepts of human rights and gender equality that the program is said to have embraced (2006b:44-45). Did vernacularizing this treatment program accommodate patriarchy in some ways while challenging it in others? In other words, is this an example of indigenization rather than vernacularization? Or was it truly the case, as Merry claims, that "inside the culturally resonant package is a core that radically challenges patriarchy?" (2006a:137). We are never given the ethnographic detail.

I have sought in this dissertation to provide some of this ethnographic detail in Niger through demonstrating the ways in which human rights, gender, and development

are negotiated, reformulated, and at times rejected by actors affiliated in various ways with CARE and UNICEF and involved in processes of translation. As will become evident throughout the dissertation, something *has* happened to the radical challenge to patriarchy found in higher administrative levels of CARE and UNICEF in the process of translation in many examples from my Niger research. Translation, in my research, very often means *reformulation* or, as Merry would call it “indigenization.” In other words, transnational projects emphasizing gender and rights very often accommodate social hierarchies rather than radically challenge them. Furthermore, translators in my study are not only employees of UNICEF and CARE, but also volunteers, aid recipients, and those in aid recipient towns who choose not to participate in CARE and UNICEF activities. All of these actors *resist* and *inhabit* norms in various ways as they negotiate and reformulate gender, rights, and development in their social contexts.

One reason that this process of reformulation emerges prominently in my study is the focus on women’s rights in development rather than in international law. Merry notes that her “analysis focuses primarily on the interaction between transnational social movement activists and governments and does not examine the interface between global ideas and those of local groups” (2006a:222). Yet what happens when one applies her framework to the so-called “interface between global ideas and those of local groups” in development? What happens when one focuses not on transnational women’s rights in the legal domain, but on transnational gender and rights-based development efforts? While Merry contends that “human rights movements do not require the adoption of a human rights consciousness by individuals at the grass roots” (2006a:215), raising aid recipients’ awareness of rights is a key dimension of CARE and UNICEF strategies for

rights-based development and women's empowerment. Additionally, transnational aid institutions are accountable in very different ways than states are concerning human rights and gender equality. States are accountable to the transnational legal order concerning these issues (Merry 2006a:225), but transnational aid institutions are not. While the legal structures of the state in Niger remain important in my study, I focus mainly on the various actors and structures associated with UNICEF and CARE who are accountable to a variety of donors in the public and private sector. Inevitably, however, I too have had to limit the actors in my study by focusing on certain sites of CARE and UNICEF interventions, which I lay out in more detail in Chapter Two. Looking at a different swath of actors and structures than Merry, yet asking very similar questions has indeed led us to different conclusions about translation and vernacularization.

A second reason that the process of reformulation emerges prominently in my study is the emphasis I give to not only transnational discourses on rights, gender, and development, but also other histories and stories about them in the field sites where I am working in Niger. Too often human rights are assumed to be only those recognized by international human rights law. Yet indeed many histories of human rights exist worldwide. Some scholars have begun to write about other histories and conceptions of human rights. For example, Makau Mutua (2002) presents a case for pre-colonial African conceptions of rights centered on rights and duties within family and community relationships. Similarly Nzenza-Shand (2005) argues for a collective view of human rights in many African societies. And Ciekawy discusses notions of "freedom, the importance of cultural expression, justice, and human accountability that have universal relevance" among Mijikenda *kaya* elders in Kenya (2000:24).

Similarly concerning gender, ethnographic studies have demonstrated many of the different constructions of gender that exist worldwide. For example, Nanda (2000) gives multiple examples of gender variants or third and fourth genders or sexes in various cultures around the globe (2000). Thus rather than assuming the categories of men and women and the inequalities that exist between them, Yanagisako and Collier (1987) call on social scientists to address the question of *why* inequalities take such varied forms in the contexts of different histories, cultures, and places. As with many of Nanda's examples, people in Hausaland have historically had a much less dualistic view of the world than transnational development institutions working in Niger do. In particular, gender has historically been more plural than simply male and female. Some of the issues that emerge when these different worldviews meet are taken up in Chapters Five and Six.

Finally concerning development, one must also pause to consider how this concept is translated across language and place. Laurie Hartmann-Mahmud has in her research asked 112 women and men⁶ in seven Nigerien towns (all but one in predominantly Hausa speaking areas) how they define development or *développement*. For those who did not know the English or French term, she asked for a term to describe initiatives or activities that had improved their lives (2000:91-100, 2004:520-526).⁷ The more politicized and commonly used Hausa term *ci gaba* ("to make progress, move forward") was offered by 59 respondents. As Hartmann-Mahmud explains, *ci gaba* is often used by politicians and radio and television commentators when speaking in Hausa about development. In light of this, it is striking that only a little over half of the

⁶ Only 15 of these informants were men.

⁷ We do not know from Hartmann-Mahmud's work how many did not know the terms development or *développement*.

informants in her study chose *ci gaba*. Other terms offered can be categorized into four main themes—1) “grow, increase, gain wealth, make profit, wealth, income generating activity” (39 responses),⁸ 2) “help oneself, redeem oneself, mobilize for self-help, self-sufficiency, meet one’s needs” (six responses),⁹ 3) “improve quality of life, women’s enlightenment, usefulness, improve rural life, flourish/blessed” (seven responses),¹⁰ and 4) “become great” (one response)¹¹ (Hartmann-Mahmud 2000:93). Clearly from Hartman-Mahmud’s data, there is no single term that directly translates “development” into Hausa. Rather different people focus on different dimensions of the concept, which also carries multiple meanings in English that I describe further below. As Hartman-Mahmud goes on to provide several examples of *ci gaba* (the most common response) from some of her informants, each links back to economic/material concerns, for example installing a grinding mill, selling vegetables and seeds, finding apprenticeships, starting livestock projects, and having access to medicines (2000:96-97). Thus, nearly all the responses have a clear economic dimension. Such material needs can be met by a variety of sources, including not only development projects but also assistance from kin, loans or gifts from wealthy persons, earnings from wage labor, or a good rainy season. It is noteworthy that nowhere in the definitions of development is a development project explicit or required. And it is not surprising that meeting material needs is a strong focus as most people in Niger struggle to meet the most basic daily needs—food, clean water,

⁸ In Hausa: *‘Karuwa, bunkasa, samu, cin riba, arziki, sana’a na a samu*

⁹ In Hausa: *Taimakon kai da kai, fansa kai, tashi tsaye da kan kai, in cin kan mu, biyan bukata*

¹⁰ In Hausa: *Zaman duniya, kyauta rayuwar su, wayewa kai mata, raya karkara, rahama*. *Rahama* usually means mercy or compassion; it is hard to know why the translation flourish/blessed was preferred without knowing the full context of the quotation.

¹¹ In Hausa: *Zaman baban*

fertile land, medicines, and so forth. It is these material matters that I wish to address in the following section, highlighting their connection to gender, rights, and development.

Integrating a Feminist Materialist Approach

One cannot talk about translations and negotiations of gender and human rights without situating these in a material reality. This plays out in two main ways in my study. First, changing rural livelihoods are linked to new theologies and gender roles through male labor migration and connections to regional and transnational religious movements. Second, the impact of class relations on translation, especially in development interventions, must be taken into account. Indeed the gap is wide in my study between those who have access to considerable resources (for example, transnational aid institutions, wealthy governments, elite persons, or an American anthropologist) and those who have little (for example, aid recipients or heavily indebted countries). CARE and UNICEF rural aid recipients and volunteers clearly point this out in their comments about these development organizations. Comprehending class dynamics and power relations, especially in a historical perspective, is absolutely central to understanding interactions between aid recipients and development professionals.

Gender and Social Change amidst Scarcity

In this study, it is critical to highlight the daily struggle of many Nigeriens to survive. Niger is ranked last on the UNDP Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme 2005, 2006). It is a country where famine is common, about one in four children dies before reaching the age of five, and few natural resources exist to bring wealth into the country. In the midst of the 2005 Niger drought and food crisis, *New York Times* reporter Nicholas Kristof called Niger “the most wretched country in the

world” (2005). Kristof goes on to explain the constant food crisis in Niger and criticize the poor response of the international community in 2005. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 2.5 million Nigeriens (about 20% of Niger’s population) were in need of food aid at the height of the food crisis after a poor 2004 rainy season and locust infestation (Food and Agriculture Organization 2005). Clearly the most vulnerable individuals (often women or children) and households have suffered the greatest. In 2006, insufficient rain in the first part of the rainy season coupled with intense flooding has ruined the harvest in many places, leaving many with insufficient food for the forthcoming year. In parts of the Maradi *Région* in 2006, the World Food Program has found that “70% of the population reports that their stocks will last for only 4-5 months.” (World Food Program 2006) Sadly, food shortage is an annual occurrence in Niger. The situation seems overwhelmingly grim.

In 2005, the Nigerien government, foreign countries, and aid organizations responded late to the predicted food crisis in Niger. In fact, President Tandja denied that there was a famine (BBC News 2005). In short, politics and red tape got in the way of getting food to hungry people. Will the Nigerien government and the international community learn to better respond to this on-going situation of hunger? Indeed, this is a situation of great urgency, and having food to eat is among the most basic of human rights. Furthermore, understanding the constant food crisis in Niger sets the scene for this dissertation as basic human needs are often not met or in some cases even recognized by the state.

Furthermore as I spell out in more detail in Chapter Three, the consequences of structural adjustment and privatization have been devastating for the country. And in the

area of Niger where I focused, land is scarce and aid is sparse. In this social milieu, Nigeriens have invoked strategies for survival, including shifting livelihoods and gender work roles as well as new theologies of prosperity. In my research, I found that residents of the towns I studied, who often have little wealth to access from worldly sources, turn to heavenly sources in search of prosperity and well-being. An increasing concern for Muslim piety over the last few decades coincides with cycles of drought, seasonal male labor migration, land scarcity, shifting gender roles, and contact with broader transnational religious movements. Amidst material hardships, piety can be considered a development strategy in two ways. First through pious living, these Nigeriens seek material blessings and well-being from God. Second, piety also aligns them with certain social groups of Muslims who could be valuable assets in times of need. In the aid recipient towns in my study, piety is strongly connected with certain gender roles that emphasize male provision and female domesticity, obedience, and seclusion. As I explain more fully in Chapter Five, this is a marked change from the past.

In a study of poverty and prosperity in Tanzania, Hasu (2006) draws many of the links that also emerge in my study between material conditions and theologies of prosperity. Drawing on Geertz, Hasu writes:

Religious beliefs and ideas inform the ways that economic circumstances are perceived, interpreted and acted upon in specific social and historical contexts. Furthermore, lived reality generates and shapes religious beliefs and ideas. [2006:679]

Thus, Hasu notes the intimate connection between economics and ideas. However, Hasu also emphasizes how ideas about economic prosperity can be tied not only to the “rational” and mundane, but also the miraculous or supernatural (2006:680).

Furthermore, moral/pious living is also connected to economic prosperity by some in her

study. Hasu explains that a Christian preacher in Tanzania had a message from God saying that spiritual and economic changes in Tanzania will go hand in hand (2006:686). In other words when Tanzanians start to act in faith, their financial circumstances will improve; reciprocally, when they give in faith, the gospel will be spread. This same preacher recounts a story in his own words of a poor widow who gave him her last 300 shillings for his ministry:

I knew that the possibility for a miracle for that woman was in the fact that she was giving me money. It is difficult to explain to anybody who has problems that the miracle awaiting you lies in giving the last money to me. [Hasu 2006:687]

This kind of logic that places the possibility of miracles and divine blessings at the center is also key to understanding development strategies in rural Niger. For example contrary to assertions by some scholars (Alidou 2005:34; Kane 2003:139) that poor and/or rural women in Hausaland cannot practice seclusion because their labor is needed, rural, poor women in my study *do* practice seclusion despite the fact that this seems at times to make little economic sense from this kind of mundane perspective. These women could be working their land (for those who have some), helping family members farm, or migrating for work like the men. Yet they stay at home, where only some of them earn a very small income from preparing foodstuffs. When one considers, however, the blessings and prosperity associated with moral and pious living, domesticated women, wife seclusion, and male provision make sense in rural towns with few other prospects for wealth.

Chandra Mohanty, arguing for a perspective grounded in historical materialism, states, “The link between political economy and culture remains crucial to any form of feminist theorizing” (2003:230). Bina Agarwal provides a framework and in-depth

example for thinking about how the material and ideological are related in terms of gender and social change. Writing about cultural explanations of women's subordination in early South Asian ethnographies, she explains:

In this emphasis on the ideological, the material basis of this subordination, or the dialectical link between the material context and gender ideology, is seldom recognized. And culture is often characterized as 'given' rather than in the process of constant reformulation, or as an arena of contestation. [1994:11]

Agarwal reveals through her study how women's access and right to own and control land or other material resources are key to understanding how and why these cultural attitudes exist. Agarwal further lays out the variation that exists between women in different contexts throughout South Asia who have different degrees of access to and control of resources and cultural traditions to contend with. Similarly women's subservient status and poverty in Niger are often ascribed to tradition or custom. However, as the material and cultural resources of Nigeriens become evident in this study, so will the relationship that these have to social hierarchies, constructions of difference, and changing gender roles including the rise of wife seclusion. Changing ideologies/theologies, gender roles, and material circumstances have mixed consequences for women. While many women gain certain rights in principle, most still struggle to access critical resources.

Furthermore feminist scholars (Abu-Lughod 1991, 1993; Moore 1994; Nussbaum 2000) have pointed out culture is fluid, changing, and contested. I too do not view culture as stagnant or bounded, but rather constantly in flux and carrying multiple meanings to different members of any so-called cultural group. Any stagnant or bounded portrayal of culture is one view among many of someone with the power to speak and be

heard. For example in the debates about customary law, customary law is often considered to be based on “culture.” However, An-Na’im argues that religious and customary laws reflect the views of those with the power to define culture (1994:176). Ali (2000), Chanock (1998, 2002), and Roberts and Mann (1991) have written about how inequalities in terms of gender or slave status have been declared “tradition” or “custom” by powerful members of communities and codified into law. By linking the naming of culture with power, access to material resources, and rights, an argument that uses culture to legitimate gender inequalities loses its footing. This dissertation explores the constructions of gender that have emerged in Niger, which are not merely people clinging to tradition or a certain ideology, but rather my perspective is that Nigeriens are adapting to a particular social, political, and material reality.

Class, Development, and Translation

The ways in which development benefits elites is a topic that has been brought up numerous times among scholars (F. Cooper 1999; Delville 2000; Englund 2006; Ferguson 1994; Kabeer 1994). Popular development strategies such as participatory approaches and community ownership become overshadowed and reinterpreted in light of power relations between development professionals or government elites, and aid recipients or average citizens. Furthermore, the history of colonial and post-colonial hierarchical relationships is a key part of the way that rural aid recipients in Niger view development institutions. They are suspicious of their motives, which are often believed to be self-serving. However, such class and power relations remain largely unexamined by development professionals I encountered in Niger in terms of how they impact their work with the poor. Particularly in Niger, few decent paying job opportunities exist apart

from development project positions, especially as government positions have decreased under structural adjustment. Working for an organization such as CARE or UNICEF is indeed prestigious and highly desirable. It means that one can enjoy a steady income and some health benefits, allowing for a more middle class lifestyle. Such social positions also resonate with familiar social hierarchies past and present related to government, royalty, and wealthy traders. In many ways, the class divide between aid recipients or volunteers and development professionals reinforces these kinds of social hierarchies, although in new ways, rather than challenging them. Thus in much the same way that gender and rights are translated and reformulated in Niger so that they are no longer a “radical challenge to patriarchy,” so too are participatory development interventions often translated and reformulated to accommodate social hierarchies rather than work towards equality. Highlighting the material basis for class, gender, and other hierarchies is a central task of this dissertation.

Development, Gender, and Human Rights: Changing Discourses

Before turning to histories and social contexts of Niger, it is crucial to have an overview of a history of development common in scholarly literature and that includes various ways that transnational development organizations and professionals have attempted to address women’s concerns over the past three decades since the beginning of the UN Decade for Women in 1975. Remnants and pieces of all the concepts and approaches I discuss in this section still exist today to some extent in development organizations and emerge in my data in Niger. Clearly this history is significant, even if it is exclusive of many other perspectives on development, gender, and rights.

Development

Since the concept “development” was born after the Second World War and key development institutions were established such as the Bretton Woods Institutions and the United Nations, development has come to mean many things to different people. Its history is deeply rooted in economics and modernization theory. Rostow (1952, 1960) was key in laying out linear stages of economic growth for the nations of the world (Escobar 1995:76; Rist 1997:93-99). The idea of “developing,” according to such thinking, entails moving along a continuum from traditional, primitive, and poor to modern, civilized, and developed, with Western Europe and the United States as the model. This view gave a new name to ideas long central to social evolution and an era of European conquest, colonialism, and slave trading.

In fact, the relationships between the developed and developing world are the direct offspring of colonial empires born into the Cold War period. Fredrick Cooper argues that in the 1940s a new type of imperialism came about as “[Colonial regimes] were anxious to show Africans, themselves, and the rest of the world that colonial rule could now be justified as progressive. The word they used was ‘development’” (F. Cooper 1999:402-3). Parallel to colonial powers before the Second World War, “developed” nations including France, England, and America continued to be the model for development. These ideas are still alive and well today. For example in economist Jeffrey Sachs’¹² new and popular work *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (2005), he continues to invoke modernist images such as the “development ladder,” which places highly industrialized, high-tech countries like the U.S. at the top.

¹² Sachs has been a special advisor to Kofi Annan on the Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals are discussed further below.

At the bottom of the ladder are countries in which most of the population is rural farmers, and in the middle are countries with light manufacturing and urbanization, which Sachs clearly sees as first steps to ending poverty.

The meaning of “development” has evolved in numerous directions as a result of governments, NGOs, IGOs, and citizens engaging in debates over the past 60 years. While still firmly rooted in economics and modernization theory, as Sachs demonstrates, development has also come to include debates on human rights, power, and social difference in some circles. In contrast to Sachs, scholars such as Amartya Sen (1999)—also an economist—and Martha Nussbaum (2000) have advocated a capabilities approach to development, which argues that human rights are key to guaranteeing economic security, freedom, and a dignified existence. Other scholars concerned with issues of social difference, particularly gender, have broadened the development discourse to include analyses of social relations and power (see Kabeer 1994; Marchand and Parpart 1995; Razavi and Miller 1995). As these debates emerged, women as a group began to receive more attention in development institutions.

A Litany of Acronyms for Women: WID/WAD/GAD/WED

A standard history is often chronicled for women/gender and development. It begins with the UN Decade for Women, launched in 1975 after the UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City and inspired in part by Ester Boserup’s pioneering work *Woman’s Role in Economic Development* (1970). Early approaches to addressing Women in Development (referred to as WID) grounded themselves in economics, as development in general has, and attempted to bring women into already existing

development efforts without questioning assumptions of modernization, westernization, or capitalism within development institutions, discourses, and practices.

Scholars (see Bandarage 1984; Jaquette 1982 for examples) soon began to critique these assumptions, however, using a neo-Marxist framework. These critiques, referred to as Women *and* Development or WAD, argue that women have always been part of development processes and that their work (paid and unpaid) sustains existing structures of inequality. Bringing women into the capitalist economy is not the solution; rather, it is the source of women's oppression. WAD sought strategies for women to improve their lives apart from patriarchal and capitalist institutions. WAD, like WID, however, focused too much on economic issues like production to the exclusion of social relations and politics.

What emerged in response is another school of thought—Gender and Development or GAD (see Chant and Gutmann 2000; Greig et al. 2000; Rathgeber 1990; Razavi and Miller 1995 for examples). GAD is a perspective that recognizes social, economic, and political factors in men and women's lives, with the goal of transforming existing unequal power structures. Proponents of GAD began to see not only women as gendered, but also men. Therefore, the social construction of masculinity needed to be understood as well as relationships between men and women. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing further fueled the integration of WID, WAD, and GAD into development institutions worldwide.

WID/WAD/GAD have also merged in some cases with discourses of sustainable development, commonly referred to as Women, Environment, and Sustainable Development or WED (see Agarwal 1994, 2000, 2001; Jackson 1993; Rocheleau et al.

1996 for examples). This approach emphasizes women's—mainly poor women in developing countries—close relationships to their material environment and dependence on nature for their livelihoods. Often political ecology and a sustainable livelihoods approach are incorporated into WED. Central to the Sustainable livelihoods approach is the recognition that “local” knowledge—or what Helmore and Singh have termed “the wealth of the poor”—is a valuable starting point to development interventions (2001:3). A sustainable livelihoods approach also focuses on helping the most vulnerable community members—often women—by understanding complex rural livelihoods and survival strategies of households and individuals. Some WED advocates, however, have focused less on real livelihoods and the political economy than on ideological notions of maternal altruism and a naturalized connection between women and nature, a view which I do not espouse.

WID, WAD, GAD, and WED, however, have been critiqued as Eurocentric and narrowly focused on gender to the exclusion of other social identities. White women from North America and Europe have tended to dominate much of the WID, WAD, GAD, and WED discourses. Critiques from women's groups in developing countries such as DAWN (Sen and Grown 1987) and scholars such as Chandra Mohanty (1987) have brought perspectives of women from non-Western countries into the picture. As a result, many women/gender and development advocates today no longer see women as a homogenous group, but also recognize intersections of race, class, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion and other identities that make up each person. And this WID/WAD/GAD/WED history has begun to be recognized by more and more

development practitioners as only a piece of women's struggles and movements around the world.

While there is a historical process by which WID, WAD, GAD, and WED each emerged in development discourses, this does not mean that any of them have disappeared. They are all alive and well today in various institutions and policies around the world, including UNICEF and CARE. And many other histories of women/gender and development exist side by side in so-called developing countries. This dissertation chronicles some of them in Niger.

Gender Mainstreaming

Throughout the 1990s, "gender mainstreaming" became a prominent discussion in many development circles. In her book *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals*, Naila Kabeer cites the agreed conclusions of the UN Economic and Social Council on gender mainstreaming as:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.
[2003:244]

These ideas are clearly linked to the GAD school of thought, as their primary concerns are gender relations and equality. Gender mainstreaming has been attempted in many development institutions, including CARE and UNICEF, although to varying degrees of success. Some feminists have argued that women's interests are in practice diluted through mainstreaming rather than strongly fought for because of gender inequalities that

remain in institutions and the larger societies in which they exist. As was the case with critiques of WID, critics of mainstreaming argue that the system and institutions of development have not been adequately challenged and changed for women to participate on an equal footing with men. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming is often seen as a *technique* to get right rather than a new way of thinking and committing resources to promote gender equality (Baden and Goetz 1998; Johnsson-Latham 2004). However when done with strong institutional support and intense training and planning, gender mainstreaming can transform an organization, as was the case in CARE-Niger. Chapter Four takes a deeper look at gender mainstreaming in CARE and UNICEF in Niger.

Rights-Based Development and Gender

Some development practitioners have come to see human rights as an integral part of development and women's empowerment. The linking of development and human rights can be traced back to the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986. Until this time, the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and institutions dealing with human rights were dealt with by lawyers and activists in separate circles from development institutions who were focused mainly on economics. Historically, human rights in the Western world have been thought of in terms of political and civil rights. The Declaration on the Right to Development also brought economic, social, and cultural rights into the picture (Udombana 2000). The entry into the UN of newly independent Third World states in the 1960s and 1970s helped to change the discourse on rights and link the two. Cold war politics, however, sharpened ideological divides between these differing views of rights (Chanock 2002). Many Western states have not been supportive of the Declaration on the Right to

Development because it criticizes Western policies as perpetuating inequalities in the world (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Fomerand 2003:89).

A rights-based approach to development has only recently been embraced by mainstream development institutions beginning in the mid-1990s, with little awareness or acknowledgement of the debates around the right to development from a decade earlier. And, not surprisingly, the emphasis on political and civil rights by Western countries lingered on in a post-cold war world. Slowly this has been challenged, however, in forums such as the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the 1995 Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Hamm 2001:1007). With increasing recognition of economic, social, and cultural rights, the relationship between rights and development has been easier to see. Prominent works by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000) have laid a foundation for connecting development and human rights through the capabilities approach, mentioned above. Scholars, activists, and development professionals have also linked human rights to various specific domains of social and economic rights including land (Hellum and Derman 2004), food security (International Code of Conduct on the Human Right to Adequate Food 1997; Zeigler 2004), water (Hellum and Derman 2005), and health (Farmer 2003; Hellum and Knudsen 2006), at the same time recognizing how these separate areas are ultimately connected. Debates over the rights-based approach to development continue and are evolving at present.

UNICEF-Niger adopted a rights-based approach in the late 1990s, and CARE-Niger in 2002. The UN was responsible for setting much of the framework for this new approach throughout the 1990s, and Kofi Annan called on all UN agencies to

“mainstream” human rights in 1997. UNICEF is considered a leader among UN agencies¹³ implementing a rights-based approach, and CARE is a frequently cited development NGO doing rights-based work (Hamm 2001:1011; Jochnick and Garzon 2002; Tsikata 2005:1). Both organizations have reports, studies, and training materials that include a rights-based approach to development.

Some development practitioners have embraced the rights-based approach to development as a means of addressing women’s empowerment. Rights-based approaches have emphasized rights of individuals, the need to change oppressive cultural practices, and structural inequalities within societies due to gender, age, race, slavery, class, or other factors. Many scholars (for examples see Agarwal 1994; Butegwa 2002; Wanyeki 2003) and some development organizations, such as CARE, have focused in particular on women’s land rights as a way of securing their access to economic resources in primarily agrarian societies. Similarly, water rights have also gained prominence in development debates and policies around the world with a particular concern for women and the poor (Hellum and Derman 2005; United Nations Development Programme 2006).

UNICEF also links gender and human rights and upholds them as core components of its development work. For example, UNICEF’s booklet *Human Rights for Children and Women: How UNICEF Helps Make Them a Reality* says:

Since the mid-1980s, the UNICEF Executive Board has approved policies on women in development and gender equality, and has endorsed women’s rights and the understanding that CRC and CEDAW jointly provide the umbrella of rights and norms for gender-responsive programme goals and strategies. [1999:16]

¹³ I refer to UNICEF as an “agency” in a broad sense. It is not one of the UN’s Specialized Agencies, but rather a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly.

Similar to critiques of WID by WAD advocates, some argue that rights-based development does not make much sense without also engaging in discussions of neoliberal policies, such as SAPs, which have crippled governments of developing countries and prevent them from establishing their own economic policies (Tsikata 2004; de Waal 2003). This leads us back to the point above—political and civil rights have been emphasized by many development institutions and Western governments, while ignoring social, cultural, and economic rights (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2005; Udombana 2000). The assumption is that good governance will reduce poverty. However in this view, the gaze is on the south and on the poor, without regard for the role of development institutions and governments in poverty and inequalities. How can good governance reduce poverty when the state has been cut back so severely that it does not have adequate resources to enforce its legislation and has little ability to determine its own economic policies? In her insightful paper for the Community Development Resources Association on gender and rights-based development, Dzodzi Tsikata writes:

Given that the site of development policy making has changed from the state to the international arena, the focus of the [Rights-Based Approaches] on national actors- citizens and governments- and the exclusion of the corporate sector, foreign governments and the IFIs from scrutiny makes it a non starter. [2004:3]

Also in the same way that feminists have been critical of mainstreaming gender in development institutions and governments, they have also worried that women's concerns will be lost in the rhetoric of rights and development that has been dominated by men. Rights particular to women such as reproductive rights, or rights of LBGT or gender variant communities are often not a part of rights-based approach discussions and

polices. Furthermore, how and why certain universal human rights like education and inheritance are denied to women in many cultural contexts are often not explored.

A UN Agenda for Development and Women's Rights in the 21st Century

The Millennium Development Goals

At the UN Millennium Summit in August 2000, eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set to be reached by the year 2015 by the 189 nations that pledged to them (Figure 4). Rich countries promised to provide aid and debt relief to meet these goals in the world's poorest countries (Oxfam 2005). However, few have lived up to this promise. Despite attention in the media worldwide by pop stars like Bono and the Live 8 concert that drew attention to the need to honor these promises leading up to the 2005 G-8 Summit and UN World Summit, these meetings did not result in a commitment from the richest nations¹⁴ to reach the UN target of 0.7% of GNP in official development assistance in a timely manner. Neither was the call answered for 100% bilateral and multilateral debt relief for the world's most impoverished countries, which was made by Tony Blair¹⁵ as well as numerous non-governmental and community-based organizations around the world including Oxfam, Jubilee 2000, and Africa Action.¹⁶ Instead, the G-8 agreed to double aid to Africa by 2010 and cancel debts owed by 18 heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC)s¹⁷ to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and African Development Fund—a small step in the right direction. The World Summit affirmed these actions, and all participating governments committed to achieve the

¹⁴ Oxfam reports in 2005 that only five of the 22 major donor countries are at the level of 0.7% aid, and none of them are in the G7 (2005:7).

¹⁵ Blair called for 100% debt relief for the most highly indebted nations in his special address at the World Economic Forum on January 27, 2005. He also, along with the Commission for Africa, called for 100% multilateral and bilateral debt cancellation for low-income sub-Saharan African countries (Commission for Africa 2005).

¹⁶ Africa Action has been calling for 100% debt cancellation for Africa.

¹⁷ Fourteen of these countries are in Africa.

MDGs by 2015.¹⁸ This commitment, however, is likely as meaningless as the first one in 2000.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
 - Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
 - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015
4. Reduce child mortality
 - Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five
5. Improve maternal health
 - Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
 - Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
 - Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies; reverse loss of environmental resources
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
 - Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020
8. Develop a global partnership for development
 - *Develop further an open trading and financial system* that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally
 - *Address the least developed countries' special needs.* This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction.
 - *Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States*
 - *Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems* through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
 - In cooperation with developing countries, *develop decent and productive work for youth*
 - In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide *access to affordable essential drugs* in developing countries
 - In cooperation with the private sector, make available the *benefits of new technologies*—especially information and communications technologies

Figure 4: The Millennium Development Goals¹⁹

¹⁸ Summaries of the results of these summits can be found at www.un.org/summit2005, <http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1119518698846>, and <http://www.un.org/millennium/summit.htm>.

¹⁹ All goals are measured against 1990 as the baseline year.

Because of the lack of commitment to the MDGs over the past five years in the agreed upon timetable, none of them except perhaps halving income poverty is likely to be met, according to Oxfam (2005:13). Many were disappointed that the 2005 UN World Summit did not produce bolder steps toward achieving the MDGs and reducing poverty.

Even though it is a struggle to get rich governments to commit to the MDGs as they stand, I argue that these goals do not go far enough in addressing inequalities. They reduce complex social issues to quantitative figures. In particular, goals three and five, which target girls and women, do not mention reproductive health and rights, nor cultural or legal barriers to education and other rights and services to women. The MDGs do not bring up the issue of rights, although human rights are mentioned in the *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, which spells out the MDGs (United Nations 2000), and the subsequent UN document *2005 World Summit Outcome* (United Nations 2005a). However, none of the indicators that measure reaching the MDGs deal with rights.

The CEDAW

The CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979; however it has been a struggle since then to get states to ratify the convention. As of November 2006, 185 states are party to the convention.²⁰ The CEDAW was ratified by the Niger government with reservations in 1999 followed by acceding to the Optional Protocol in September 2004 (Stewart 2004). Fifty-two other states that have ratified the convention have reservations on one or more articles. Article 16 on eliminating discrimination against and guaranteeing equality for women in family and marriage relations is the most reserved article (Stewart 2004:9). CEDAW is monitored by a 23 person Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. States that have ratified

²⁰ See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm>.

the convention are required to produce reports for this committee. Niger's first report has recently been made public, and I elaborate on it in Chapter Three. Some NGOs also produce shadow reports to keep states accountable in their reporting.

UNICEF, as part of the UN, upholds the MDGs and CEDAW as key guides in its work. It frequently references them as well as other UN conventions and declarations in its documents, as mentioned above. CARE, on the other hand, while deeply concerned with rights and development, does not embrace the MDGs, CEDAW, or other UN documents in the same way. They speak more broadly of poverty reduction and addressing discrimination and inequities. Further comparisons and contrasts between CARE and UNICEF are taken up in Chapter Four.

Islam, Development, and Women

In addition to the large literature on development discussed above that tends to privilege Western and UN perspectives, a small literature is also developing on Islamic views of development. Some of these ideas are buried in works on broader or related topics. Yet within these studies, alternate views of development linking Muslim piety and economic development are discussed. Of particular concern to my study, proponents of these views in Niger frequently discuss the role of women in society.

Bjorn Olav Utvik's book *Islamist Economics in Egypt: The Pious Road to Development* (2006) takes the example of two Islamist political parties in Egypt—the Muslim Brothers and the Labour Party—to illustrate how economic and development discourses can be connected to Islam. Contextualizing Egypt in an era of structural adjustment and with little independence to set its own economic policies in the latter half of the 1980s, Utvik illustrates the ways in which morality, piety, and the idea of ending

Western dominance over Egypt are understood by these Islamists to be essential for Egypt's development. Leading Islamists in Egypt argue that development is a collective duty for Muslims, work is *ibada* (worship/service to God), and the development effort is a *jihad* (Utvik 2006:35). And it is a moral society that will endure the hardships on the road to progress and development (Utvik 2006:36). Furthermore, they argue that certain financial practices common in the West and forbidden by Islam—in particular *riba* (usury or interest) and *ihtikar* (monopoly)—must end in order to achieve justice for the poor. The *riba* system is understood to be a reason why the West has continued to dominate Egypt and must be done away with in order for Egypt to be independent (Utvik 2006:202). Islamists also insist that corruption must be rooted out in Egyptian society (Utvik 2006:174-5). Indeed, such Islamic development ideas are reactions to and proposed alternatives for neoliberal policies of the West (particularly of the IMF) that have sunk Egypt more deeply into poverty (Utvik 2006:233). And morality and piety are seen as essential ingredients (perceived to be lacking in the West as well as by many Egyptians) in such alternate development strategies.

Similarly in Niger, Idrissa (2005) and Hassane (2005) highlight certain economic issues in discourses of religious movements. For example, prominent Muslim preachers in Niger note the country's situation of poverty and dependency, suggesting that this is due to both exploitation by Christians and Jews as well as lack of faith in God (Hassane 2005:386, 389-390).²¹ Some Islamic activists' suspicions of the West run even deeper as they have issued warnings that Western family planning programs aim to depopulate the Muslim world and spread AIDS through contaminated condoms (Idrissa 2005:364).

²¹ Hassane quotes Cheikh Youssouf Hassan Diallo and an unnamed prominent *Izala* preacher, who express these sentiments.

These sentiments are expressed in a context where Western-led neoliberal policies and a secular, corrupt state have failed Nigeriens in many ways and alternate visions of and strategies for development are being sought. The heart of reformist Islam and anti-Western discourses in Niger lies in Maradi, where leaders draw followers from struggling street vendors and youth with few economic opportunities.

In Niger, much of the public debate between francophone and Muslim activist elites²² centers around the position of women and whether or not the state should be secular (Idrissa 2005:347). Idrissa (2005) recounts three major examples in recent history of political confrontations between these two groups of elites, all of which concern women, development, and/or rights. The first two concern women's rights. The Family Code—an attempt to give men and women equal rights in matters such as inheritance, divorce, and marriage—created an uproar among certain Islamic groups in Niger (including some women's organizations) in the 1990s (Alidou 2005:165-168). They have been successful in blocking its implementation. Some of these groups that opposed the Family Code argued that excessive independence for women is dangerous (Idrissa 2005:363). Second although the CEDAW was ratified, it has also been met with opposition from religious groups. Idrissa suggests that the reason for its passage may have to do with the military regime in power at the time that showed little sympathy for religious activists (2005:365). Finally, an international African fashion show (FIMA) held in 2000, which was organized by a Nigerien fashion designer in order to promote “culture, peace, and development” in Niger, was met with much resistance from certain Islamic associations. Some argued that the event was a gathering of prostitutes and

²² Francophone elites tend to be more pro-Western, while the Muslim activist elites are not. Muslim activist elites are not necessarily Islamists. For example, much of the resistance to the Family Code came from religious leaders of long-standing sufi orders in Niger.

homosexuals organized by the West and their Nigerien henchmen to undermine the country's moral well-being (B. Cooper 2002:16; Idrissa 2005:365-366). Protests to this event by Islamist groups in Maradi resulted in acts of violence against bars that prostitutes frequent, horse race kiosks, Christian churches, famine relief grain stores largely aiding single women,²³ and the homes of women who had escaped violence against prostitutes in Nigeria and the *Iya* (a woman leader of the *bori* religion) as well as the *Iya* herself²⁴ (B. Cooper 2002; Idrissa 2005). Clearly single women were targets of many of these acts of violence, as Barbara Cooper points out (2002). In these three examples, Nigerien elites with Western ties or espousing what were perceived to be Western notions of women's rights and development met with substantial resistance by Muslim activists who have a different vision for Niger. In their view, women's rights and development for Niger must be within the framework of a certain understanding of Muslim piety and morality, which includes different and specific rights for men and women as well as female modesty and dependency. Furthermore many of these activists argue, these should be reflected in the state's laws and policies.

Next Steps

This is a study of social change, translation, negotiations within fields of power, and relationships between the ideological and the material. My research combines quantitative overviews of resources, relations, and identities combined with personal histories and lengthy discussions of beliefs from two rural towns where CARE and UNICEF intervene as well as with CARE, UNICEF, and collaborating government

²³ Barbara Cooper points out that most of the recipients of famine relief from the SIM grain stores that were burned were single, poor women (2002:25-26).

²⁴ Barbara Cooper reports that the *Iya*, running from her burning home, was picked up and thrown back into the flames by protesters. Although severely burned, she survived (2002:21).

employees. It also sets these communities and development efforts in the context of economics, geopolitics, and changing trends in development discourses, particularly on gender and rights. Before discussing the findings from my data, Chapter Two lays out my research methodology and data collection, followed by Chapter Three, which gives the historical context for structural and social change in Niger relevant to this dissertation. Chapter Four discusses the history of women, gender, and rights approaches in CARE and UNICEF, comparing and contrasting the two organizations as they have adapted to structural adjustment and shifting development discourses. Chapter Five examines social hierarchies, social change around gender roles, and women and men's access to resources in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, towns where CARE and UNICEF intervene, respectively. Finally in Chapter Six, actors affiliated with CARE and UNICEF translate, reformulate, and reject CARE and UNICEF gender and human rights-oriented development interventions, sometimes endorsing and sometimes challenging patriarchy. Gender, class, religion, education, and organizational structure and culture are prominent factors in how translation, reformulation, and rejection take place.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology and Data Collection

This research project required ethnographic field work in Niger and strong language skills in Hausa and French. I spent December 2003 through August 2004 doing field work in Niger. In this chapter, I lay out the data collected and analyzed, their link to my central research questions, and my positionality as a white, American, non-Muslim, middle class, female researcher constructing knowledge in English on gender, rights, development, and Islam.

Research Sites

Because this research project is multilayered, incorporating information from individuals at various levels of UNICEF and CARE interventions, numerous research sites were essential. Most of my data collection took place in the Maradi *Région*. Both CARE and UNICEF have offices in the town of Maradi, where administrators for the region are based. These offices oversee CARE and UNICEF's work in the sub-region (*département*) of Madarounfa, where the two aid recipient towns I focus on are located. The specific CARE project that worked in one of the towns I focus on is the Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security Project, called PN 51 for short.²⁵ This town is Garin Jakka. The second town, where UNICEF intervenes, is Tchikaji Gajeré. UNICEF's work in Tchikaji Gajeré is mainly carried out through government civil servants in the town of Madarounfa, which is the capital of Madarounfa *Département*. Therefore, I spent time in Madarounfa interviewing government workers and attending UNICEF-sponsored activities. I also attended CARE workshops, trainings, and meetings in Maradi, 'dan Issa, and neighboring CARE aid recipient towns.

²⁵ This stands for project number 51. It is also referred to in CARE documents as NER 051 at times.

Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré are two Hausa-speaking communities that lie within a five kilometer radius of 'dan Issa, a vibrant trading town about midway on the paved road from Maradi to Nigeria. In 2004, CARE's PN51 Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security Project had been active in Garin Jakka for about five years, and UNICEF (in collaboration with Madarounfa government partners) had been active in Tchikaji Gajéré for about nine years. I chose these towns in consultation with CARE and UNICEF administrators in Maradi, based on four main reasons. 1) They are both in an area where wife seclusion is common. 2) The only transnational aid organization present in Garin Jakka is CARE, and the only transnational aid organization in Tchikaji Gajéré is UNICEF.²⁶ 3) I had previously conducted research in Garin Jakka in 2002 and therefore knew people in that town. 4) Both towns are considered among the most resistant and problematic by CARE and UNICEF employees in Maradi and by government collaborators in Madarounfa *Département*. This is not to say that all residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré are not cooperative with CARE or UNICEF. Some residents of these towns have been very active in CARE or UNICEF's work and shown strong leadership skills. Nevertheless, these towns are perceived overall by development professionals working with them to be more resistant and uncooperative than other neighboring towns. This perception of resistance made them especially interesting for me to study as there certainly seemed to be some heightened points of tension and difference between aid recipients and development professionals.

²⁶ Soon after beginning data collection in Tchikaji Gajéré, I learned that a CARE women's credit and savings group had begun there in late 2003. This was started by a volunteer woman living in 'dan Issa who came to Tchikaji Gajéré once a week to help a group of about 15 women learn to keep track of their savings and loans. Administrators in the CARE-Maradi office did not yet know about her work there when I spoke with them in early 2004. Since the CARE work in Tchikaji Gajéré was so new and involved so few people, however, I proceeded with the study there on UNICEF.

Therefore in the Maradi *Région*, I conducted interviews, attended numerous CARE and UNICEF gatherings, and collected documents in Maradi, Garin Jakka, Tchikaji Gajeré, 'dan Issa, and Madarounfa (Figure 5).

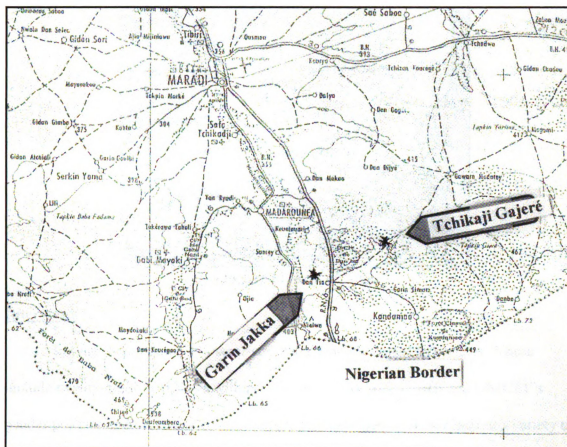


Figure 5: Map of Niger South of Maradi²⁷

In addition, I spent time in Niamey, the capital of Niger, doing interviews and finding critical documents (Figure 6). CARE and UNICEF both have their country offices in Niamey, and key archives and libraries are located there. Also, numerous government bureaucrats, NGO workers, and academics were available for consultation in Niamey.

²⁷ Adapted from Niger government map.



Figure 6: Map of Niger²⁸

Interviews

In total, I conducted 112 semi-structured (mostly taped) interviews. These include twenty-eight interviews with persons who work with CARE and UNICEF's gender policies and programs in some capacity. These people were based in a variety of locations—Niamey, Maradi, Madarounfa, Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. Seventeen of the interviewees are men, and eleven are women. The reason for more men than woman is largely due to the lack of women in key government positions related to UNICEF's work (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Interviewed Men and Women Working with CARE, UNICEF, or the Government

	Number of Men	Number of Women
CARE	5	5
UNICEF	7	5
Government	5	1

²⁸ From <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ng.html>

UNICEF, CARE, and government employees who I interviewed mostly self-identify ethnically as Hausa with four exceptions (Table 2). Interviewed volunteers all self-identify as Hausa (Table 3). It is not surprising that most of the interviewees self-identify as Hausa since this is the ethnic group largest in number in Niger and dominant in the Maradi *Région*. Some people are known to self-identify as Hausa even if one or both of their parents do not. For example, one of the CARE volunteers self-identifies as Hausa, although his mother self-identifies as Kanuri. In some cases, people talk about *becoming* Hausa when someone settles into a Hausa town rather than being nomadic. And some choose to identify primarily as Muslim rather than in terms of ethnic categories common in Western literature on the region such as Hausa, Fulani, Tuareg, and so forth. In this way, ethnicity is fluid and complex in Niger, and these self-identified ethnicities should not be viewed as the final word on an informant's identity.

Table 2: Self-Identified Ethnic Backgrounds of Interviewees Employed by CARE, UNICEF, and the Government

	Hausa	Zerma/ Songhay	Mixed West African Background	Yoruba (Benin)	No Data
CARE Employees	3	1	1	1 (raised in Niger)	0
UNICEF Employees	3	0	0	0	0
Government Collaborators with UNICEF (Maradi Ministry of Social Development; Madarounfa Technical Services and Ministry of Community Development)	4	1	0	0	1

Table 3: Self-Identified Ethnic Backgrounds of Interviewees Volunteering with CARE in Garin Jakka and UNICEF in Tchikaji Gajéré

	Hausa	Other
CARE Volunteers in Garin Jakka	4	0
UNICEF Volunteers in Tchikaji Gajéré	9	0

Some of these 28 interviewees are salaried employees of CARE, UNICEF, or the Nigerien government. Leaders in aid recipient communities, however, simply volunteer their time and energy to work with CARE or UNICEF. Thus, throughout the dissertation, I distinguish between these two groups by calling them either “employees” or “volunteers.” Furthermore in CARE, some of the “employees” are administrators while others are field agents. UNICEF employees all do administrative work.²⁹

Second, I drew a random sample of households in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré from a list of all households that I compiled with key informants. I conducted 84 in-depth, semi-structured interviews (mostly taped) on household economies, gender roles, and rights with one man and one woman in nearly each household in the sample.³⁰ In four cases, these were female-headed households with no adult male to interview, and in four other cases there was no consenting second person in the household to be interviewed.

Third, I individually consulted over thirty additional authorities in Niger on issues pertaining to my research. These include employees of UNICEF and CARE, academics, government employees, officials in the UN system, employees of other NGO’s, and US government personnel (Figure 7).

²⁹ This excludes drivers and guards in both organizations.

³⁰ Thirty-nine interviews were in Garin Jakka and forty-five were in Tchikaji Gajéré.

UNICEF (Niamey, Maradi)
 CARE (Niamey, Maradi)
 Ministry of Social Development, Population, Promotion of Women, and
 Protection of Children (Maradi, Madarounfa)
 Ministry of Community Development (Madarounfa)
 Technical Services (Madarounfa)
 Agriculture, Education, Animal Husbandry, Literacy, and Health
 United Nations Population Fund (Niamey)
 World Bank (Niamey)
 Land Commission (Madarounfa)
 Association of Women Legal Professionals in Niger (AFJN, Niamey)
 The High Commission for Administrative Reform and Decentralization (Niamey)
 Niger National Institute of Agronomic Research (INRAN, Maradi)
 Université Abdou Moumouni (including *Institut de Recherches en Sciences
 Humaines*, Maradi and Niamey)
 US Embassy (Niamey)
 The Netherlands Development Organization (SNV, Niamey)

Figure 7: Organizations Consulted for Oral and Written Information

Participant Observation

In addition to these consultations and interviews with individuals, I was able to participate in numerous CARE and UNICEF meetings, trainings, and service activities (Table 4). Some of these were at the administrative level, while others were in rural towns receiving aid.

Table 4: CARE and UNICEF Activities Attended

CARE	UNICEF
Educational Presentations for PN 51 Aid Recipient Communities ³¹	Transborder Meeting between Nigerien and Nigerian Traditional Chiefs on Polio Eradication
PN 51 Aid Recipient Community Presentations for Government Authorities	Integrated Community Development Training for Representatives from Aid Recipient Communities
Gender and Empowerment Workshop for CARE Employees	Vaccination and Pre-natal Mobile Clinics
Gender Training for PN 51 Employees	Mosquito Net Distribution for Pregnant Women and Children
Women's Leadership Training for Aid Recipient Town Representatives	Baby Weighing

³¹ Called *Communication pour un changement de comportement*

I also spent two months living in Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka, allowing for abundant opportunities for daily interactions with community members.

Documents

Documents—mainly from CARE, UNICEF, and the Nigerien government—are the final component of my data collection. The documents I collected number over 200, many of which are crucial to piecing together the history of gender and rights in CARE and UNICEF in Niger. They were found in UNICEF and CARE offices in Niamey and Maradi, the national archives, *Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines* (IRSH) in Maradi and Niamey, the French Cultural Center library, the World Bank office in Niamey, the US Embassy, *Centre d'Information et de Documentation Economique et Sociale* (CIDES) in Niamey, and various government offices in Niamey, Maradi, and Madarounfa. I have gathered additional information from CARE and UNICEF's websites and through email with CARE-Norway.

Answering My Research Questions

The first of my two research questions is:

- How do CARE and UNICEF compare and contrast in terms of organizational culture and structure as two transnational aid organizations working in Niger that have mainstreamed gender and use rights-based approaches to development, particularly focusing on selected sites in Maradi *Région* and Madarounfa *Département*?

To answer this question, I focused my data collection on human rights, gender, and structural and cultural change in CARE and UNICEF. This includes interviews with CARE and UNICEF employees in Maradi and Niamey, government collaborators in

Maradi and Madarounfa, and CARE and UNICEF volunteers in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, respectively. I selected interviewees who have worked with CARE or UNICEF for a substantial period of time, are knowledgeable about gender and human rights, and/or are key players in CARE's work in Garin Jakka or UNICEF's in Tchikaji Gajeré. These interviews are supplemented with documents and participant observation in CARE and UNICEF activities in Maradi, Madarounfa, 'dan Issa, Garin Jakka, and Tchikaji Gajeré. In my analysis, I compare institutional histories of CARE and UNICEF, organizational strategies and structures for carrying out their work, development approaches they use and trainings given for them, and attitudes about and language used for gender and rights. The results of this analysis are in Chapters Four and Six.

The second research question driving this project is:

- How are gender and human rights policies and programs of CARE and UNICEF understood and translated, reformulated, or rejected by Nigerien employees, partners, volunteers, and rural aid recipients of CARE and UNICEF, taking into account their gender, class, religious, and other identities as well as cultural beliefs/practices and economic/political contexts?

This second question goes into more depth on attitudes, beliefs, practices, and the political economy around gender and rights. My data provide the cultural, economic, and political context for understanding gender and rights in a site where CARE and in a site where UNICEF intervene through the random sample of interviews in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. Living in these towns enhanced my understanding of daily life there as well. Furthermore, I participated in events where CARE or UNICEF employees/collaborators interacted with residents of these towns, aid recipients from

neighboring towns, or fellow employees/collaborators in their respective organizations. In these interactions, I observed many issues in translation, reformulation, and rejection of development concepts. These interactions were enhanced through the interviews with CARE, UNICEF, and government employees, who serve as middle persons between aid recipients and transnational development institutions. By interviewing both these middle class employees as well as rural aid recipient volunteers, I was able to compare reformulations and translations of CARE and UNICEF's gender, rights, and development interventions in these two groups. I also include an analysis of class relations between these two groups. The results of these issues are in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

Overall, this project traverses multiple positionalities of actors affiliated with CARE and UNICEF's gender and rights-based development interventions, including me. Finally in this chapter, I reflect on my place in this research project as a white, American, middle class, non-Muslim woman doing research in collaboration with prominent transnational aid organizations.

Positionality of the Researcher

Background in Niger

I have now spent a total of three years in Niger as well as three additional years studying the Hausa language in the U.S. My first stay in Niger was 1997 to 1999 when I worked with a small NGO doing agro-forestry and health teaching and research in the Maradi *Région*. Afterwards, I began my graduate program at Michigan State University. During graduate school, I was able to return to Niger for two summers— to do language study at the Université Abdou Moumouni in 2001 and to do pre-dissertation research in 2002. The pre-dissertation research was in collaboration with CARE PN 51 and included

data collection in Garin Jakka and a second neighboring town. In 2003-2004, I received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Grant to return to Niger and do the research that resulted in this dissertation.

My Identity and Relationships in Niger

I am “other” in many ways in Niger as I am a white, American, non-Muslim, relatively wealthy (compared to the average Nigerien), native English-speaking woman. I stand out on the streets wherever I go, although people quickly seem to feel at ease with me once they see I can speak Hausa well. I even occasionally receive the praise of being a *jakin Kano* (natural Hausa speaker, literally donkey from Kano, Nigeria), although these generous complements by no means completely cover over my foreignness. And while there is a great appreciation for my effort to live with Nigeriens—speaking Hausa, sleeping in their homes, and eating their food—I remain something of a mystery to many in Niger. Why would an American woman not have a car or rent a nice home for herself with servants in Maradi or Niamey? Why would I want to live in a mud home in a rural town with no electricity or running water? And how could I be white and American, yet have little influence in the American Embassy, UNICEF, or CARE? Was I being paid well by the CIA to do this work?³² It did not seem to all add up to some.

I also do not identify as a Muslim and therefore do not do daily prayers (*salla*), the most visible marker of Muslim identity in Niger. While I deeply respect the Muslim faith, I chose to attend a Christian church in Maradi and Niamey the few times I did participate in organized religious activities. In most cases, Nigerien Muslims and I seem to mutually respect each other’s different faith traditions and enjoy talking about them with one another. I had many deep discussions in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré about

³² My only source of income while doing field work was the Fulbright-Hays.

faith and life, but never with a sense of wanting to convert one another. Among middle class Muslims in Maradi and Niamey, I came across the occasional individual who clearly hoped I would convert to Islam, however. Nevertheless, there always seemed to be an open invitation for me to marry a Nigerien and become Hausa and/or Muslim—to become one of the group. I very much appreciate this welcoming attitude of most Nigeriens.

The most challenging aspect of developing relationships with Nigeriens for me is the differences between us in terms of access to resources and power. I am assumed to be wealthy, which I confess in a relative sense is certainly true in many cases.³³ I am also assumed to be powerful. This is more complicated, as I am often able to access resources for myself (e.g., getting a grant for research expenses or being able to talk to people in the American Embassy), but not necessarily for someone else. Nevertheless, some Nigeriens hope that by getting to know me they can get a visa to the U.S. or somehow tap into my perceived wealth. I gladly assisted people in Niger as I could, but my capacity to help is often much smaller than many people's expectations. This is a reality for any American living in Niger and a great challenge for those who desire cultivating friendships based on trust as I do. These friendships can and do happen, but they are indeed special. On the other hand, I found that I was the one with little power in a few cases when trying to access high-level administrators in the government and certain development organizations for data. As a graduate student, I probably did not seem very important or

³³ There are, however, an elite group of Nigeriens who are much wealthier than I am. The 2005 UNDP Human Development Index reports that 85.3% of the Nigerien population lives on US\$2 a day or less (United Nations Development Programme 2005:229). By comparison, my Fulbright per diem was about US\$18 in Maradi and US\$30 in Niamey.

official to them and could easily be brushed aside as a low priority in their busy schedules.

Being a woman in Niger presented certain challenges and opportunities for me. Although my race, nationality, education, and class often allowed me privileges many Nigerien women (or even men) do not have, my gender was still important in terms of how people treated me. As someone well beyond the age when I should be married in that society, people frequently badgered me to get married and to have some children. The pressure can be intense, and I empathize with women friends who have shared with me that they married before they were ready just to please their families and friends. On the other hand, being a woman allowed me to easily access female spaces, particularly in the home where many women spend most or all of their day.

Finally in order to position myself within the theoretical framework I have laid out in Chapter One, a word is needed on my own reformulations and translations concerning gender, rights, and development as I conducted research and lived in Niger. Marcus writes:

What...remains essential to multi-sited research is the function of translation from one cultural idiom or language to another. This function is enhanced since it is no longer practiced in the primary, dualistic "them-us" frame of conventional ethnography but requires considerably more nuancing and shading as the practice of translation connects the several sites that the research explores along unexpected and even dissonant fractures of social location. [1995:100]

By positioning myself as one of the many translators in my study, I seek to move away from the "them-us" dualism Marcus describes, presenting a more complex picture of interconnections around transnational development interventions. Like CARE and UNICEF, I too have certain affiliations with the West and am rooted in schools of

thought from Western institutions. And as an anthropologist who speaks Hausa and French, does field research in Niger, and writes about my findings in English, I too am an actor who translates and reformulates ideas on gender, rights, and development.

Knowing how challenging this position can be and how one's translations and reformulations can be again reformulated and used by others for a different end, I have great respect for the efforts CARE and UNICEF make in Niger. While this dissertation sometimes focuses on less than stellar examples of CARE and UNICEF interventions, I do not mean to discredit their work to address poverty in Niger. Indeed, the resources that CARE and UNICEF provide very often do save or improve the lives of the most vulnerable. A broader assessment of their work in Niger would surely demonstrate this. However, the purpose of this study is quite different. It is an examination of resistance, reformulations, and translations in particular Nigerien sites. I have sought to bring other voices and dimensions into narratives on gender, rights, and development for an English-speaking audience. If some of the issues raised in this dissertation are able to provoke discussion and reflection in CARE, UNICEF, and elsewhere even a little, it has been well worth the effort.

Language

Thus, this project has not only been a study of translation in development projects, but also an exercise in translation for me as I seek to communicate to an English-speaking audience my experiences in Hausa and French. I conducted interviews in Hausa and French, and personally translated all quotes taken from them for this dissertation.³⁴ Furthermore, I translated quotes from French documents that I cite in the

³⁴ I also consulted native Hausa speakers and Nigeriens fluent in French on occasion when I needed greater clarity about how to translate a phrase or term.

dissertation. In particular, translating Hausa terms and expressions into English was at times a complicated process as I sought the best way to express certain words and concepts that do not directly translate. This study requires precision in determining the nuances of meaning in certain Hausa terms. I welcome comments from all Hausa scholars on how I have chosen to translate and explain them.

In addition, I have chosen to use certain English terms over others to talk about Niger. For example, I only use “village” when specifically talking about CARE and UNICEF programs that invoke this concept. Otherwise, I prefer to talk about a town or a community. By doing this, I hope to avoid some of the negative or unrealistic stereotypes of “villages” in Africa, which are often considered simple, primitive, or “traditional.” A town seems somehow more familiar and less “other” to a reader in the West. I do, however, chose to use the term “rural” even though it can invoke a sense of isolation or backwardness for some, even when referring to people in the U.S. However, my discussions of rural towns in this dissertation are anything but disconnected from urban and transnational spaces and transformations. I find the term “rural” useful for identifying where the land and permanent residences of most people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré are. Rural and urban designations are also interwoven into Niger’s governing structures, as I explain in Chapter Three. Certainly, however, so-called rural people can have strong ties to urban spaces and so-called urban people can have strong ties to the rural countryside. People frequently move between these settings. Finally, there is some debate in the literature on Hausaland as to whether one can truly speak of social classes in a Marxist sense in Hausa society (see Grégoire 1992 or Watts 1983 for examples). While there is no clear consensus on this issue, I use “class” in this

dissertation to generally express social rank of various groups based on kin, occupation, and/or wealth.

Sharing Results

I shared preliminary results from my research project with people in Niger before leaving through oral presentations for 1) the NGO and academic community in Niamey, sponsored by the American Cultural Center, 2) men and women in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, 3) employees in CARE PN 51 and the UNICEF-Maradi office, and 4) the head of the Ministry of Community Development in Madarounfa. The first was presented in French, and the others were in Hausa. I also wrote and submitted a report on preliminary findings to the CARE and UNICEF country offices, Ministry of Community Development in Madarounfa, and CARE PN 51. I am grateful for feedback from individuals in Garin Jakka, Tchikaji Gajeré, CARE, UNICEF, the Madarounfa Community Development Ministry, and others.

Chapter Three

Structural and Social Change in Niger: What Does It Mean for Women?

Before focusing in on the Maradi *Région* of Niger and the case studies of CARE, UNICEF, Garin Jakka, and Tchikaji Gajeré, a general context is needed for these places and organizations within the Nigerien state. This chapter traces in broad strokes important changes in the state from the colonial period to the present and discusses the rise of new Islamic movements and identities in Niger since the 1990s in this context. These structural and social changes in the country as a whole have had important repercussions for women's status throughout Niger and explain how development has gone from being a central component of the state to a largely private sector affair.

Transformations of the State

The Colonial State, Centralized and Authoritarian

Niger became a French colony in 1922, although it had been under French military control since the end of the 19th century (Fuglestad 1983:6; Kanya-Forstner 1989; Manning 1998:75). By 1910, the French decided to reduce the size of their military in Niger, and move towards control by governance (Fuglestad 1983:79). Their approach to governing colonies was intended to be more direct than British indirect rule as they sought a highly centralized government and assimilation of Africans into French culture. However, they did not have the capacity to really accomplish this. Instead, they ended up implementing a version of indirect rule that used and in some cases created indigenous rulers to serve as intermediaries (Charlick 1991:35; B. Cooper 1998:31; Fuglestad 1983:85). The French also trained an elite group of intermediaries (*fonctionnaires*) from the Zerma ethnic group, who dominated Nigerien politics until the

1990s. Speaking of the type of colonial governance that developed in Niger, Charlick writes:

In Niger, French colonialism combined aspects of both a bureaucratic-authoritarian regime (BA) and personal rule, a combination that posed problems of coherence, even for colonial France. To the extent that it was bureaucratic-authoritarian, colonial government centralized power in the hands of individuals who ruled by virtue of their official positions. Officeholders, in turn, promoted the interests of powerful groups, above all the civil and military bureaucracies and, to a lesser degree, business interests associated with French colonialism in Niger, while limiting the meaningful participation of other social groups. [1991:53]

Centralization and authoritarianism have remained key components in Nigerien governance from this time throughout most of the post-colonial period. And the journey toward democracy and public participation in government has been a slow process with many interruptions.

France's relationship with its colony, Niger, was characterized by conquest, exploitation, and subordination. French control brought about heavy taxation, forced labor, and new kinds of trade centered on Europe's economy. French policy also forced farmers, who had historically been spread out in the countryside, to live together in "villages." Farmers in the Maradi region grew groundnuts for much needed cash to pay high taxes, and were forced to work on government fields for reserve granaries (B. Cooper 1997:46-47). Relocation and intensive groundnut agriculture had severe ecological consequences in a very fragile agricultural environment, hastening soil infertility and land competition. Meanwhile, groundnuts were exported to Europe to feed its demand for vegetable oil (Charlick 1991:38-39). This top-down, authoritarian strategy of governance during the colonial period that clearly served the interests of those

who govern is still fresh in Nigerien memories and has carried over into the post-colonial state, a topic I introduce in this chapter and return to in Chapters Five and Six.

The Early Post-Colonial State: Towards a Development State

After independence in 1960, Niger remained a highly centralized state, and the idea of “development” began to play a crucial role in its post-colonial policies. The state took control of commercial enterprises formerly run by the European trading houses, and the public sector was very large at the beginning of the post-colonial era. This followed suit with other post-colonial states in Africa who became highly centralized and closely regulated the national economy in the name of “development” (Diouf 1997; Renders 2002:61). Diouf writes of new African states:

From the start, postcolonial countries claimed two rights: recognition of political parity (control over the formal processes of sovereignty, the most decisive of which was the right to nationalize economic sectors) and positive economic discrimination through the institution of a system of economic advantages. These claims—what Samir Amin (1993:152) characterizes as “radical nationalism” and “catching up”—were consistent with what development economists at the time considered the “failure of markets” and the need for “an active role for governments” (Bates 1991:262). [1997:292]

After independence, Hamani Diori, Niger’s first president from 1960-1974 (Table 5), consolidated power into his one-party (*Parti Progressiste Nigérien* or PPN) state (Robinson 1991:5). The PPN was made up of almost exclusively people who were part of the Zerma ethnic group, as had been Nigerien colonial elites (Charlick 1991:36-7, 55). Thus, a centralized and elite group from southwestern Niger ran the country. Diori attempted to increase popular support first through elites throughout the country and later through his short-lived *animation rurale* system of mobilization, which sought to organize rural farmers and promote agricultural modernization (Charlick 1991:57-9). He

also used women's issues as a platform to create popular support and founded Niger's first women's association in 1958 called *Union des Femmes du Niger* (UFN). This organization, meant to be a women's wing of the PPN, strove to reform legislation to reduce bride wealth payments and polygamy, and to adopt a Family Code, although without much success (B. Cooper 1997:17).

Table 5: Niger's Heads of State since Independence

Name	Years of Rule	Type of Rule
Hamani Diori	1960-1974	Civilian
Seyni Kountché	1974-1987	Military
Ali Saibou	1987-1993	Military
Mahamane Ousmane	1993-1996	Civilian (first democratically elected president of Niger)
General Ibrahim Baré Mainassara	1996-1999	Military
Daouda Malam Wanké	1999	Military
Mamadou Tandja	1999-present	Civilian (re-elected in 2004)

Diori's administration laid out the governing structures for the post-colonial state. In 1964, four years after independence, law 64-023 divided Niger into seven *départements* (the largest territorial subunits), which were further subdivided into 35 *arrondissements* (districts). *Arrondissements* were further broken down into *communes* (municipalities). These divisions were modeled on France's administrative structures (Doka, et al. 2002:29). This structure, however, was not completely implemented, and governance remained centrally controlled for most of the independence period. Charlick characterizes Nigerien colonial and the first three decades of post-colonial politics as a time of "personal rule" (1991:53-4). Public participation in government was therefore limited until the 1990s.

Overall, Diori's programs and policies laid the ground work for 1) top-down, state-orchestrated mobilization in the name of "development" that was taken up by his

successor and 2) the long march toward decentralization over the next four decades.

Amidst the dwindling groundnut trade, heavy taxation, drought, allegations of corruption, and deteriorating support from France, Diori was removed from power in a 1974 military coup led by Lieutenant-Colonel (later General) Seyni Kountché.

Kountché was Niger's second head of state, ruling from 1974-1987. Under Kountché's military regime, the Nigerien state accessed new resources through the uranium boom, some of which were channeled into education, health, agricultural development, and infrastructure. Like Diori, Kountché attempted to build a popular support base among women, and included important women with ties to royalty in these organizations; however, Kountché stressed rural women's interests in particular and linked women's issues with national development (B. Cooper 1995:865; Djibo 2001:104, 113-4). Kountché initiated a new national women's association called *l'Association des Femmes du Niger* (AFN). Unfortunately, however, AFN had little effect on rural women's lives and, like UFN, limited success in legal reform around women's issues (B. Cooper 1995:865-866). Kountché also sought to mobilize popular support through the revitalization of the *Association des Chefs Traditionnels du Niger* (ACTN) and the establishment of his state-run program *Société de Développement*. The *Société de Développement* was structured around *samariya* (youth) groups, farmer cooperatives, and various socioprofessional groups. While these were supposed to be "traditional" groups, they were largely created and supported by the state (Charlick 1991:67). Furthermore, those who participated in decision making processes and activities in the *Société de Développement* were in most cases elites (Robinson 1991:14). Kountché's government, therefore, also orchestrated a highly centralized system that was controlled from above,

regardless of his participatory and democratic rhetoric about the *Société de Développement*. Miles (1994:281-287) reports in his study of the rural Nigerien community Yekuwa that participatory efforts in the *Société de Développement* were not evidenced in many accounts. In one instance, the leader of the women's association of Yekuwa sums up the association's relationship with their superiors in the *arrondissement* capital Magaria by saying, "What they tell us to do, we do" (Miles 1994:283). In the end, Kountché's programs brought little improvement in the lives of rural farmers (Robinson 1991:10); however, the association of this top-down, authoritarian state structure with "development," "participation," and "democratization" has provided challenges today as these ideas continue to be promoted by transnational aid and financial institutions as well as the Nigerien government.

Towards the second half of Kountché's presidency, economic recession in world markets, increasing national debt, and another period of severe drought began to sink the country into more and more difficult economic times. After his death in 1987, he was succeeded by his chief of staff, Ali Saibou (1987-1993), who was in power during a transitional era of structural adjustment, privatization, and the beginnings of democratization.

Structural Adjustment and Privatization

Chapter One discusses the 2005 efforts to cancel the world's most impoverished nations' debts to financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. This debt has consumed public expenditures in these nations since the 1980s, limiting states' capacities to provide much needed services and make investments. For example in 1997, Niger

owed US\$1,579,000,000 in external debt, 56% of its GNP (Table 6) (World Bank 2000:271). But how did countries like Niger get into this predicament in the first place?

Table 6: External Debt of Selected Countries³⁵

Country	1990 External Debt in US dollars	1997 External Debt in US dollars	External Debt Present Value % of GNP 1997
Angola	8,594,000,000	10,160,000,000	206
Honduras	3,724,000,000	4,698,000,000	86
Niger	1,726,000,000	1,579,000,000	56
Senegal	3,732,000,000	3,671,000,000	56
Uganda	2,583,000,000	3,708,000,000	31
Vietnam	23,270,000,000	21,629,000,000	78
Zambia	7,265,000,000	6,758,000,000	136

In the 1980s, developing countries around the world were in need of loans. In the case of Niger, this was largely due to the 1985 collapse in the price of uranium, Niger's principle export to the world market that helped to pay for clinics, schools, wells, roads, and food aid. Uranium revenues comprised nearly 88% of Niger's total export earnings in 1979 (Rain 1999:113; Robinson 1991:10). Niger also suffered from drought between 1982-1984, soon after the 1968-1974 drought. The loss in crops and livestock during this time was devastating for the country. In 1984, foodstuff production declined 30-40%, and the number of livestock decreased by about 40% (De Coninck and Tinguiri 1992:162).

In this time of economic hardship, the IMF and World Bank provided loans to Niger beginning in the mid-1980s, although with the condition that Niger implement SAPs (Dorosh 1994:164; DeConinck and Tinguiri 1992:163). SAPs brought about down-sizing the Nigerien government, privatizing or liquidating national companies, and increasing informalization of the economy (Akinterinwa 1994). Cuts in state spending

³⁵ Data from World Bank 2000:270-271.

were made in a number of sectors. Dorosh lists mining/industry/energy and education as the most drastic decreases in spending throughout the 1980s (1994:193-4). Overall, SAP cut backs shifted a greater economic burden onto individuals. Proponents of SAPs are described by Razavi as “pursu[ing] fiscal restraint, open trade and capital accounts, and privatization, reflecting a principal concern with ‘sound’ finance, irrespective of social costs” (2002:1).

In 1994, France’s devaluation of the West African franc (Niger’s currency) only added to this time of economic hardships (B. Cooper 1997:xlii). Niger sunk deeply into debt throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as it struggled to pay off loans and had little to profit from in the world market. Privatization and disengagement of the government in markets has continued to be central to Nigerien government policy up until the present, influenced largely by the World Bank and IMF and evidenced in Niger’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (République du Niger 2003b). The PRSP is required for Niger to qualify for HIPC debt reduction.

Foreign aid has become important to Niger’s survival. In 2003, 16.6% of its GDP was official development assistance (United Nations Development Programme 2005:282). Foreign aid, however, was spotty in the 1990s due to Niger’s return to a military regime in 1996 after only three years of democracy. In response to the 1996 *coup d’état*, many bilateral donors, including USAID,³⁶ suspended their operations in Niger. Other aid organizations such as CARE and UNICEF continued regardless of Niger’s drift away from democratic governance. Since 1999, Niger has returned to democracy. As a result, some former and many new foreign aid organizations have (re)established themselves. These organizations have compensated for services the

³⁶ USAID stands for United States Agency for International Development.

downsized state cannot adequately provide in terms of health care, education, aid to rural farmers, credit, and so on.

With the downsizing of state programs and the entrée of numerous foreign aid organizations, development has largely shifted from a state-sponsored endeavor to the private sector. Many former government employees have moved into the private development sector as government positions have been cut back and private sector jobs often offer better pay and benefits. In some cases, aid organizations have collaborated with and propped up a state crippled by SAPs, as in the case of UN agencies. In other cases, aid organizations operate according to an almost exclusively private model of service provision, as is the case with CARE today. These distinct models will be compared and contrasted in depth in Chapter Four.

As development becomes increasingly a private sector affair, communities are being encouraged to seek out needed services (e.g., adult literacy programs, well construction, etc.) on their own rather than having government Technical Services decide what they need, provide the services, and evaluate their own work. Now various private sector groups can compete to provide such services, and third parties can perform evaluations to verify the competency of services provided. Small grassroots associations that have services to offer can also solicit support from larger, better-funded projects for their work. These sorts of partnerships and contracts between parties are referred to by some as *le faire-faire*. As one Madarounfa Technical Services administrator explained to me, “It’s like a market.” Indeed, market-driven, private sector development is now the model embraced by the Nigerien government, under pressure from international donors and financial institutions.

Democratization and Decentralization

Nigeriens have lived under oppressive, undemocratic regimes throughout much of independent Niger's history, and Zerma elites have continued to hold the political reins from independence in 1960 until the National Conference in 1991 (Ibrahim 1994:24-5). The National Conference of 1991 was organized in response to growing public unrest over political authoritarianism and economic hardships under SAPs, and served as a turning point in the development of democratic governance in Niger. Students and labor unions pressured President Ali Saibou to hold the conference, following the death of fourteen students killed by soldiers while demonstrating against IMF SAPs. This conference marked the end of a Zerma monopoly of the government, and a revitalization of civil society and public participation in politics. Some of the items on the agenda of the conference were political crime in Niger, corruption, economic crisis of the country, SAPs,³⁷ the Family Code, and the Rural Code (the latter is discussed in Chapter Five). In addition, women in the AFN pressured conference organizers through public demonstrations to include more women delegates. As a result of their protests, the number of women was increased from one to six (B. Cooper 1995:876; Hartmann-Mahmud 2000:361; Ibrahim 1994:29-31).

Ali Saibou's regime, under intense domestic and international pressure, took important steps toward democracy, which led to Niger's first democratic presidential election in 1993. Saibou lost that election to Mahamane Ousmane, who remained president until displaced by another *coup d'état* in 1996. Between 1996 and 1999, General Ibrahim Baré Mainassara, the new head of state, ostracized much of the

³⁷ Interestingly, Nigeriens at the conference rejected IMF SAPs, but they found that there was no other conceivable alternative to their fiscal crisis (Ibrahim 1994:29-31).

international donor community with his disregard for democracy and human rights. Municipal elections were attempted in February 1999, but the results were annulled, further disgruntling an already uneasy public. In April 1999, Major Daouda Malam Wanké took control as head of state in yet another *coup d'état* in which Baré was assassinated. Under Wanké, a new constitution was approved, and presidential and legislative elections were held within a year of the time he took office. Mamadou Tandja won that election, and was re-elected for a second term in 2004.

With the return to democracy at the end of 1999, discussions of decentralization that had begun as early the Diori period started to move forward. In particular, efforts were made to institute municipal level (*commune*) governing bodies. By 1994, only 21 *communes* existed (Doka, et al. 2002:29), and most were not established until the first nationwide municipal elections in July 2004. After the 2004 elections, 265 *communes* existed with elected municipal counselors and a *maire* (mayor), and the names of territorial designations shifted. *Départements* became *régions*, and *arrondissements* became *départements*. New smaller *arrondissements* have yet to be established, but once they are, they will not be considered *collectivités territoriales* (autonomous and elected government, separate from but under the state, over a specific territory). Also to follow the 2004 elections will be elections for municipal counselors of the *régions* and *départements*. As of the end of 2004, there were seven *régions*, four *communautés urbaines*, 36 *départements*, and 265 *communes* in Niger. This is the first time that municipal level authorities have been elected nationwide rather than simply relying on appointed “traditional” leaders in Niger at that level of government.

Capacity Building: Programme d'Actions Communautaires

Policies of decentralization and privatization of the state are sometimes created with the assumption that civil society will quickly occupy the spaces these policies create. However, many development institutions and governments promoting such policies also recognize that capacity building is needed in many cases for this to occur. For example, Niger does not have enough schools for its population of 13.1 million. Only 14.4% of the population was found to be literate in 2003 (United Nations Development Programme 2005:235, 261) (Table 7). It is difficult for this population to step up and participate in formal government structures and interact with private sector NGOs and businesses without the ability to read and write nor training in how matters operate in these spheres. Because of such challenges, a number of capacity building programs have been established, the most notable in the Maradi *Région* being the World Bank's *Programme d'Actions Communautaires* (PAC). Begun in 2003, this program participates in the preparation for decentralization and implementation of poverty reduction strategies, offering community and governance support, investment funds, poverty monitoring, and project management. The program is expected to last for 12 years and intervene in 54 *communes*. Communities needing assistance from PAC make formal requests. While I was doing fieldwork in 2004, government workers I interviewed in Madarounfa *Département* were just beginning to learn about the program.

Table 7: Adult Literacy Rate in Niger³⁸

Adult Literacy Rate in 2003 (% ages 15 and above) ³⁹	14.4
Female Adult Literacy Rate in 2003 (% ages 15 and above) ⁴⁰	9.4

³⁸ Data from United Nations Development Programme 2005:261, 310.

³⁹ Data for 2003 refer to national literacy estimates from censuses or surveys conducted between 2000 and 2004.

The Effects of Privatization and Decentralization on Women and the Poor

Privatization and decentralization have had varying consequences in Niger for women and the poor. In the case of SAPs, which have been implemented over the last two decades, it is easier to see some of the difficulties that have arisen as Niger has sunk to last place among the 177 countries ranked on the 2005 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme 2005:222). Decentralization, however, is really just beginning, and presents both opportunities and challenges for marginalized groups.

Consequences of SAPs

SAPs in Niger, as in many other countries, have made the situation for women and the poor (who are disproportionately women) worse for several reasons. First, economic restructuring reduces rather than enhances the kinds of public services (e.g., water, health care, and education) that women and the poor need to compensate for their unpaid or low-paid labor. Maternal-child health in Niger is among the worst in the world, and few women have access to hospitals/clinics and proper nutrition for themselves and their children. The maternal mortality rate in 2000 was 1600 per 100,000 live births (1.6%), while the under-five mortality rate in 2003 was 262 per 1,000 live births (26.2%) (United Nations Development Programme 2005:253) (Table 8). Secondly, because of the increased work burden of women and the poor due to few state services and rising prices, they have less time and energy to invest in participating in public life and politics. Third, SAPs diminish educational and professional opportunities for women and the poor, who are already marginalized groups in education and the

⁴⁰ Data refer to national literacy estimates from censuses or surveys conducted between 2000 and 2004.

formal economy in Niger. This is especially true in the 1990s when many private sector development organizations pulled out of Niger at the same time that the Nigerien government was downsizing. Outside of government and development-oriented jobs, not many formal employment opportunities exist in Niger. Furthermore the history of the entrée of women and gender into development discourses laid out in Chapter One (WID, WAD, GAD, WED, etc.) overlaps substantially with the history of structural adjustment and privatization in Niger as elsewhere. As a result, good governance, entrepreneurship, social attitudes, and political/civil rights (all compatible with a neoliberal agenda) have been emphasized in mainstream development programs concerned with women's empowerment, while a focus on consequences of SAPs and debt relief have been rare.

Table 8: Selected UNDP Human Development Indicators for Niger⁴¹

Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)			Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)
2003 Average	Poorest 20%⁴²	Richest 20%⁴³	Adjusted 2000⁴⁴
262	281.8	183.7	1600

In the context of state downsizing and the rise of private sector development, there is a contradiction in strategy between structural adjustment programs and many non-governmental development projects in Niger. On the one hand, structural adjustment programs push for small government and the movement of many once-government services into the private sector. Within this framework, as I have already stated, many development activities have moved into the private sector, as aid or with a marketplace mentality. On the other hand, transnational aid organizations often see themselves as

⁴¹ Data from United Nations Development Programme 2005:245, 253.

⁴² Based on births in the 10 years preceding the survey.

⁴³ Based on births in the 10 years preceding the survey.

⁴⁴ Data adjusted based on reviews by UNICEF, WHO, and UNFPA to account for well-documented problems of underreporting and misclassifications.

temporary (e.g., three or five year) projects that will build capacity, teach people to solve their own problems, and end. They explain to aid recipients that they will not be around forever, but the government will be. Therefore, citizens should make demands of and engage with their government. So at the same time development is supposed to be a private sector affair, transnational aid organizations do not see themselves as permanent solutions to Niger's problems. Therefore, matters of health care, education, agricultural assistance, or infrastructure have slipped through the cracks of these competing rhetorics, leaving Nigeriens with no cohesive, long-term plan for improving their lives. Inevitably, the most vulnerable members of society suffer the most from such contradictions.

The 2005 Famine

Although the 2005 Niger famine occurred after my field work had officially ended, the events leading up to it are connected with structural adjustment policies and democratization. Johanne Sekkenes, the Niger mission head of Doctors without Borders, has accused the IMF and European Union of pushing structural adjustment too quickly on Niger. She stated, "No sooner had the government been re-elected [in 2004] than it was obliged to introduce 19 percent VAT [value-added tax] on basic foodstuffs. At the same time, as part of the policy, emergency grain reserves were abolished."⁴⁵ Furthermore in August 2005, *The Observer* reported, "Aid agencies around the world saw the crisis coming and appealed as early as last November for assistance. Not wishing to depress the

⁴⁵ Thomas C. Dawson, the IMF's director of external relations, objected saying, "The IMF has never supported or encouraged the abolition of government grain reserves. In fact, the grain reserve is in place and has been used, to the best of our knowledge, to relieve the current food shortage... the VAT extension was soon rescinded because of public protests and could have had little effect on the crisis." Abdoulaye Bio-Tchané, IMF African department director, also argued, "There is absolutely no truth to the suggestion that IMF policy advice has impeded free food distribution" (A. Smith 2005; Bretton Woods Project 2005; Vermont Guardian 2005).

market prices, however, the Niger government, under instruction from the IMF and European Union, at first refused to distribute free food to those most in need” (McRae 2005).

In addition to these policies from outsiders that left Nigeriens in a vulnerable position, Niger’s government exasperated the situation in several ways. First the government downplayed the magnitude of the crisis, claiming that it was not a “famine.” As a result, the state did not take special measures to supplement income or food for the poorest of the poor, and the international community was slow to respond to pleas for assistance. Sen refers to this as “the alienation of the rulers from those ruled,” a common condition in places of famine (1999: 170). Second, the value-added tax on food and abolition of grain stores came the same year that drought and locusts destroyed crops for many. So just as the most vulnerable farmers were in greatest need, food prices went up as animal prices (a kind of savings for many and main income source for some) went down (A. Smith 2005). Third, the government attempted to silence public protests about this tax, although in the end the public pushed the government to reduce some of the tax.⁴⁶ Fourth, journalists speaking out about the famine were labeled “unpatriotic.” A U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor report says, “The government seized cameras and film from journalists, closed a private radio station, and brought libel charges against journalists who criticized the government, particularly in its handling of the food crisis and the VAT increase” (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor 2006). Sen also argues that a free press helps to prevent famine (1999: 180-182).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The tax was dropped on milk and flour, and reduced for water and electricity (Lawler 2005).

⁴⁷ Ironically even though Sen argues that a famine has never taken place in a functioning multiparty democracy, many of the undemocratic conditions he describes in places where famines have occurred resemble Niger.

Seeing the role structural adjustment policies played in and the government's attempts to silence the public and media speaking out about the famine, one begins to understand that it may have been preventable, or at least much less severe. Certainly the famine was not solely an act of nature. Specific economic and political policies contributed to the suffering of many, particularly women, children, and the poor.

Speculations on Decentralization

In theory, decentralization should spread power and resources among more groups and facilitate increased participation in governance. Since *communes* were only beginning to be established in 2004 while I was doing fieldwork in Niger, I have no data to indicate how well these goals are being accomplished. However, I do have reasons for concern and also some optimism about how decentralized governance in Niger may affect women and the poor.

Decentralization is central to poverty reduction in Niger, according to PAC and government poverty reduction strategy documents (République du Niger 2003a, 2003b; World Bank 2003:9). Authority figures at the level of the mayor and municipal counselors are believed to be well-positioned to meet the needs of the poorest members of their population and maintain long-term investments in their communities. While this may prove to be true, it is built on an assumption that the needs of all community members will be considered, not just those of elected officials and their kin. In a report by Doka, Sayo and Amadou on decentralization and poverty reduction in Niger, one citizen in their study expresses what I also fear may happen, "Won't locally elected officials benefit more than the communities as a consequence of decentralization considering the illiteracy of the population?" (2002:43, my translation). In other words,

will these newly created government structures become just another form of elitism rather than a public service? And how will a population who cannot read and write (including some elected officials) engage with the existing structures and tasks of governance?

The division between the 213 rural and 52 urban *communes* is also a reason for concern. Urban areas have the majority of literate and French-educated professionals as well as wealthy elites. Without adequately addressing the lack of educational and economic opportunities in rural *communes*, these populations are considerably disadvantaged when competing with urban *communes* for resources such as funding from NGOs. Ibrahim cites a 1990 study by Adji, which reveals that 62.7% of development projects were in Zerma/Songhai areas (approximately 20% of the population) and only 22.7% were in Hausa areas (a little over half of the population) (1994:25).⁴⁸ This study was done at the end of a long-term monopoly by Zerma elites in Nigerien politics. Now new groups of elites are forming or being reinforced along rural-urban and literate-illiterate lines. This division will likely only perpetuate seasonal labor migration and lack of resources in rural areas. Capacity building programs such as PAC are addressing such problems in rural *communes*; however, time will tell if their efforts will be effective and enough.

A point of optimism for women in Niger is the passage of the Quota Law 2000-08 in 2000 that requires a minimum of 10% of elected positions and 25% of cabinet and senior civil servant posts be held by one or the other sex (United Nations 2005b:65-66). As a result, the 2004 elections raised women representatives from 1.2% to 12.4% of the

⁴⁸ While I cite this at the risk of oversimplifying ethnic identities, which are often fluid and mixed, these numbers do help to give a general idea of how certain constructed ethnic categories actually matter in politics and resource distribution.

National Assembly⁴⁹. If this law continues to be enforced, women will maintain some (although not necessarily equal) representation in government. With the expanded elected positions created since 2004 and more to be developed in the future, an increased number of women will be able to participate in the governance of their *communes*, *départements*, *régions*, and state. Whether these women will strive to represent women of different social and economic standing in Niger remains to be seen.



Figure 8: Women from Garin Jakka Lined up to Vote in July 2004

Women and the Law

In addition to the Quota Law, a number of other legal issues in Niger have important consequences for women. First of all, Niger has retained the colonial construction of customary law in the post-colonial period. The Napoleonic Civil Code⁵⁰

⁴⁹ See www.parlcent.ca/africa/Gender/Niger_e.php

⁵⁰ Apart from the civil code, Niger also has a number of other legal codes including the penal, labor, electoral, and commercial codes (United Nations 2005b:19-20).

has been applied in Niger after independence, although in a limited manner due to Act No. 62-11 of March 16, 1962 (United Nations 2005b:19). According to this act, customary law is given preference over civil law in the following matters:

- The ability to enter into contracts and bring legal proceedings;
- Marriage, divorce, direct descent, inheritance, settlement of assets, wills;
- Ownership or possession of real property, with the exception of registered real estate. [United Nations 2005b:19]

While Maliki law, a school of Islamic law, is referred to when dealing with matters under customary law for Nigerien Muslims, Islamic law does not extend outside of the above mentioned issues in Niger as it does in certain states of northern Nigeria that have accepted full Shari'a law in civil and criminal matters (Mahmud 2004:84-85). Equality of all citizens is guaranteed under the Nigerien constitution, but customary law allows for different treatment of citizens based on gender, ethnicity, and religion in the civil matters cited above.

The Family Code was an attempt to reform legislation so that men and women are equal in matters such as marriage, inheritance, and divorce. It began to be developed in the late 1970s (Dunbar 1991:81-2), and under international pressure was finally ratified in 1999. However, it has yet to be implemented. There has been strong opposition to the Family Code from Islamic groups (Alidou 2005:164-168; Charlick 2004:101). These groups are not simply the more radical Muslims. Rather implementing the Family Code would present a challenge to the patriarchal order more generally. Although Islamist groups have also been resistant to the code, opposition to it resonates much more widely with the population at large. In Niger, different treatment of men and women under the law in family matters is well engrained in people's moral and religious sensibilities.

Also in 1999, Niger ratified the CEDAW. However, the government's reservations mirror the same sorts of issues resisted in the Family Code. Specifically, Niger's reservations relate to: 1) equal inheritance (Article 2d and f); 2) the right of married women to choose their residences (Article 15, paragraph 4); 3) "the same rights and responsibility during marriage and at its dissolution, the same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and the right to choose a family name" (Article 16, paragraph 1c, e, and g); 4) modifying social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women (Article 5a); and 5) the procedures for arbitration (Article 29) (United Nations 2005b:27, 65). An additional declaration by the Nigerien government on family education in Article 5b indicates that this term "should be interpreted as referring to public education concerning the family" (United Nations 2005b:28).⁵¹ This declaration, therefore, excludes the private family sphere from Article 5b, which reads as follows:

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases. [United Nations 1979]

Furthermore the declaration cites Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in its support, which reads:

1. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks. [United Nations 1966]

⁵¹ These reservations and declaration are outlined in *Ordonnance 99-30 du 13 août Autorisant l'adhésion de la République du Niger à la Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes, adoptée le 18 décembre 1979 à New York* (République du Niger 1999).

Clearly issues pertaining to family matters form the bulk of these reservations and declaration. Ratifying the CEDAW in this manner does not pose a radical challenge to the existing legal order. Equal rights of individuals are guaranteed through the current constitution, except in family matters treated under customary law. With the CEDAW reservations and declaration, these inequalities under customary law remain.

Similar debates have continued over new legislation. In November 2006 and again in March 2007, Islamic groups staged protests to speak out about the ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, a supplementary protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. In Maradi, Niamey and several other Nigerien cities, Islamic associations and Muslim women's groups objected to aspects of the protocol that they consider "anti-Islamic" such as equal inheritance (African Press in Norway 2007; Agence de Presse Africaine 2006, 2007). These debates continue at present and remain an important area for future research.

New Islamic Movements and Identities

One way that people have tried to make sense of and respond to the economically difficult times and political corruption in Niger, especially since the 1980s, is through religion. In this context, Islamist movements have gained strength in Niger (as elsewhere in the world) over the last three decades. However, Islamists are far from being a single cohesive group and have various alliances and influences from West Africa and abroad (for example Saudi Arabia and Iran). Yet Islamists are similar in that they critique established authorities, desire to purify Islam from other cultural practices, and search for Islamic solutions to contemporary problems (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). Islamists in

Niger, the most prominent being *Izala*,⁵² promote veiling and seclusion of women (Grégoire 1993:112; Masquelier 1999:237-241), as long have Muslims of other persuasions in northern Nigeria (a history I give in Chapter Five).⁵³ In neighboring Nigeria, Islamist groups have also ushered in the implementation of full Shari'a law in twelve northern states since 2000 (Mahmud 2004:84, 87-89). In part, Islamist groups in Hausaland are reacting to economic crises in their countries and critiquing corruption and oppression in their governments and in the West, calling for social and religious reforms and in some cases an Islamic state. These groups draw on religious revivalism and wider critiques of corruption throughout the Muslim world.

On the other hand, the Nigerien government has attempted to keep religious leaders and organizations under its control in several ways and has also participated in debates about Islam and women. Under Diori, religious leaders were not permitted to organize so as to influence politics (Alidou 2005:150-1). Kountché had a different tactic as he organized religious leaders into a single national association, *Association Islamique du Niger* (AIN), which was closely aligned with and subordinate to the state but did not incorporate women's involvement and leadership (Alidou 2005:151; Niandou 1993). In general, Kountché used Islam to spark national unity in Niger (Masquelier 2001:41; Miles 1994:252). Also, Ibrahim explains that the Kountché regime can be described as a "one-man tyranny," and during this time, Nigeriens retreated from public political life and focused their attention instead on religion, culture, and economic activities (1994:26).

⁵² While the establishment of *Izala* (or the Society for Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of the Tradition) can be traced to Jos, northern Nigeria in 1978, it is not today a single cohesive group (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 114-115; Kane 2003:85, 217-226).

⁵³ Interestingly Kane tells us that *Izala* women in northern Nigeria challenge wife seclusion, which is the social norm there (2003:140). In Niger, seclusion is not the overall norm, although it is becoming increasingly more popular.

After Kountché throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, the Nigerien government used religious debates in the media on issues affecting women to distract the public from its failure to pay salaries and other national problems (Alidou 2005:157). At the same time, the disengagement of or centralized control of religious organizations in affairs of the state had given way to a plurality of voices on religion, society, and politics. The turn toward democracy in 1991 opened the door for new Islamic groups to form and citizens (mainly men) to engage in public debates in ways they had not been able to under prior undemocratic regimes. Within this context, much public discussion around women's dress and presence in public has taken place since the 1990s in Niger.

Alidou connects the economic crisis Niger faced under SAPs with changing gender identities:

As men continued to lose the economic means and opportunities that serve to define them as providers, as husbands and fathers, they embraced more and more misogynists conceptions of the "proper Muslim woman"—a religious housewife—based on a type of Islam that, in its cultural articulation, gives them a sense of masculinity and privilege to continue to define women in society. [2005:13]

Such theologies have not only embraced the domestic, dependent woman, but also individualism, another way to cope with the increasing poverty and harsh economic times in Niger. For example, *Izala* Islamists advocate for small bride wealths, simple celebrations, and relief from social obligations to extended families (Charlick 2004:103; Grégoire 1993:112; Masquelier 1999:232-233). Thus since Kountché's time, Islam has become a more central part of most Nigeriens' identities—an Islam that has been increasingly informed by hard economic times, and cultural and economic exchanges with northern Nigeria in particular as well as the rest of the Muslim world.

As Sub-Saharan African countries have fallen into times of economic crisis with little help from the West, other countries in North Africa and Western Asia who seek to grow their influence in Sub-Saharan Africa have strengthened economic and cultural ties there through activities such as building mosques and increasing trade. At the same time, West African Muslims seek work, pursue studies, and perform the hajj in the Arab world (Grégoire and Schmitz 2000; Kane 1994). The strengthening of these ties in recent years has reinforced a sense of common Muslim identity in the context of what seems to be continual Western attacks against the Muslim world (e.g., the Iraq war, U.S. support for Israel, publication of offensive images of the Prophet Muhammad). Through these connections, Islamic influences from other parts of the Muslim world have grown in Niger.

Islamisms have grown particularly strong in Maradi, compared to other parts of Niger, as strong economic ties between traders in northern Nigeria and Maradi have facilitated the flow of new religious ideologies (Charlick 2004:101-2). Seasonal migrants and other urban poor in Nigeria also can have strong connections to Islamist groups (Abdullah 2002:158).⁵⁴ The particular history of how the Maradi *Région* is connected to northern Nigeria and how this has brought dramatic changes for women in terms of their mobility, work, leadership opportunities, and dress are taken up in Chapter Five.

Conclusion: The State, Development, Islam and Women

Starting with the colonial model of centralization and authoritarianism, Niger as a collective entity has moved through many changes in state structure up until the present. Elite groups have dominated the politics of the colony and later country, particularly prior

⁵⁴ Interestingly, however, Muslim, male migrants from aid recipient communities in my study did not label themselves as a particular brotherhood or Islamist group. Rather, they preferred to be simply Muslims.

to the 1990s. As an independent state, Niger remained highly centralized and a large bureaucracy from the 1960s to the early 1980s, manipulating public support and participation in order to control citizens rather than seeking their input. Development efforts were orchestrated by the state in a hierarchical and top-down manner under Diori and even more so under Kountché. In the mid-1980s, however, big centralized government gave way to SAPs and privatization. The state began to down-size, and development efforts started to move to the private sector. Most recently, policies of decentralization and private, market-based development have dominated in Niger.

As a consequence of SAPs, Niger has sunk more deeply into debt and poverty. Especially women and the poor have suffered from reduced state services such as health care and education, and the temporary nature of private sector development projects. Decentralization has brought the promise of improved community-based development efforts and public participation; however, time will tell if this proves to be the case or decentralization will become another tool to divide the haves and the have-nots. Legislation such as the 2000 Quota Law serve to ensure better representation of women in government positions, a positive step towards equality.

Efforts to guarantee equality for men and women under the law, however, have not yet been successful in Niger. The Family Code was strongly resisted, especially by Islamic groups who argued that equal treatment of men and women in certain family matters such as inheritance or marriage rights is counter to their religious beliefs. The CEDAW, another attempt to achieve gender equality in Nigerien law, was ratified only with significant reservations and a declaration that mirror already existing inequalities in

the law. Similar matters are currently being debated regarding the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa.

In the context of political corruption and severe economic hardships, Niger has seen the rise of Islamist movements over the last three decades, which have also greatly impacted gender roles and social relations. Women have found their bodies and social roles being debated publicly by men and have become scapegoats for politicians trying to evade responsibility for national crises. A surge of discourses from many directions concerning man as the provider and woman as the dependent housewife have pervaded the public space. The material circumstances Nigeriens find themselves in amidst SAPs, drought, other economic hardships is certainly linked to these changing gender roles and relationships. Some Nigeriens, feeling that the West has failed them, have looked to the rest of the Muslim world for new development strategies and moral critiques of their society and government.

These changes in state structure, development, and religious and gender identities set the stage for a more in-depth discussion of two transnational aid organizations—CARE and UNICEF—working in Niger (Chapter Four) and two towns—Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré—who receive aid from these organizations (Chapter Five). What structural and social changes have occurred in these specific contexts, particularly over the past three decades, and how do people understand development, gender, and human rights in these spaces?

PART II

CARE AND UNICEF IN NIGER: TRANSLATION, REFORMULATION, AND REJECTION OF GENDER, RIGHTS, AND DEVELOPMENT

Chapter Four

Comparing and Contrasting Approaches, Structures, and Organizational Cultures in CARE and UNICEF

Among some of the most prominent buzz words and development approaches to appear in transnational aid organizations since the 1990s are gender mainstreaming and rights-based approaches to development. These concepts *à la mode* are being integrated into a world that is becoming more privatized, leaving development institutions to strategize how to do gender mainstreaming and rights-based development work in this context. CARE and UNICEF in Niger have adopted two different strategies. Although both claim to put gender mainstreaming and human rights at the forefront of their work, the organizational structures and subsequent cultures that have developed within these institutions serve as intriguing examples of how different responses to structural adjustment, privatization, and contemporary approaches to development can create two very different organizations working side by side in the same country. Thus, this chapter demonstrates institutional reformulations and translations of gender and rights-based development approaches and also lays the foundation for understanding the different ways that CARE and UNICEF employees, government collaborators, volunteers, and aid recipients reformulate and translate development concepts, which I describe in Chapter Six.

I start this chapter with a brief history of gender mainstreaming and human rights in CARE- and UNICEF-Niger as well as the specific gender- and rights-oriented work on which my research focuses. This is followed by an explanation of CARE and UNICEF's two different organizational structures and cultures in the context of SAPs and increasing privatization in Niger. Finally, I discuss how democratization and participation play into

CARE- and UNICEF-Niger's work. While these concepts are central to both organizations, the contrasting structures and networks through which CARE and UNICEF operate raise interesting issues regarding the role of states and the private sector in transnational aid interventions.

Women, Gender, and Human Rights in CARE-Niger

WID and WAD discourses started to influence some of CARE-Niger's projects in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but it was not until 1994 that the first step was made to integrate GAD ideas by hiring a full time gender specialist. In 1997, all CARE-Niger employees received training in gender, and in 1998 a gender audit was conducted by CARE-USA in Niger, which found that CARE-Niger had no female project directors and administrators. CARE-Niger took this seriously and by 1999 was making significant changes and attempting gender mainstreaming. As a part of this effort, a new research-oriented Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security Project (PN 51) began in the Maradi *Région* of Niger. CARE-Niger also looked internally to make adjustments at this time, addressing discriminatory hiring practices against pregnant women, hiring more women, placing women in higher level positions, and making special accommodations for women field agents with babies.⁵⁵ One administrator who has been working at CARE-Niger since 1996 explained to me that by 1999:

Almost everyone [in CARE]—from those people who work in the rural areas to those working in Niamey to those working wherever—everyone agreed to doing [gender]... Therefore it contrasts with the time when senior administrators would say we must do gender.

⁵⁵ For example, these women could travel by car rather than motorcycle to work in rural areas.

At present, cultivating an ability to identify economic, political, and social issues that men and women confront in different ways has been a high priority in all CARE-Niger projects.

Ideas about a rights-based approach were introduced at CARE-Niger shortly after GAD concepts were integrated. Officially, rights-based development ideas were introduced in 2002 after certain employees received training on the topic in Ivory Coast. However, several CARE-Niger employees shared with me that they realized at this training they were already doing rights-based work in some of their projects. For example by 2002, the Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security Project (PN 51) was already engaged in conversations over inheritance rights for men and women in communities where they worked, including how Islamic law could be used to advocate for women's rights to land. This project has also built alliances with Islamic teachers in the Maradi area, the Association of Muslim Women in Niger, and the Association of Women Legal Professionals in Niger to discuss and do teaching on rights in rural areas. Thus, educating the public on some of their rights was already becoming a high priority in PN 51's work.

Rights-based development and gender have been integrated with other prominent development approaches in CARE-Niger. In particular, MARP (*Méthode Accélérée de Recherche Participative*⁵⁶ or Rapid Rural Appraisal⁵⁷) was introduced to CARE-Niger in the mid-1990s, followed by a household livelihood security framework, adopted by all of CARE International in 1997. These approaches went hand-in-hand as CARE-Niger evolved as an organization. CARE began work in Niger in 1974 by responding to hunger

⁵⁶ Sometimes also called *Méthode Active de Recherche et Planification Participative*.

⁵⁷ Sometimes also translated, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), usually once PRA was added to RRA.

issues resulting from the Sahel Drought of 1968-1974. To better address these, CARE soon expanded into environmental concerns (largely desertification and drought) and then agriculture. By the latter half of the 1990s, CARE had begun to better recognize the complex livelihoods of rural residents that expand beyond farming.⁵⁸ MARP helped them collect the data needed to begin to understand these livelihoods, and a household livelihoods security framework was adopted, which helps CARE identify the most vulnerable households and what can be done to help them. Gender awareness brought to light social relations and varying access to and control of individuals' resources in a household. And rights have become a tool to promote equity.

As already mentioned, my research focuses on PN 51, the Gender Equity and Household Livelihood Security project, administered from the town of Maradi. PN 51 worked in two *départements* in the Maradi *Région* (Guidan Roumji and Madarounfa) and was funded by CARE-Norway. Its funding cycle has now ended and a new project began as its successor in 2006.⁵⁹ PN 51 was staffed by ten field agents⁶⁰ and four administrators (eight men and six women total). The objectives of PN 51 are as follows:

- Overall Objective of the Project: By 2004, at least 7,000 women in 7,000 rural households among the most vulnerable in Maradi *Département*⁶¹ will have attained a more secure and equitable way of life.
- Intermediary Objective #1: By 2004, at least 7,000 women in 7,000 households will have improved their capacity to better negotiate an equitable sharing of risks and resources in their household.
- Intermediary Objective #2: By 2004, at least 7,000 women in 7,000 households will have increased their productive assets and will be able to better protect them during difficult times.

⁵⁸ CARE-Niger projects related to improving health, helping pastoralists, supporting women's savings and loan, and others have also emerged alongside these agriculture and natural resources projects.

⁵⁹ PN 77 Programme Leadership and Mata Masu Dubara, funded by CARE-Norway.

⁶⁰ The ten field agents include two field supervisors and eight *animateurs/animateuses* under them.

⁶¹ Now *Région*.

- Intermediary Objective #3: By 2004, at least 3,000 of the most vulnerable households will have increased their productive assets and will be able to better protect them in difficult times. [CARE-International au Niger 2004a:2; 2004b:2, my translation]

Table 9 lists the activities that PN 51 did in Guidan Roumji and Madarounfa

Départements in order to achieve these objectives.

Table 9: CARE-Niger PN 51 Activities, 1999-2004⁶²

ACTIVITY	NOTES
Literacy Training	Separate for men and women. By May 2004, CARE reported 46 literate women in Guidan Roumji <i>Département</i> and 7 literate women in Madarounfa <i>Département</i> of the 96 trained. ⁶³ Have also started libraries.
Women's Savings and Loan Groups	Groups of women meet periodically to put money in a locked savings box. A group can loan to people in and out of the group, charging interest. Those who save then get a portion of the revenue from the interest.
Listening Centers	Centers for listening to educational messages using radio and cassettes, sometimes combined with women's savings and loan groups.
Private Rural Operators	Training of midwives, health workers, and veterinarians in aid recipient communities.
Community Radio	As of 2004, two had been installed by CARE. Used for educational purposes, such as talking about decentralization and elections.
<i>Marabout relais</i>	Training for Islamic teachers/leaders in aid recipient communities on topics such as women's rights to inheritance, seclusion, education of women, and marital rights and duties. Forty-six people were deemed active in 2004.
<i>Petit élevage</i>	Assistance for women to obtain goats with the idea that the goats will reproduce. In 2004, PN 51 reported that the 3,950 goats they assisted women with had increased to 4,389. ⁶⁴
Community Cereal Bank	Community members store their grain in a warehouse to use as collateral on cash loans for income generating activities in the dry season or to sell off when grain prices are high.
<i>Communication pour un changement de comportement (CCC) Tours</i>	Tours made by professionals collaborating with CARE to educate aid recipient communities on topics such as HIV/AIDS, women's rights, elections, etc.
Access to Seeds	Assistance for men and women to get millet, cowpeas, and peanuts.
Support for Local Initiatives	Assisting communities with obtaining wells, grinding mills, or other needs.
Trainings	Trainings for employees and/or volunteer leaders related to the above activities as well as on topics such as gender, women's leadership, and conflict resolution.

⁶² Shaded activities are for women only. Men and women participate in other activities.

⁶³ See CARE-International au Niger 2004b:11.

⁶⁴ See CARE-International au Niger 2004b:15.

Certain residents of Garin Jakka have participated in all of the activities listed, except for activities for rural private operators, support for local initiatives, community radio, and women's literacy training. Contrary to other communities, however, some of these activities have not gone so well in Garin Jakka. In particular, Garin Jakka has had trouble repaying CARE for loaned assistance. I will elaborate on some of the problems in Chapter Six.

Two of the activities listed in Table 9 are for women only—women's savings and loan groups and *petit élevage*—while the rest involve men and women. The mix of women only and “gender” (i.e., including both men and women) activities reflects the history leading up to PN 51. Earlier agriculture and natural resources-oriented CARE-Niger projects primarily involved men with minimal effort to incorporate women. For example in 1989, the only reference to women in a CARE-Niger agriculture and natural resources document reads, “CARE pays specific attention to those groups with least access to resources, especially women” (CARE International au Niger 1989b). Another 1989 document talked about “the women's component of the project” (Holding and Aboubacar 1989:16) as CARE-Niger tried to incorporate women into what they were doing. Also at this time, however, some of the donors, namely CARE-Norway and NORAD,⁶⁵ recognized the need for new strategies to increase women's participation (CARE-International 1989a:37). These donors continued to support, with increasing concern for women, an agroforestry project in Maradi through the 1990s, which merged into PN 51 in 1999. However, also in 1991, CARE-Norway began a women's savings and loan project in Maradi that has spread to other regions of Niger and other countries

⁶⁵ The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

where CARE works (with other donors later contributing). These savings and loan projects still exist today and are for women only.

Looking through this history, therefore, one sees evidence of WID, followed by WAD, and finally a mix of GAD, WED, and a rights-based approach as discourses on and approaches to women/gender and development changed over the last three decades. The inclusion of men in PN 51's gender programming stems from their focus on household livelihoods and social relations. However even within a single project such as PN 51, one sees some components of successful CARE women-only activities. And today one continues to find separate CARE women-only savings and loan projects throughout Niger (e.g., in Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder, Tillaberi, Diffa, Dosso, Kollo, Say).

Women, Gender, and Human Rights in UNICEF-Niger

Since UNICEF was created in 1944, helping children and women has been central to its mandate. UNICEF opened its doors in Niger in 1976, although it only had a liaison in Niamey for the first five years and a resident administrator for the next four years. Finally in 1985, UNICEF installed its own Representative in Niger. Early programs in Niger in the latter half of the 1970s and the 1980s focused largely on nutrition and health, collaborating with the government through its period of the *Société de Développement*.

In the late-1980s, the Integrated Basic Services (SBI) started to become part of UNICEF-Niger's work. SBI incorporates activities in agriculture, environment, nutrition, health, animal husbandry, women's income generation, and education to improve the living conditions of the population. These SBI activities are overseen at the "village" level by village development committees (i.e., village development committee, village

women's cell, and village leadership⁶⁶ committee), coordinated by the then-*arrondissement* development council⁶⁷ (directed by the *sous-préfet*), and carried out by the *arrondissement* Technical Services in collaboration with the *Service du Plan*.⁶⁸ Technical Services are further divided into sectors (e.g., agriculture, education, adult literacy, environment, and so on). In Madarounfa, SBI was preceded by the UNICEF-Niger government collaborative *Programme Intégré de Maradi* (1995-2000), which was similar to SBI and was actually renamed SBI in 2000.

In addition to SBI, UNICEF has also advocated for legislation in Niger to improve the status of women—including the Family Code, CEDAW, and CRC—since it began its work up until today. It also invests in communication activities to educate the population on issues concerning children and women, such as collaborative high-profile events with the Association of Traditional Chiefs in Niger on polio vaccinations, girls' rights to education, and early marriage of girls (described in Chapter Six). The goal of the 2000-2004 Cooperative Program between the Niger Government and UNICEF is “to promote a development centered on the child and based on the practice of children's and women's rights.” It goes on to state:

The objectives of the program from now until 2004 are:

To contribute to the reduction of infant mortality by 15 percent, of child mortality by 20 percent and maternal mortality by 15 percent.

To contribute to the increase in the gross rate of school enrollment for girls from 23 to 35 percent.

To further children's and community's access to basic knowledge required for the full enjoyment of their rights. [UNICEF 2000a:8, my translation]

⁶⁶ *animation*

⁶⁷ Currently titled the *Comité technique du département*.

⁶⁸ Planning ministry at the *arrondissement* level, now called *Développement Communautaire*.

Like CARE, UNICEF-Niger also began to integrate gender (rather than women) into its work in the 1990s. Aishatou, who has worked for UNICEF-Niger since 1989, serves as the best institutional memory of this effort. In 1990, she was given a position to look after women's concerns; and in 1992, she recounts that the gender and empowerment approach and gender mainstreaming began to be integrated into UNICEF-Niger's work. In 1995, trainings on UNICEF's gender approach were done for employees of UNICEF, other UN agencies, certain NGOs, and the Ministry of Social Development, Population, Promotion of Women, and Child Protection in Niger. Other gender trainings have followed. However as of 2004, UNICEF had never had a training on gender for all of its employees and government partners in Niger. Somewhere between 1998 and 2000, a rights-based approach was also introduced in UNICEF-Niger around the time that the CEDAW was signed (1999).

Also in the late 1990s in response to the Beijing Conference, all ten UN agencies in Niger came together to form a gender thematic group to help with gender mainstreaming and harmonization of government support on gender. This group has met anywhere from four to fifteen times a year since 2000, but had no budget as of 2004. They produce a newsletter and collaborate on International Women's Day activities in Niger. Some of the gender focal point people from UN agencies that attend this group have a vast knowledge of gender issues, while others are fairly new to the idea.

In Niger, UNICEF is known as one of the most advanced UN agencies in terms of mainstreaming gender. Today, UNICEF claims that gender has been mainstreamed throughout the organization, and human rights—particularly the CEDAW and the CRC—is the framework through which it approaches development, with a special concern for

women and children (UNICEF 1999). In addition to the CEDAW and CRC, UN summits, conferences, and declarations (in particular the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals) that deal with women and children are all central to UNICEF's work.

Interestingly, not all UNICEF employees are able to recount this history that Aishatou lived. Often, I heard conflicting accounts about when a rights-based approach and gender were introduced from UNICEF-Niger employees who had not been at UNICEF for long. In fact, one administrator did not even think that UNICEF-Niger was doing gender in SBI activities, as I will describe in Chapter Six. However, Aishatou's history seems most consistent with written documentation. In contrast, all CARE employees I interviewed were able to give consistent dates for the introduction of gender, a rights-based approach, and other development approaches into CARE-Niger.

The part of UNICEF-Niger's work I focused on most intensely in my research is SBI activities in Tchikaji Gajéré. These are carried out by the Technical Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development in Madarounfa *Département*. Their work is overseen by a UNICEF administrator based in Maradi, who in 2004 was part of the UNICEF-Maradi office of three administrators and two program assistants (three men and two women).⁶⁹ The SBI activities UNICEF supported in Madarounfa *Département* between 2000-2004 are listed in Table 10.

⁶⁹ The Maradi office also has four drivers and a secretary. Normally there is also a *chef de bureau*, but one of the administrators held this position temporarily in 2004 while they waited for someone to be permanently appointed. One administrator is a woman, and one program assistant is a woman.

Table 10: UNICEF's Basic Integrated Services in Madarounfa *Département*, 2000-2004⁷⁰

ACTIVITY	NOTES
Vaccinations	BCG, Polio, DTCP3, measles, yellow fever, meningitis, vitamin A
Distribution of treated mosquito nets	For women and children; 5,000 given in 2004
Training health workers, midwives, and veterinarians	In aid recipient communities; among these, only the health workers include men
Assistance for schools	Includes school supplies and building separate latrines for girls
Training on girl's education	In 2002, for directors of schools or their assistants
Literacy program support	For men and women's classes (separate and mixed) and creation of libraries
Assistance obtaining shared community resources	Grinding mills, wells, etc.
Training village leaders/representatives	For radio clubs, village committees, etc.
Radio Club ⁷¹	Educational forums/discussions that can be taped and sent to play on national radio
Baby/child weighing	Trained residents of rural communities to do this on a regular basis
Public education on early marriage of girls	Films produced and shown
<i>Petit élevage</i>	Assisted women obtaining goats
Seeds and tree seedlings for women	Millet, vegetables, moringa, etc.; women also trained on applying pesticides
Assistance building latrines	Materials provided
Cash loans for women	For example, a group of 40 women in Tchikaji Gajéré was given an initial loan of 1,500,000 CFA total (about US\$2800 ⁷²), divided amongst them; groups who repay the loan and interest may qualify for additional loans.

As with CARE, some UNICEF activities are only for women (namely *petit élevage*, seeds and seedlings, and cash loans), although most also include men and/or children.

While at a UNICEF-sponsored training in Madarounfa for aid recipient community leaders, a participant asked me why UNICEF used to work mainly with women but has now started to incorporate more men into their work over the last five years. This observation corresponds with the integration of “gender” (rather than “women”) in

⁷⁰ Shading indicates the activity is only for women.

⁷¹ The Radio Club Association was started by the Nigerien government in 1962 as a means of educating the population and encouraging debate about development (UNICEF 1994:198).

⁷² Using the 2004 conversion rate.

UNICEF-Niger in the 1990s. Although gender concepts were officially integrated into UNICEF-Niger earlier than 1999, it seems to have taken this long for the changes to noticeably trickle down to aid recipients. Furthermore, as already stated, some women-only activities still remained even in 2004. Thus in UNICEF-Niger one also sees an evolution of WAC to GAD, although without completely doing away with WAC. WED is also evident in the agroforestry activities for women only. UNICEF is unique, however, in that it has always been an institution specifically for children and women. So integrating women into UNICEF was never an issue in the way it was with WID in other development organizations.

UNICEF in collaboration with the Nigerien government began work in Tchikaji Gajéré in 1996. Activities that Tchikaji Gajéré has participated in include cash loans for women, latrines, seeds for women, baby weighing, radio club, vaccinations, mosquito nets, literacy, and trainings such as for village committees, health workers, and midwives. How these are understood as well as some of the problems encountered in Tchikaji Gajéré are highlighted in Chapter Six.

Structural Adjustment in Niger and Adaptations of Development Organizations

CARE

In the context of the broader issues of SAPs, privatization, and decentralization in Niger, CARE has been experiencing its own structural changes from the 1990s up until the present. CARE-Niger's 1994 Long Range Strategic Plan called for it to decentralize and move away from working with government counterparts, which had been how most of its field work was carried out until that time. CARE-Niger staff had been increasingly dissatisfied over their inability to control and evaluate what government workers were

doing and account to donors (Sayo 2003:2). Thus from 1996 on, CARE-Niger stopped carrying out their work primarily through government Technical Service counterparts and instead hired and trained its own staff for practically all field work. So at the same time that gender, household livelihood security, and MARP were becoming key elements in program planning and implementation in CARE-Niger, the entire process of how work was being carried out on the field drastically changed. As government services, undergoing enormous downsizing under SAPs, failed to adequately perform, CARE-Niger largely privatized its services in order to attract more donors and maintain good relationships with them. This change gave CARE a tremendous ability to control staff training in gender, human rights, MARP, and household livelihood security from the mid-1990s to the present. However, CARE-Niger's shift also added to the state's problem of dwindling resources, since the government lost funding from CARE that it used to get through collaboration.

Today CARE-Niger is beginning to work with the government and other collaborators again, while still maintaining its field agents in most cases. However when collaborating, CARE-Niger is careful to partner with those who have some training in gender. For example, occasionally PN 51 contracts a specific task out to government workers or private groups with appropriate expertise (e.g., to teach an adult literacy class). And a few projects are beginning to move away from field agents, such as PN 67 in Maradi, Reinforcement of Local Capacities and Good Governance in Natural Resource Management. This project works through associations, NGO partners, and community members rather than CARE field agents with an emphasis on capacity building for decentralization. In addition to these types of project collaborations, CARE-Niger also

creates its strategic plan by consulting with representatives of several government ministries (e.g., prime minister's cabinet, Community Development, and Social Development),⁷³ and each CARE-Niger project has a ministry with which it maintains contact. Overall, however, field agents still play a critical role in most of CARE-Niger's work.

UNICEF

Unlike CARE, UNICEF-Niger has not privatized its services, but has persisted with the model of government collaboration in Niger. Approximately every three to four years, UNICEF and the Niger government negotiate a Country Cooperative Program document, which spells out what activities UNICEF will fund the government to do. These activities are largely conceptualized and carried out by the Technical Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development⁷⁴ at the *département*-level and are overseen and funded by UNICEF. UNICEF-Niger supervisors might visit each rural town where they have programs only once or twice a year, leaving *département*-level government employees to do most of the field work. However in the context of a heavily indebted and downsized state, government workers are not always well-trained in the latest development approaches or well-equipped with adequate resources, despite UNICEF's support. In fact, I found that in Madarounfa few government employees had ever had training in gender and human rights. Gender is not mainstreamed in the Nigerien government, and there is little discussion or even awareness of the CEDAW in Madarounfa amongst government workers. UNICEF-Niger was, however, starting to hold trainings on it in 2004. Additionally, many government employees have lost their

⁷³ The full name is Social Development, Population, Promotion of Women, and Protection of Children.

⁷⁴ Until recently, this ministry was known as Plan, and it is commonly still called this name.

jobs due to government downsizing through SAPs, and a number of the most competent and experienced government employees have left their positions voluntarily to find jobs in the private development sector, where pay is often better.

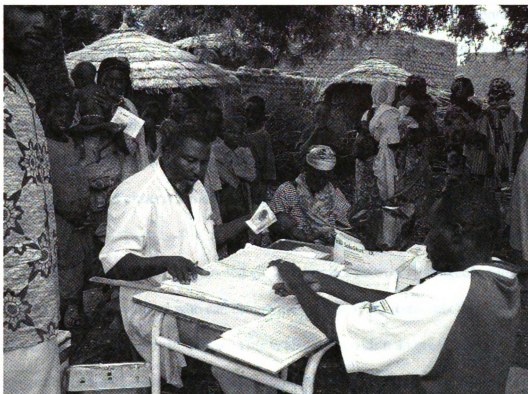


Figure 9: UNICEF-sponsored Vaccinations Carried out by Government Employees in a Town in Madarounfa Département.

As UNICEF-Niger has persisted with state collaboration, its emphasis on gender and human rights has not successfully trickled down to most government employees carrying out their work. Now also confronted with decentralization in Niger, which emphasizes responsibility and governance at the municipal level, UNICEF-Niger will find additional challenges trying to work with new government structures in rural areas that have very minimal resources. On the other hand, the Niger government is deeply dependent on UNICEF's resources to provide basic services to the population. If UNICEF were to cease collaboration, it would be devastating for the state.

Organizational Structures and Cultures

Even though CARE and UNICEF in Niger place gender and human rights as central to their work and are engaged in many similar development activities, their different structures and approaches to carrying out development work in the context of state downsizing and privatization have contributed to unique organizational cultures. I have identified three main distinctions in CARE and UNICEF's organizational cultures, which can be linked to the larger structural differences. These are in terms of how each organization 1) understands knowledge and research, 2) facilitates communication and dialogue, and 3) takes either a top-down or a bottom-up approach to development.

CARE

CARE-Niger's ability to train and closely monitor its own field agents allows for the development of personnel who can bridge the worlds of aid recipients and transnational development institutions. This is also done within an organization that recognizes different kinds of knowledge and voices as legitimate, and thus facilitates dialogue between donors, CARE employees, and aid recipients. In my research, I found intriguing discussions of what rights and gender mean in Nigerien contexts where CARE is working, which I describe at length in Chapter Six. PN 51 team members regularly sat down with one another to discuss gender, empowerment, and human rights—how to express these ideas in culturally appropriate ways as well as operationalize and measure gender empowerment in the communities where they work. They were also regularly joined by aid recipients, consultants, and/or donors for trainings and workshops. Participants in CARE workshops and trainings feel free to speak, and their responses are

normally listed on the board for the whole group to reflect on.⁷⁵ CARE-Niger field agents are culturally knowledgeable through their daily interactions with aid recipient communities. The MARP and household livelihoods security approaches that CARE-Niger integrated into its work in the 1990s are tools they use to understand and respect knowledge and livelihood patterns in aid recipient communities. Yet field agents are also competent in current development discourses and approaches due to their frequent trainings and workshops.

CARE-Niger has a spirit of learning about it. Its employees overall are encouraged to see themselves as communicators and facilitators, rather than experts (Sayo 2003:21). Especially in PN 51, the work CARE does is seen as largely of a research nature. Field agents do data collection on a regular basis, and CARE welcomes consultants or students to help them understand cultural contexts where it works through research projects. This, in some cases, results in aid recipients who feel bombarded with questionnaires and discussions, rather than getting desired material goods. However, those who stick with CARE through this process, can see positive results in their lives. CARE's bottom-up approach to development in Niger has earned it respect from many aid recipient communities.

Privatization of CARE-Niger's work and the subsequent training of its own employees have undeniably been key in developing this kind of organizational culture over the past decade. Autonomy and money given by donors to CARE-Niger to shape its own country and regional programs, and good communication between donors and CARE-Niger also greatly contribute to this organizational culture that encourages dialogue and recognizes the value of different sources of knowledge concerning gender,

⁷⁵ This is even done if most of the group is illiterate.

human rights, and other topics. Also, more direct accountability to donors and the creation of a culture of research and learning has caused CARE-Niger to be self-critical and open to constructive criticism from outsiders about how to improve its programs.

UNICEF

UNICEF's organizational culture contrasts with CARE's, which values dialogue between a variety of knowledge sources, a research orientation, and a bottom-up approach to development. In sum, UNICEF's organizational culture in Niger is considerably more hierarchal and top-down. I had a good deal of difficulty getting people in UNICEF-Niger to speak to me about their work on several occasions because they did not know what they were allowed to tell me or were afraid that they did not know the "right" answer to a question. UNICEF's claim to have mainstreamed gender and base its work on rights appeared at times to be a façade, as only select people could speak at length about these subjects in the organization. In general, most UNICEF-Niger employees did not know how to respond to a researcher such as myself.⁷⁶

In contrast to the open dialogues at CARE workshops and trainings, UNICEF's 2004 training for village leaders in the Madarounfa area on integrated community development had a different feel to it. The instructors, who were mostly government civil servants, did solicit answers to various questions from the participants. However, they continually referred back to what the "right" answers were in the teaching curriculum they used. These were the answers that were written on the board or deemed correct in the teaching sessions. I later asked one of the instructors who the author of the curriculum is, but he did not know. This anonymity is consistent with most UNICEF

⁷⁶ This is not true of most government employees collaborating with UNICEF who I met. They generally took an interest in my work, discussing development concepts, and research in general.

materials I collected in which no author's name is listed. By contrast, CARE more frequently lists the author(s) of a study, report, or training manual. This is very revealing as to how each organization tends to see knowledge in either plural or singular terms, and the source and creation of knowledge as either situated or not.

For the first few months of field research I felt sure I was missing something because although UNICEF documents frequently mentioned gender and rights, I could not find vibrant dialogues on these topics and what they mean in Niger amongst UNICEF-Niger employees. However as time went on, I became increasingly convinced that there simply are not many such dialogues that take place. A significant gap exists between the world of elite UNICEF-Niger employees (well-paid, well-educated, and based in large cities) and the rural aid recipients of UNICEF's SBI interventions. Those UNICEF-Niger employees who could talk about gender and human rights often drew on UN or other transnational development discourses on these topics rather than on Nigerien conceptions of gender and rights. I return to this point in Chapter Six.

The diffuse structure of UNICEF-Niger contributes significantly to its struggle to integrate a rights-based approach and mainstream gender into its organization. This structure has led UNICEF-Niger employees to spend little time investigating aid recipient daily life and rely on a top-down orientation. Using government employees to carry out UNICEF's work in an age of privatization when the state has few resources for training or hiring top employees in the country compounds the problem. There are no strong bridges in UNICEF-Niger between transnational development discourses and discourses of aid recipient communities as there are in CARE. On top of this, the Nigerien government, as described in Chapter Three, has its own heritage of top-down

development. These factors in combination are a recipe for hierarchical management that does little to encourage dialogue and learning about cultures and knowledge in aid recipient communities.

Blurring the Lines Between State and Non-state Actors

I categorize CARE and UNICEF as transnational aid organizations, although (as described in Chapter One) CARE is an NGO and UNICEF is an IGO. In other words, neither organization is the foreign aid arm of a specific nation-state, but rather an independent entity that reaches into and across multiple countries and has affiliations with a conglomeration of organizations and states. While, as I have spelled out above, CARE and UNICEF contrast in the ways they interface with the Nigerien state in terms of their work in rural communities, there are additional relationships that each organization has with particular states as donors and with the politics of the Nigerien state. These complex relationships blur the lines between state and non-state actors in development work.

Donors

First, Figure 10 lists UNICEF-Niger and CARE-Niger donors between 2000-20004.

<u>UNICEF-NIGER DONORS</u>	<u>CARE-NIGER DONORS</u>
<i>Association Mondiale des Amis de l'Enfance</i>	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i>
Australian Committee for UNICEF	Canadian Embassy
Belgian Committee for UNICEF	CARE Denmark
Belgium	CARE France
Canadian International Development Agency	CARE Norway
Center for Disease Control and Prevention	CARE UK
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	CARE USA
Finnish Committee for UNICEF	Danish International Development Agency
France	Dept. for International Development, UK
French Committee for UNICEF	European Union
German Committee for UNICEF	Food Industry Crusade Against Hunger
International Development Research Center	Fokus
Italian Committee for UNICEF	Journey Foundation
Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF	Mary Bauer
Netherlands	Norwegian Agency for Development
Norway	Pierls Foundation
Regular Resources from UNICEF	US Agency for International Development
Rotary International	World Bank
Slovenia National Committee	
Spanish Committee for UNICEF	
Swedish Committee for UNICEF	
Swiss Committee for UNICEF	
UK Committee for UNICEF	
UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	
US Fund for UNICEF	
Belgium Survival Funds	
Diner's Club International (Italy)	
Germany	

Figure 10: UNICEF AND CARE Donors, 2000-2004

Clearly a complex web of sources contributes to both CARE and UNICEF's work in Niger, drawing on the private sector, governments, and intergovernmental organizations. All of UNICEF's donors are considered "other resources" apart from the listing "regular resources." "Other resources" are specified for a certain type of work in UNICEF's country program designated by the donor, for example nutrition or vaccinations. Regular resources are provided centrally by UNICEF and fund UNICEF Executive Board approved country programs, program support, administration, and management. Beigbeder reports that in 1998 UNICEF as a whole received 62% of its funding from

governments and IGOs, 33% from non-governmental sources, and 5% from other sources (2001:56-7). And UNICEF committees in specific countries⁷⁷ raise funds from a variety of sources including corporations and selling gifts and cards. CARE donors normally fund one or more specific projects. For example, CARE-Norway funded PN 51, while DANIDA⁷⁸ funds a women's credit and savings project. To make the matter even more complex, seemingly private sector donors may receive their funding from governments. For example, CARE-Norway receives funding from NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, part of the Norwegian government). Seeing this landscape of donors who are influencing policies and programs in CARE and UNICEF, nation-states, the private sector, and IGOs all play important roles in transnational aid. When talking about CARE and UNICEF up until now, I have suggested CARE invokes a private model in terms of project intervention in Niger while UNICEF collaborates with the state. While this is true, it seems inappropriate to simply classify CARE as a private NGO and UNICEF as an IGO and part of the UN as the networks CARE and UNICEF are a part of are much more complex. Unpacking the networks of these transnational aid organizations clearly provides an example of the situated, historical nature of what are often perceived to be "global" institutions.

Weighing in on National Politics

Regardless of UNICEF and CARE's contrasting relationships with the Nigerien state in delivering aid, both are involved in influencing national politics to better include women and women's issues, although in different ways. CARE-Niger has been a leader in developing a coalition of NGOs and women's associations in Niger called

⁷⁷ There are 37 such committees worldwide. In 2005, they raised 37% of all UNICEF income. See <http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/2005/together/comlist.html>.

⁷⁸ Danish International Development Agency

CONGAFEN.⁷⁹ This coalition includes over 30 groups as members. CARE-Niger has also been a leader in developing a training manual on women's leadership, published in 2003 with eleven partners including NGOs, government units, and CONGAFEN (Figure 11). This timely effort preceded the elections for and implementation of *communes* by about a year as part of the decentralization process. It also capitalized on the 2000 Quota Law requiring a minimum of 10% of elected positions be held by women and 10% by men. This manual was used to train women throughout Niger on the decentralization process, their capacity to be leaders in politics and in their homes, citizens' rights in Niger, and strategies for mobilizing people and resolving conflicts.

- The Ministry of Social Development, Population, Promotion of Women, and Protection of Children (MDS/P/PF/PE)
- The High Commission for Administrative Reform and Decentralization (HCRAD)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Niger Gender Initiative Project (IGN)
- The Netherlands Development Organization (SNV)
- National Democratic Institute (NDI)
- Nigerien Association for the Defense of Human Rights (ANDDH)
- Niger Gender and Creativity Network (REGECA)
- Centre Afrika Obota (CAO)
- CONGAFEN
- Collective of Women's NGOs "Kassai"
- Democracy 2000

Figure 11: Collaborators with CARE-Niger on the Women's Leadership Training Manual

While CARE-Niger's engagement with national politics is primarily concerned with educating civil society (especially women) to participate in government, UNICEF-Niger takes a more active role in pushing for new legislation that is pro-women and children. UNICEF has been working diligently to harmonize Nigerien laws with the

⁷⁹ CONGAFEN stands for *la Coordination Non-Gouvernementale et Associations Féminines Nigériennes*.

CRC and CEDAW. For example, UNICEF helped get a law passed in 2003 criminalizing female genital mutilation. A Child Protection Code to “eliminate sexual and economic exploitation of children, fight harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation, and protect orphans and vulnerable children, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS” was also on UNICEF-Niger’s agenda in 2004 (UNICEF 2004:5). Furthermore, UNICEF-Niger has made an effort to line up its work with national priorities laid out in the Niger Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, specifically “to improve food security, universal access to basic services, good governance, and more equitable growth” (UNICEF 2004:3). In this way, UNICEF-Niger has positioned itself as both a powerful ally and agitator of the Nigerien state. CARE-Niger on the other hand takes a role that reinforces already existing legislation (rather than pushes for new legislation) on women, rights, and decentralization by educating the public.

Democratization, Participatory Development, and Contrasting Models

What does all this mean in terms of public participation and democratization? What roles do UNICEF and CARE play in this process? On the one hand, UNICEF-Niger is directly supporting a (currently⁸⁰) democratic government through its aid for government social services while also pushing for human rights-oriented legislation for women and children. CARE-Niger has less involvement with the state, but encourages the democratic process through educating men and women on how to run for office, how to vote, and what rights a citizen has. Furthermore both CARE and UNICEF expect participation from aid recipients, providing them with a venue for their voices to be heard. In particular, these organizations make an effort to include the voices of women,

⁸⁰ The state UNICEF and CARE have aided has not always been democratically elected.

who may not participate otherwise, in discussions and decisions made. However, UNICEF aid recipients are voicing their concerns directly to the government, while CARE-Niger aid recipients are speaking to a non-governmental organization who is at best an intermediary to the government.

In sum, CARE-Niger takes an encouraging and supporting role towards the state. This reflects CARE-International's mission statement and orientation to "serve" (Figure 2). UNICEF, by contrast, is "mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential" (Figure 3). This includes mobilizing politically, promoting equal rights of women and girls, and upholding UN conventions, charters, and the like. Therefore in addition to CARE and UNICEF's different organizational structures, these contrasting missions also help to explain why UNICEF-Niger has tended to take a top-down approach whereas CARE-Niger tends toward a bottom-up approach. Both organizations have strengths and weaknesses by embracing their respective orientations. CARE-Niger is strong in field work; they have a good understanding of knowledge and cultures in aid recipient communities. UNICEF-Niger is strong in influencing higher levels of government; their work with legislation as well as with "traditional chiefs" has moved Niger further towards honoring human rights, as spelled out by the UN. Both types of work often reinforce one another. For example, CARE-Niger educates the public on legislation that UNICEF-Niger helps pass.

Conclusion

Although both CARE and UNICEF have mainstreamed gender, base their work on human rights, draw on a wide constituency of donors, and do similar activities in aid

recipient communities, each has reformulated and translated ideas about gender and rights-based development uniquely according to its organizational structure and culture. CARE-Niger serves as a relatively successful example of privatization of development services in the context of SAPs. It has cultivated an organization where employees are knowledgeable about and dialogue on gender, human rights, and other contemporary development approaches as well as knowledge and cultures of aid recipient communities. However, its strategy does not solve the larger problem of a state that is heavily indebted and unable to adequately serve its citizens. Furthermore, CARE's mission is to serve, which leads them to take a supportive and educational role in national politics rather than be a strong lobby for change. UNICEF-Niger, on the other hand, helps to prop up the Nigerien state in order to provide some basic services; however, the trainings and dialogues that take place around gender and rights in this collaboration are diffuse and inadequate. Furthermore, UNICEF-Niger tends to take a top-down approach, concerned about following mandates, speaking with a single voice, and giving the "right" answers. In terms of influencing national politics, UNICEF is mandated to play the role as agitator for reform on behalf of women and children.

The ways that CARE-Niger and UNICEF-Niger as organizations reformulate and translate gender and rights-based development approaches are largely a matter of structure. In other words, their agency to choose and implement strategies for gender and rights-based work is limited by the structures in their respective organizations and in the country of Niger. First, the structural adjustment of the state is a critical backdrop to understanding strategies for development that CARE and UNICEF have chosen as well as the extreme poverty that beckons transnational aid interventions in Niger. As

discussed in Chapter Three, these material conditions affect the kinds of reordering of gender roles and relationships that is occurring in Niger as well as understandings of rights. However, the structures of CARE and UNICEF also create another level of reformulations of gender and rights within this larger context. In CARE, multiple sources of knowledge, research, dialogue, and a bottom-up approach to development and women's empowerment are embraced. UNICEF, however, takes a more top-down orientation to its work, seeing knowledge in more singular terms and seeking to align Nigerien law with UN conventions and mandates.

Examining the networks and histories of UNICEF and CARE in Niger certainly complicates any attempt to use the labels “local” or “global.” Donors—who include the private sector, governments, and IGOs—often have particular interests that translate into projects or programs that they fund in Niger. Some donor organizations are strongly influenced by civil society in Western countries while others represent more elite interests. Nevertheless all of them are situated in particular places and histories, while also connected to other particular groups and places in the world. Furthermore, examining some of the histories of gender and rights in CARE- and UNICEF-Niger, we have seen examples of how such connections play out in specific Nigerien sites. A richer picture of the complex networks of power and influence emerges in an analysis that resists dualistic and often homogenizing categorizations of global and local. We begin to see some of the diverse ways in which ideas about gender and rights get reformulated and translated in different organizations in a particular country.

This chapter provides the first part of the backdrop for examining in Chapter Six how CARE and UNICEF employees, volunteers, and rural aid recipients translate,

reformulate and at times reject gender and rights-based development ideas and interventions. The second essential piece to understand is the context in which CARE and UNICEF are working in the Maradi *Région* and Madarounfa *Département*. This is the subject of Chapter Five, which focuses on a rural town where CARE intervenes (Garin Jakka) and another where UNICEF intervenes (Tchikaji Gajeré).

Chapter Five
Gender, Rights, Power, and Social Change in Two Rural Towns near ‘dan Issa:
A Closer Look at CARE and UNICEF’s Intervention Sites

Hausa Riddle: What has its trunk in the home, but its shade is outside? (Ice gida, inuwarsa waje?)

Answer: A girl (Yarinya)

KBH: Has there been a change between the past and the present in terms of women’s work and men’s work?⁸¹

Woman in Garin Jakka: The past and the present are not the same since back then a woman farmed. If she worked four days in her husband’s field, she would then work three days in her field.⁸²

In order to move into a discussion of how gender and human rights programs and policies of CARE and UNICEF are understood and translated, rejected or reformulated by Nigerien employees, volunteers and rural aid recipients, it is first essential to understand the social context in which these organizations are working. In addition to broader changes in Nigerien women’s status discussed in Chapter Three, other factors are also at play in Garin Jakka, Tchikaji Gajeré, and the Maradi *Région* that are dramatically affecting gender relations and identities, household economies, and women’s access to educational, political, religious and economic resources. This chapter examines these issues first in a historical perspective and then today, situating Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré in the larger politics and social relations of the region, which CARE and UNICEF employees are a part of.

Life in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré as well as the surrounding Maradi *Région* has long been hierarchical and patriarchal in structure. Concerning gender for example,

⁸¹ *Akwai canji tsakanin mutanen dâ da yanzu wajen aikin mace da aikin namiji?*

⁸² *Na dâ da na yanzu, ba daya ba ne, tun da lokacin nan mace tana noma. In ta yi kwana hudu gonar namiji, kana yi kuma sai ta yi kwana uku gonarta tana yi.*

marriage dislodges women from their birth home, so that other families benefit from their labor (represented in the riddle above). And wives have long been socially expected to obey their husbands. However, how hierarchies are constructed and play out in these communities has changed over time as different models of patriarchy co-exist, compete, and reconfigure. Certain aspects of social and work roles of men and women are considerably different today than in the past as women in many parts of the Maradi *Région* have largely moved out of agricultural work and become secluded in their homes, limiting their access to resources. In addition to gender, age, class, kin group and education are also linked to power and status within these communities and the region. I examine the importance of these identities today and how they have changed over time. By the end of the chapter, the material and ideological factors in changing gender roles will appear intimately intertwined as people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré adapt to a changing social, political, and material reality.

The Maradi *Région*

The Maradi *Région* of Niger is a part of two distinct, yet overlapping histories of tremendous consequence in the present. First, it is a part of Hausaland, which refers to the predominantly Hausa-speaking area of northern Nigeria and south-central Niger. Prior to European colonization, Hausaland consisted of the Sokoto Caliphate that united most of what is now northern Nigeria and a collection of kingdoms that resisted dominance by the caliphate, including Maradi. Britain and France divided Hausaland to each take a portion for its colony. Maradi and the rest of the most northern part of Hausaland, which was outside of the caliphate, became part of Niger and the southern part of Hausaland, mainly the Sokoto Caliphate, became part of Nigeria. This history has

important implications for the status of women and cultural ties between the Maradi *Région* and northern Nigeria, which I discuss further below.

In the colonial period, the Maradi *Région* was marginalized politically and economically compared to Zerma speaking areas in the west of the country. This pattern continued after independence as Zerma elites largely controlled the government. Although Hausa-speakers have in general gained greater representation in Niger's government since 1991, the Maradi *Région* has lagged behind other regions of the country in a number of quality of life indicators. For example, life expectancy reported for Maradi in 1998 was 44 to 45 years, while in Niamey it was 55 to 56 years and in Agadez it was 58 to 59 (Magagi 2002:20).⁸³ UNICEF's 2000 SBI study reports that the Maradi *Région*⁸⁴ had a child-infant mortality rate of 306/1000 in 1995, compared with 280/1000 for Niger overall (UNICEF 2000:24).

Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré

Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré lie about 35 kilometers south of the town of Maradi and ten kilometers north of the Nigerian border (Figure 5). Garin Jakka sits less than two kilometers west of 'dan Issa and has 45 households.⁸⁵ Tchikaji Gajeré is about five kilometers northeast of 'dan Issa and is a considerably larger town with 130 households. Both towns claim to be 100% Muslim. All residents use Hausa as the lingua franca, and for most, it is their first and only language used. The founders of Tchikaji Gajeré came from somewhere east of Kano, Nigeria, and Garin Jakka founders came from a neighboring Nigerien town called Kourin Koura. Residents of Tchikaji Gajeré

⁸³ These numbers refer to the regions (or in the case of Niamey, capital district) and not the towns of Maradi, Niamey, and Agadez.

⁸⁴ It was then called Maradi *Département*.

⁸⁵ I differentiate households in terms of those members of a family who normally eat together.

and Garin Jakka live in the Katsina kingdom based in Maradi, so many identify as *Katsinawa*, although some claim another origin (e.g., *Zanfarawa*, *Gobirawa*) Such identifications are often re-enforced with facial scarification patterns that represent place of origin.

The economy is closely tied to Nigeria in these towns close to the border. Naira (the Nigerian currency) are more commonly used in Garin Jakka, Tchikaji Gajéré, and 'dan Issa than CFA (the Nigerien currency). In nearby Maradi, however, naira are scarcely used. The nearest biomedical health services and market for Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré are in 'dan Issa. The nearest hospitals are in Danja (a mission-run leprosarium about 15 kilometers north of 'dan Issa) and Maradi (a government hospital). In 2004 during my field work, no development projects besides CARE or UNICEF were active in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré.

Data used in this chapter are mainly from the 84 random sample interviews with men and women in these two towns as well as participant observation in daily life. I conducted all research in these communities in Hausa.

A Brief History of Women's Status in the Maradi Region

Gendered Agricultural Divisions of Labor

A generation ago, most men and women around 'dan Issa were engaged in agriculture as their primary means of subsistence. Historically in the Maradi region, researchers (Boubacar 2000; B. Cooper 1997; Doka 2000; Raynaut 1976) have noted that households often operated according to a *gandu/gamana* system of farming. In this system, a household consists of a senior male as the head, his wife(s), his unmarried daughters, his sons, their wives, and their children. Women who marry into the

household and junior men in the household are given usufruct rights to *gamana* fields by the head of household, which they farm three days of the week. The harvest from these fields belongs to these individuals, and is their main source of sustenance during the dry season. The *gandu* field, however, is worked on four days a week collectively by the men and women in the household. The land and harvest from the *gandu* is owned and controlled by the senior male head of household and feeds the household during the rainy season. There were likely variants of this arrangement in different households, but this *gandu/gamana* system of farming seems to have been common historically according to residents of and the literature on the region. Table 11 contains data from a town about five kilometers south of Maradi, Sumarana, collected by Claude Raynaut and published in 1976. These data serve as one example of the predominance of *gamana* plots as women's main source of agricultural land earlier in history. *Gamana* plots still exist in some households today, as described further below, although the *gandu/gamana* system of agriculture has largely broken down.

Table 11: Origins of Women's Plots in a Sample of 185 Farms at Sumarana (from Raynaut 1976)

	Inherited	Bought	Pawned	Gift	Borrowed	Gamana	Total
Number of plots	109	1	4	1	3	398	516
Percent	21.12%	0.20%	0.77%	0.20%	0.58%	77.13%	100%

Property Law and Inheritance

Land ownership and inheritance in Niger have undergone significant changes as Islamic inheritance patterns have become more widespread and the government has shifted its policies over time. During the colonial period and into the postcolonial period,

Maliki law⁸⁶ was enforced regarding family matters such as inheritance (B. Cooper 1998:32). Boubacar (2000) explains that there is a significant difference between how customary (pre-Islamic) and Islamic inheritance patterns operate in the Maradi *Région*. Customary land rights are patrilineal, excluding women and junior males from inheritance. With the introduction of Islamic inheritance patterns in the area, women and junior males began to inherit property. Normally according to Islamic law, property is passed down from parent to children, daughters receiving 1/3 and sons receiving 2/3. This is widely accepted in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. Islamic law also recognizes inheritance rights for a spouse (male or female) and parent whose child has died, although this is not often known in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré.

A second important change in the Maradi region started to occur as junior males began to inherit their own property. As a result of this, large extended family households began to break down into smaller family units. Part of the reason for the breakdown of the *gandu* was also related to colonial taxation. Household heads in the colonial period had to pay tax on their wives and male children in their household. To relieve heads of households of heavy tax burdens, extended family landholdings began to be broken up into smaller units (B. Cooper 1997:46).

Also, a series of government policies in the early independence period of Niger further contributed towards the individualization of property. The newly independent government tried to undermine the authority of “chiefs” in the land tenure system in favor of land users’ rights, although with little success (Boubacar 2000; Lund 1998:86-7). Since 1986, the Niger government has been devising the Rural Code, a reform in the land

⁸⁶ In Niger, as in most of West Africa, the Maliki school of Islamic law is used for family matters amongst Muslims.

tenure system that allows private land titles to be claimed through customary rights (Boubacar 2000:39-40; Gado 2002; Lund 1998). Unlike policies in the early independence period, the Rural Code has strengthened the authority of customary rulers to control and manage land (Gado 2002:168-9). Scholars who have written on this topic, however, do not deal explicitly with what this reform means for women and their land rights. One can speculate that there is potential for men to once again define “custom”—as scholars such as Chanock (1998) have demonstrated with customary law during the colonial period—to their benefit in order to make land right claims over women. This remains an important topic for future research. Regardless of the reinvigoration of customary authorities, however, the trend toward individualized property continues up until today (Doka 2000:8).

The idea of equal inheritance does not sit well with the Nigerien public. For example as mentioned in Chapter Three, one of the reservations the Niger government has with the CEDAW concerns equal inheritance for men and women. The reservation reads:

The government of Niger Republic issues reservations concerning paragraphs d and f of Article 2 relative to taking appropriate measures to repeal all customs and practices that constitute discrimination towards women, particularly with regard to inheritance. [République du Niger 1999, my translation]

This reservation reflects the different treatment of men and women in inheritance under customary law. As noted in Chapter Three, many Nigeriens object to the idea of equal inheritance in the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa as well.

As far as land rights in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, however, residents infrequently use formal government legal channels. Inheritance, ownership, and settling

property disputes are commonly overseen by kin or other community members without paper documentation.⁸⁷ If they cannot settle their disputes in this way, usually customary authorities (described further below) are called on.

Today, people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré practice a mix of inheritance systems. For example, one male informant in Tchikaji Gajeré explained he will only give his land as an inheritance to his sons, not daughters. Another male resident of Tchikaji Gajeré told me that he did not receive his inheritance because his older brothers took it from him. However, most people agree that sons and daughters should inherit according to Islamic inheritance patterns. I return to this topic further below.

Women as Leaders in Hausaland

Some women in Hausaland—what is now northern Nigeria and south-central Niger— have historically held politico-religious positions of power. In particular, women have important leadership roles in the pre-Islamic *bori* religion (B. Cooper 1997: xxxiv; Dunbar 1991:76, 2000:406; Masquelier 2001). *Bori* was harshly criticized by Shehu Usman ‘dan Fodio and his followers after the early 19th century jihads and establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in what is now considered northern Nigeria (B. Cooper 1998:28). Its subsequent marginalization and the growth of reformist⁸⁸ Islam within the Sokoto Caliphate led to the decline of women’s religious and political positions of power (Callaway 1987:14; Callaway and Creevey 1994:14; Mack 1991). However, the institution and leadership positions of *bori* have been maintained to a large

⁸⁷ A few individuals have begun to write out land transactions on pieces of paper, however.

⁸⁸ I am using the term “reformist” here to describe the variation of Islam used by ‘dan Fodio and his followers—to be differentiated from many other types of Islamic belief and practice in the region that were often more tolerant and syncretic.

extent in regions of Hausaland outside of the Caliphate like Maradi and Gobir (a neighboring kingdom to Maradi/Katsina).

The people of Maradi, after some time of negotiation with the former king of Katsina who had been driven from power by the jihads, eventually accepted him to come be their king. Thus, this region became a mix of animists of the Maradi valley and some Katsinawa from Katsina who were both animists and Muslims (Meunier 1997:128). Additionally, descendents of sovereigns of Kano and Gobir also took refuge there (Grégoire 1992:32). Triaud (1981:12) and Masquelier (2001) note that Islam was not widely practiced in the region that would become Niger during the 19th and the first part of the 20th centuries. However, a tolerant form of Islam was practiced side by side to some extent within this politico-religious state structure in the Maradi region (B. Cooper 1998:29).

Modeled on the state of Katsina (Grégoire 1992:32), Maradi maintained many of the positions that had been historically reserved for women in the Hausa states. Grégoire notes that during the rule of King (*sarki*) Dan Baskore (1851-1873), several women leaders were among the royalty (*sarauta*) (1992:33). Barbara Cooper's work notes several leadership positions for women that have been retained in some form in Maradi up until the present. Among them are the *Iya* (senior woman of the aristocratic class who arbitrates between women in the *sarauta* class and *bori* in various capacities), *Jekadiya* (intermediary between the *sarki* and his wives, hostess, and "eyes and ears of the *sarki*"), and *Magajiya* (the woman in charge of courtesans or *karuwai*⁸⁹) (B. Cooper 1997:25, 67).

⁸⁹ *Karuwai* are previously married women who are now single and usually live together. They are courted by men and earn their keep through sexual favors (B. Cooper 1997:173). Djibo notes that Zerma regions of Niger have a similar institution (2001:104).

Nicolas' account of the Gobir kingdom also includes the *Inna*, assistant to the *sarki* and grand *bori* priestess, comparable to the *Iya* of Maradi/Katsina (1969:208).

Although women's historical leadership positions in Hausa state structures continued in Maradi during the 19th century, French colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries contributed to their decline. The French pushed women out of Nigerien politics in two main ways. First, they did not recognize the joint political and religious authority of the Hausa state structure, especially in Maradi and Gobir where it had remained much intact (Masquelier 2001:188). Triaud suggests that this reflects France's own concerns at home over separation of church and state at the time (2000:170). Therefore, the politico-religious positions women had once held in Hausaland were sidelined as "religious" rather than "political."⁹⁰ In the Maradi *Région*, however, women did hold on to some of their traditional positions, like the *Iya*, although with a weakened status. Secondly, women were not included in French education and therefore could not enter into the new colonial government positions described further below (Alidou 2005:69-70; B. Cooper 1998:33). It is important to note, however, women leaders such as the *Iya* are elite women. Sources that speak to common women's status in the Maradi region during the pre-colonial and colonial periods are difficult to find. Indeed, we know that slavery was practiced (B. Cooper 1994), so women's positions in society varied widely.

The Rise of Wife Seclusion

Since about 20-27 years ago, wife seclusion has become the norm in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré, drastically changing the positionality of women in economic,

⁹⁰ Even in Zinder, Muslim teachers who played a role in governance were sidelined, although these were men in this case (Glew 1997:66).

political, and religious roles in these towns and other parts of the Maradi *Région*.

Seclusion, also commonly called *purdah*, is a set of values and practices that restrict women's movements and behaviors so that they are kept separate from men. This usually means confining women to the home, although veiling can be considered a sort of portable seclusion (Masquelier 1999:239; Papanek 1973:295), and segregation of men and women in public spaces and in the home may also be considered a part of seclusion. To understand how this transformation took place, we must step back and look more carefully at the history of Hausaland over the last five centuries.

In Hausaland, seclusion is first noted by historians as emerging around the latter half of the 15th century as a practice adopted by elites in Kano (Callaway and Creevey 1994:12; Mack 1991:113). It remained an elite practice until the time of 'dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate when a strong public discourse emerged that disapproved of women holding public office and promoted modest female dress and behavior that was protected from the gaze of men. More and more women ceased to work in agriculture and became secluded in their homes during this time as Muslim women's status came to be associated with seclusion and veiling (B. Cooper 1998:24). Seclusion, however, was not only a marker of religious but also class identity. As women moved out of agriculture, farm work became more and more reliant on and associated with slave labor (B. Cooper 1998:24). Barbara Cooper suggests that when slavery was later abolished during the colonial period, some freed women may have chosen seclusion as a way of marking their free status (1994:73, 1998:24). Researchers doing fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s (Hill 1972; M. Smith 1954) acknowledge that wife seclusion was commonly practiced in rural and urban areas of northern Nigeria. In Barbara Callaway's 1987 book *Muslim Hausa*

Women in Nigeria, she notes that nearly all women—rural and urban—of childbearing age in Kano State of northern Nigeria are secluded (59).

In other parts of Hausaland, however, seclusion was not practiced until more recently. In particular, people in the Maradi region of Niger were not interested in certain Islamic practices of the caliphate such as seclusion of women (B. Cooper 1994:64) until economic and cultural ties were renewed in the late colonial period through an emerging group of Muslim businessmen, the *Alhazai*,⁹¹ who flourished in Maradi largely through close ties with European trading houses and the shifting trade routes south toward Atlantic ports rather than north across the Sahara (B. Cooper 1997; Grégoire 1992; Grégoire and Schmitz 2000). Their Islamic identity helped to facilitate the growth of Islam in central Niger, and eventually the adoption of certain Nigerian Islamic practices such as wife seclusion (B. Cooper 1997; Grégoire 1992, 1993). Wife seclusion also fit well with patriarchal French notions of female domesticity and male provision that were promoted in the colonial period (B. Cooper 1997:110-122). Women in rural areas around Maradi, however, continued to be active in farming and move about relatively freely in public in the late colonial and early independence years. People in these communities were often Muslim, but of a different sort that blended other religious beliefs and practices and did not seclude or veil women.

Seclusion remained a phenomenon for urban elites in the town of Maradi until devastating drought struck the Maradi *Région* (along with the rest of the Sahel) in 1968-1974 and 1982-1984. One of the consequences of the drought was that people in the Maradi *Région* increasingly migrated elsewhere looking for work, a pattern that has

⁹¹ *Alhazai* is used as a term that denotes both a certain social and economic stature in one's community as well as someone who has made the hajj. I use it here as Maradi historians such as Emmanuel Grégoire (1992) and Barbara Cooper (1997) have to talk specifically about a merchant class of men in Maradi.

continued during the dry season even after the droughts ended (Grégoire 1992:17-19; Tiffen 2001:16). Economic hardships described in Chapter Three since the 1980s, scarce land, and poor crop yields due to low and inconsistent rainfall, poor soil quality, and pests have continued to drive labor migration. Most of these migrants are men who head either to the town of Maradi or south to Nigeria for weeks or months at a time. The migration of rural male farmers to northern Nigeria and Maradi often combines work and religious studies. In these places, migrants have seen and heard about wife seclusion first hand, a practice closely tied in this region to proper Muslim behavior, prosperity, and salvation. This period of increased migration since the droughts corresponds with accounts from Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré of the time wife seclusion began.

The first members of both towns to seclude their wives are Islamic teachers (titled *malamai* in Hausa). In Tchikaji Gajeré, I interviewed one of the first three men to seclude their wives as well as his senior wife. Both still live in town. They began to practice seclusion about 27 years ago. The husband, who has studied under various *malamai* in Niger and Nigeria for 17 years, first learned about seclusion from one of his *malamai* in Maradi before he was first married. This teacher told him about the blessings and prosperity (*albarka*) that he would receive for secluding his wives. The husband said people laughed at him when he first secluded his wives. But with time, he explained, they saw God was helping him and started practicing seclusion too. His wife describes how she and her co-wives first became secluded and how neighbors responded:

When we started [seclusion], my husband came to us and said for each to go and tell our parents that he wants to seclude us. So we went and told them. [Our parents] said, "Since we have already given you to him, it is what he says to you that matters, not us." Then [my husband] went and told them himself. He said, "I am telling you so that you don't hear it from someone else that I want to seclude my wives." They said, "May

God help you since you have them now, not us.” So on a Friday, we had our hair braided, applied henna, and put on makeup. [Our husband] bought us several sets of clothes, shoes, head scarves, and shawls. Then he said we were now secluded, and he gathered Muslim teachers at the door of our home to pray for us...Once we were secluded, people would come by after returning home from their farms and ask us if we really wanted this. How could we be kept from farming in the harvest season? “Is it enough to just sit at home without doing commerce or selling anything,” they asked? “How will you get money for marriage and birth celebrations?” We said God will give us what we need for these celebrations. Since our husband secluded us, God will give him what he will give us for our relatives’ needs. We stayed home and ignored them. Were we going to follow other people and ignore our husband? So you see what they said to us. We told them we wanted seclusion. Since your husband says he wants you to do this and you love him, you must follow him. Right?

I was not so fortunate to be able to interview the first two men in Garin Jakka who secluded their wives nor the wives. One of these families had moved to Nigeria and members of the other household were not willing to talk with me. Both men, however, were also *malamai*. Accounts in Garin Jakka point to seclusion first being practiced about 20-25 years ago, around the same time as in Tchikaji Gajeré, just six kilometers away. With an increase in wife seclusion over the last few decades in the area south of Maradi, women have been slowly disappearing from agriculture.

Changes in Gender Roles and Diversification of Rural Livelihoods Today

As a result of land shortage and poor farming conditions, people in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka have increasingly relied on non-agricultural forms of livelihoods in addition to farming— primarily labor migration, animal husbandry, trade, and working as hired farm laborers. At the same time, these changes in household livelihood strategies are interwoven with the introduction of wife seclusion over the past 20-27 years in these communities, significantly impacting the kinds of work that women and men do. For example, secluded women do not work as farmers as their mothers and

grandmothers did, although they can be land owners or operate small businesses out of their homes. Diversified livelihood strategies and seclusion are further elaborated on in the following section, but I first explain how farming has changed in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré.

Changes in Farming

Certainly the way that farming is carried out has changed considerably in recent years, as has land ownership and control in these towns. As mentioned above, more women and junior males today than in the past have a field that they own; however, fewer women are farming today than in the past. How can this be? As the *gandu/gamana* system has broken down and Islamic inheritance patterns have gained acceptance in the Maradi *Région*, there has been a shift towards bilateral inheritance. Today only three households of twenty-two (14%) interviewed in Garin Jakka, and six of twenty-four (25%) interviewed in Tchikaji Gajeré are still farming a *gandu*. The other households are farming on an individual basis, or jointly with only one or two family members. Why then are fewer women farming than in the past? Two main reasons account for this phenomenon. First around Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka, there is a land shortage. No more bush land exists to clear new fields. David Rain reports that, “The population of the Sahelian zone of Maradi Department grew a hundredfold in less than a century” (1999:70). Doka and Monimart state that:

in the south of Maradi region (southern Madarounfa district and certain areas of southern Guidan Roumji district) where population density is greatest, the area cultivated per person shrank by nearly 50% in 25 years: the population more than doubled (x 2.3%) and the overall area cultivated only increased by 34%. We can therefore assume that land occupation has almost reached saturation point in southern Niger. [2004:3]

As the population grows, the Maradi area is experiencing land shortages, leading not only to competition over land, but also an increase in the use of hired labor, discussed further below (De Coninck and Tinguiri 1992:172; Kauck 1999:14). Land is divided up into smaller and smaller portions, and some people are simply unable to acquire new land. It is often women or junior males in the family who are pushed out of their inherited land as senior male relatives claim it, reflective of historical inheritance patterns in the area. And women and poorer families are usually unable to acquire the resources to purchase new land.

Table 12 lays out a summary of land ownership in the Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré samples. From this data, women in both towns clearly struggle to gain access to land, although access to land for women in Garin Jakka appears slightly more problematic than in Tchikaji Gajeré. Garin Jakka is in a more densely populated area than Tchikaji Gajeré, explaining why access to land is slightly more difficult there. Also possibly due to the larger number of *gandu* farms in Tchikaji Gajeré, there are a few men who did not receive inherited land, reflecting older *gandu* inheritance patterns. However, these men have been able to acquire land by other means. One can see a notable contrast between Raynaut's 1976 data in nearby Sumarana (Table 11) and the Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré data (Table 12) in terms of the percentage of women who have access to *gamana* plots (77.13% in Sumarana and 25% in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré).

Inherited fields, by contrast, appear to be more common for women today in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré (41%) than in Sumarana (21.12%) several decades earlier. While these data sets are not completely comparable for a number of reasons (i.e., community practices can vary widely even within a small region, sample sizes are not comparable,

etc.), they do seem to affirm the overall trend found by other researchers who have looked at land ownership change in the region and found that individual ownership and single family households have become more common as *gandu/gamana* extended family agriculture declines (Boubacar 2000:21, Doka 2000:6-12).

Table 12: Land Access and Ownership in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré⁹²

	GARIN JAKKA (Total of 22 women and 17 men interviewed)	TCHIKAJI GAJERE (Total of 22 women and 23 men interviewed)	TOTAL (Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré)
Women who have no access to land	13 (60%)	6 (27%)	18 (43%)
Men who have no access to land	0	0	0
Women who have inherited land ⁹³	8 (36%)	10 (45%)	18 (41%)
Men who have inherited land	17 (100%)	19 (83%)	36 (90%)
Women farming a gamana field ⁹⁴	3 (14%)	8 (36%)	11 (25%)
Men farming a gamana field	0	2 (9%)	2 (5%)
Women who bought a field	0	1 (5%)	1 (2%)
Men who bought a field ⁹⁵	4 (24%)	3 (13%)	7 (17.5%)
Women who borrowed a field	0	0	0
Men who borrowed a field	0	1 (4%)	1 (2.5%)
Women who cleared bush land for a field	0	0	0
Men who cleared bush land for a field	0	5 (22%)	5 (12.5%)
Women who received land as a gift	0	0	0
Men who received land as a gift	0	2 (9%)	2 (5%)
Women whose responses were not clear in the interview	0	0	0
Men whose responses were not clear in the interview ⁹⁶	2 (12%)	1 (4%)	3 (7.5%)

⁹² Individuals are listed multiple times in this chart if they have more than one field.

⁹³ This is looking only at ownership, not control or ability to farm the land oneself. These issues are addressed further below.

⁹⁴ Two of the three women in Garin Jakka who have a *gamana* field also have an additional inherited field. Two of the eight women with a *gamana* field in Tchikaji Gajeré also have an additional inherited field.

⁹⁵ All of the men who bought a field in Garin Jakka also had one or two additional inherited fields. One of the three men who bought a field in Tchikaji Gajeré does not have an inherited field. He was cheated out of his inheritance by older siblings.

⁹⁶ All of these men have other land listed in the table. It is only one piece each of their property about which it is not clear in the interview how they acquired it.

In my interviews among 84 people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, there are no men who are landless, although some men from more vulnerable households have very little land. There are, however, 13 women out of 22 (60%) interviewed in Garin Jakka, and 6 women out of 22 (27%) interviewed in Tchikaji Gajeré who have no access to land, neither as owners nor through usufruct rights. All of these landless women are secluded. And of the women with access to land in the samples, only about half in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré have indicated that they have their own granary and control over its contents. These women with control over their granaries can sell, eat, or give away food stored inside at their own discretion. Therefore for about half of the women with land, their granaries are controlled by their husbands. While a small number, 3/22 (14%) women in Garin Jakka and 5/22 (23%) women in Tchikaji Gajeré from my sample are secluded, have access to a field (although do not farm it themselves), and control the contents of their own granary. Therefore, seclusion does not inevitably mean a woman cannot have access to and control over agricultural resources; however, few do in comparison to women who are not secluded.

Among all residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré today, only one third (19/57) and a little over one quarter (70/246) of women still farm in these two towns, respectively. In general, the divide between who farms and who does not is mainly according to age. Of the nine women who have access to land in the Garin Jakka sample and the sixteen women who have access to land in the Tchikaji Gajeré sample, only three (33%) and six (38%), respectively, actually physically farm the land themselves. In the Garin Jakka sample, all of the women who physically do field work and have a granary

that is under their control are over approximately 40 years of age.⁹⁷ As one Garin Jakka woman put it, “It is the old women who have land; young women don’t have any.”

However in the Tchikaji Gajeré sample, three women in their 20s farm themselves and also control their own granaries. Three additional Tchikaji Gajeré women in their 20s do not do field work themselves, but have their own granaries that they control. In general, young women in these two towns have been largely cut off from economic resources related to agriculture. However, a few young women in Tchikaji Gajeré have managed to maintain ownership and control of agricultural resources, although some of these women are living in quite economically vulnerable households as I describe further below.

Another factor that contributes to few young women in these towns having access to land is that even if a woman does inherit from her parents, she does not receive the inheritance until her parents are deceased. In contrast, sons are given property from their parents as young men with the understanding that sons need this property to provide for their families.

Even when women do have access to land, it is in most cases sandy *jigawa* land rather than the more fertile and well-watered *fadama* land (Figure 12 and 13). *Fadama* fields can yield two crops a year, while *jigawa* yields only one. *Fadama* fields can also grow a wide variety of crops beyond simply the millet, sorghum, beans, peanuts, and sesame found in most *jigawa* fields. Of the six women in the sample with *fadama* fields, two are secluded, and two are widows; all but one are over 55 years old. So clearly there are some opportunities for women to acquire *fadama* land; however by contrast, 21 men in the sample had a *fadama* field.

⁹⁷ People in these communities do not often remember their exact age, so 40 is an approximation that was given or determined in the interview.



Figure 12: *Jigawa* Field in Tchikaji Gajéré in July 2004
(No Fertilizer on Left and Animal Droppings as Fertilizer on Right)



Figure 13: *Fadama* Field in Tchikaji Gajéré on the
Banks of a Flood Plain in July 2004

The de-feminization of agriculture (Doka and Monimart 2004) that is happening south of Maradi serves as a counter example to what is happening in other parts of the world. For example in Da Corta and Venkateshwarlu's study in India (1999), they found that the feminization of agricultural labor has taken place in Andhra Pradesh as men have benefited from government economic policies and moved into other kinds of livelihoods. Women in such cases become a cheap substitute for formerly male agricultural labor. In Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka, by contrast, quite a different phenomenon is occurring. Men are not necessarily moving into better livelihoods, but many are simply no longer able to earn a living through primarily farming. And women are not substituting for lost labor, but rather land shortage as well as shifting class and religious identities are pushing women out of agricultural production all together. In some cases, no substituted labor is needed because there is no longer enough land to farm. In other cases, hired farm labor (discussed further below) is substituting for lost labor. Women's roles, however, are increasingly seen less in an economically productive sense than in the past, emphasizing mainly their reproductive role in the Maradi *Région*.

Seclusion, Male Headship, and Prosperity

In addition to difficulties accessing land in these towns, ideas about the proper roles of men and women in Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka have undergone important changes over the past three decades. Rather than an agricultural arrangement that requires women to farm in order to contribute to *gandu* production and provide for themselves and their children during the dry season (as had been the model historically and is still the case in other regions of Niger), contemporary Islamic beliefs in these towns require husbands to be the full providers for their families year round. Men also

see secluding their wives at home—which means that their wives no longer farm, collect firewood, go for water, or leave the home for any reason without the permission of their husbands—to be part of a proper Muslim lifestyle. Husbands compensate for these work tasks by either doing them or hiring someone else to do them.

Veiling, which can be considered a kind of portable seclusion, has also become common and expected in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka. Women in the past wore small head scarves, but now-a-days a shawl over the head and upper body is wrapped on top of this. A few women who have the means may also wear a covering that only reveals their face, hands and feet, hiding the hairline and most of the body. Veiling is not limited to women who are secluded, however. All married women in the Maradi *Région* are expected to dress with such modesty when they are in public. Veiling, however, does not directly limit women's opportunities to participate in economic and political activities as seclusion in the home does. In fact, veiling is a way that women can enter public spaces in this cultural context while maintaining a certain level of modesty and protection from the male gaze. Therefore while I understand a link between veiling and seclusion in terms of protecting women from the male gaze, I also differentiate the two in terms of the effects on women's mobility and access to resources. What concerns me in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré (as well as throughout the Maradi *Région*) is the tendency to practice physical seclusion in the home over allowing (veiled) women to be present in public.

Two Hausa words are used for seclusion in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka—*kuble* and *tsari*. *Kuble* (or *kulle* in Nigerian Hausa) literally means locked up. *Tsari* means purdah, confinement, or imprisonment. I asked informants if there is a difference between *kuble* and *tsari*. Most said there is no distinction. The few who did see a

difference explained that *kuble* is more strict than *tsari*. *Tsari* is what is practiced in Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka, they said, because women are allowed to leave the home with permission. By contrast, women in *kuble* never leave the home. Some parallels can be drawn between these comments and Barbara Callaway's distinction of three kinds of seclusion around Kano. First, *kullen dinga* is considered the most strict kind of seclusion, when a woman never goes out. Second, *kullen tsari* is less severe and the most common in the region she studied. Women under *kullen tsari* can go out occasionally with permission. Finally, *kullen zuci* is a seclusion of the heart that is symbolic and allows women to move about freely. This, however, Callaway found is only practiced among well-educated, elite women in Kano (1987: 56-7); it is not acknowledged in Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka. The less strict *kullen tsari*, commonly just called *kuble* or *tsari* in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré, is closest to what is practiced in these communities where households struggle to make ends meet and women are expected to participate in strong networks of gift exchange through attending birth and marriage celebrations (*biki*).

Unlike the early reactions to seclusion cited above by one of the first secluded women in Tchikaji Gajéré, seclusion is well accepted and aspired to by most people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré today. And because it is now a normal part of marriage from the outset and the rituals described above by the woman from Tchikaji Gajéré are also part of marriage rituals, there is usually nothing special done to mark the start of seclusion these days.

Men overwhelmingly explain that seclusion is practiced for a variety of religious reasons, such as following the Prophet Muhammad's example, receiving rewards from

God, escaping judgment, and entering paradise (Table 13). A young man in Garin Jakka told me, “God said to seclude [our wives] because things will be better. Even though it is the rainy season, if one is doing one’s best, God will bring a fertile harvest.” The rainy season is the hardest time to maintain seclusion, when last year’s harvest has often run out and extra labor is needed in the fields. Without this insight into the anticipated material blessings associated with seclusion, it seems to make little sense why men would take on the extra burden of fully providing for their wives and children and losing free labor on the family *gandu*, for those who still farm one. In this young man’s mind, seclusion is connected to prosperity, fertility, and provision in a place where resources are scarce. This same man from Garin Jakka also connects wife seclusion with insufficient land. Male heads of household often find they do not have enough land to give *gamana* fields to their wives and sometimes also to junior males in their household, nor inheritance to all of their children. Wife seclusion can be a way for some men to justify taking over ownership and/or control of much needed land from women.

Table 13: Men’s Responses: Why Do Women in Your Household Practice Seclusion?⁹⁸

RESPONSE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Islam	24
Husband told her to	6
Husband’s happiness	2
Others do it	2
Not enough land for women to farm ⁹⁹	2
Woman’s well-being	2
That’s the way it is/has been	2

Furthermore, the well-being (*lahiya*) of the wife or husband is also acknowledged by eight interviewees as a reason for seclusion. A secluded woman has a reduced

⁹⁸ Top seven answers from 33 men with secluded women in their households in the Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka random samples. Each respondent may have more than one response. These responses were freely given, not chosen from a list. All other responses not listed totaled one each.

⁹⁹ These responses were both in Garin Jakka, where land shortage is more acute.

workload and therefore less suffering (*wahala*). This again is linked to prosperity since, at least in principle, her husband is able to provide for her needs and compensate for her work. “We are happy because we remain in seclusion. We do not lack anything. With God’s approval, we do not lack anything. Whatever you ask [your husband] to give you, he gives you,” explained a young secluded wife in Garin Jakka. Another fifty-one-year-old secluded woman stated, “If your husband sympathizes with you, he will tell you not to work in the fields, go to the well, and collect firewood. Just prepare food for the children. You see how he shows sympathy and reduces the work load?” These two women struggled with daily provisions like most others in their town but saw seclusion as part of the solution to their suffering rather than a problem. Men are also happy having their wife or wives protected at home from the gaze of other men.

Most women I asked in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka did not know they would be secluded until after they were married; however, now-a-days one expects that nearly all young women will be secluded at marriage. Nevertheless for most of the secluded women I asked, seclusion is clearly not their choice. Why, then, do they agree to it? And are there times when they do not? In the responses from women in my sample who are secluded or have secluded women in their households in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré (Table 14), the reason why seclusion is practiced is most commonly attributed to the will of the husband with religious reasons following close behind.

Table 14: Women's Responses: Why Do You (or Women in Your Household) Practice Seclusion?¹⁰⁰

RESPONSE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Husband told her to	16
Islam	12
Woman's well-being	4
That's the way it is/has been	3
Others do it	3

For women, male headship is a primary reason for seclusion (Table 14). Indeed, this society is one which has long been patriarchal, shutting women out of inheritance in pre-Islamic times and to some extent still today, upholding obedience to the husband as a woman's primary duty in marriage, and always residing in the husband's home upon marriage. Echoing the voices of many others in these communities, one secluded informant in Tchikaji Gajeré explained to me that if you are secluded, "[Your husband] did not put you to work in the fields...he has put you to work at home." Obedience to one's husband and other superiors in this hierarchical society can ensure the well-being of a woman and her children. In part, this means being provided for materially, but can also include having the husband's support in decision making, conflicts, and obtaining information. Marriage in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré is understood as a reciprocation of rights and duties. Residents clearly and consistently stated to me in interviews that a woman's main duty (and a man's right) in marriage is obedience to her husband, while a man's main duty (and a woman's right) is to provide for his wife or wives. Seclusion is often a part of maintaining this relationship as obedience to the will

¹⁰⁰ Top five answers from 36 women who are secluded or have secluded women in their households in the Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka random samples. Each respondent may have more than one response. These responses were freely given, not chosen from a list. All other responses not listed totaled one each.

of the husband appears prominently in both men and women's responses to why seclusion is practiced (Tables 13 and 14).

Women also connect seclusion with Islam. Some women interviewed specifically associate seclusion with earning salvation for the wife and husband, receiving rewards from God, and being a command in Islam. However in general, women's access to education and knowledge about Islam is very limited, reflecting its lower ranking among women as a reason for seclusion in comparison to men (Tables 13 and 14). I will return to the issue of education further below.

Even under this patriarchal structure, however, one sees that women find ways of resisting and bending the rules when seclusion and obedience do not suit them. With men gone much of the day and sometimes for longer stretches of time, secluded women can hop from house to house relatively unnoticed. These times at home without the men can be extremely playful, as can moments when husbands are home. For example one day several young secluded women in Garin Jakka gathered in a neighbor's compound to dress up in men's clothing to make me laugh while the men were away. This transgression into male dress and behavior was a way of pushing boundaries and stepping outside of proper social roles for these young secluded women. In a home in Tchikaji Gajeré, I witnessed the playful banter of a young secluded woman with her serious husband one night:

When Ali came home, A'ishatou started a debate with him. She said she was too busy doing work to pray five times a day. Ali said she didn't have the kind of work that she couldn't stop and pray. She listed off all the work she had done today--pounding, sweeping, cooking, and "I ate a mango," she said with a smirk. I laughed at her sense of humor and playfulness. She walked off a minute, and Ali turned to his relative who was there beside him. "I keep preaching to her and preaching to her, but she doesn't listen. I relieve myself of my obligation to educate her.

That's all I can do!" he said. When she returned, Ali and A'ishatou went on and on arguing about this for a while. It was a very spirited argument. Ali was quite serious about doing the right thing. A'ishatou was in an argumentative and joking mood. In the end when everyone except for A'ishatou and me had left the compound, she did her prayers, although they were late. [Field Notes May 17, 2004]

I also found that A'ishatou left her home during the day on several occasions while I was staying in Tchikaji Gajéré without informing her husband of where she was going. This situation was not unique. I occasionally found secluded women in other people's homes during the day or going on errands outside of the home, such as to get water or grass for the animals. Sometimes this was with the husband's knowledge and permission, but not always. This kind of movement was at times noticed by neighbors, but usually assumed to be necessary or with the husband's permission that the woman went out. An overtly resistant secluded wife who insisted on leaving the home without her husband's permission and without a good reason could be punished by her husband, though. However, it is also important to note that bending the rules in seclusion is not only due to resistance from women, but poverty, age, and religious stature all also play an important role in if and how seclusion is practiced.

Poverty, Age, and Religious Stature as Factors in Seclusion

Many households in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré cannot feed themselves by farming throughout the whole year and have sought other livelihood strategies such as seasonal labor migration to supplement household income. Seasonal migration has made it extremely difficult for some families to live up to the ideals of seclusion. However contrary to Alidou's assertion that "poor" (i.e., non-middle class and rich) families in Niger cannot afford to practice any form of seclusion (2005:34), many do make it happen in very difficult economic circumstances. Nevertheless, several male interviewees

explained to me that they used to seclude their wives but simply cannot afford to do so any longer. When men are gone from home looking for work for weeks or months at a time, they are unable to always ensure that water and wood are brought home for daily needs and sometimes also need their wife/wives' help in the fields while they are gone. Several secluded women shared with me their desperate situation of needing food or medicine while their husbands were away. Many times, however, other relatives can help with basic necessities so that seclusion can be maintained. Several men who cannot seclude their wives for financial reasons told me they hope God will bless them with enough wealth to do it in the future. One of these men with two wives explained, "We keep asking God to bring us prosperity (*falala*) to return them [to seclusion]." Seclusion is indeed a marker of prosperity and blessings from God. At the same time, it is practiced by poor families when possible in order to gain God's blessings.

Age also is an important factor in who is and is not secluded and how strictly seclusion is practiced. In general, most women of child-bearing years are secluded, and most who are older are not secluded in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. This has to do with two main factors. First, seclusion is only about 20-27 years old in these towns, so some of the older generation never adopted the practice. Second, seclusion is a way of separating young, attractive women from the gaze of men in public. Once a woman is older, losing some of her sexual appeal to most men and no longer at risk of bearing a child outside of marriage, she often gains more freedom to move about in public. However, there are certainly exceptions to this as are evident in Table 15 and 16.

Table 15: Age and Seclusion in the Garin Jakka Random Sample of 22 Women

	Under 20 years	20-29 years	30-40 years	41-51 years	52 years and older
Secluded	3/3	7/7	4/5	2/2	None
Not Secluded	None	None	1/5	None	5/5

Table 16: Age and Seclusion in the Tchikaji Gajeré Random Sample of 22 Women

	Under 20 years	20-29 years	30-40 years	41-51 years	52 years and older
Secluded	2/2	5/9	5/6	1/2	3/3
Not Secluded	None	4/9 ¹⁰¹	1/6	1/2	None

The Garin Jakka data on age distribution and seclusion came out as I had expected (Table 15). Only one of the women in the sample under 52 years old is not secluded. Furthermore, she was unsure of her age and may in fact be older.¹⁰² Also, two of the women under 30 years old who are secluded also explained that there are times when they must go out for water if their husbands are either away or sick. Therefore, economic factors are also clearly at play in whether and how one practices seclusion in Garin Jakka, although age is indeed a strong factor in this group of women.

The data in Tchikaji Gajeré are more surprising when one only looks at the numbers in Table 16, which make age appear as a less important factor than in Garin Jakka. The number of women under 52 in the sample who are not secluded is higher than in Garin Jakka, even though a greater overall percentage of women (about 75%) do not farm in Tchikaji Gajeré. Furthermore, four out of five of the women over 40 years old are secluded. A closer look at these case studies reveals other important factors affecting seclusion in these women's lives.

¹⁰¹ Three of these four have their own granary that they control.

¹⁰² Judging by the approximate age of her children, the youngest she could be is mid- to late thirties. It is important to keep in mind that in nearly all cases, age is an estimate since most people do not remember the year they were born nor keep track of their age by counting the years.

First, one of the women not secluded in the 20-29 age group is from the only household that I did not choose randomly. I included her in the sample because she was the sole female head of household in Tchikaji Gajeré. She had been secluded until her husband got sick in 2003 and passed away in 2004. She farmed for the first time in her life in 2003 and 2004. Within a few months after the interview, she had already remarried; however, it was too soon to tell if she would continue to farm the following year or not. The second woman in this group used to be secluded, but no longer is because she has to help with the farming when her husband is away working in another town. The third aspires to be secluded, but she also has to help her husband with the farm work. And the husband of the fourth intends to seclude her in the future.

Among the secluded women over 45 years old in the Tchikaji Gajeré sample, two are married to two of the very few men who have made the hajj from this town. Another is the wife of an Islamic teacher. These exceptions to what one would expect to find in terms of age not only accentuate the difficulty of practicing seclusion in households that are struggling economically, but also suggest that certain men with considerable religious training or stature make an effort to seclude their wives even beyond childbearing years.

Other Livelihood Strategies

Lack of sufficient farm land and the exit of women from agriculture have led to a diversification of livelihoods in most households, including the increasing importance of seasonal migrant labor, animal husbandry, trade, and hired farm labor. Migration is not a new livelihood strategy in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. However, community members agree that it has been used increasingly over about the past 30 years. Today in Garin Jakka, sixteen of twenty households interviewed (80%) have men who migrate

during part of the year. Most of them go to Kano and work as butchers (Table 17). In Tchikaji Gajeré, fourteen of twenty-two households interviewed (64%) have men who migrate during part of the year. They are more varied in terms of their migration destinations and types of work than the men in Garin Jakka are (Table 17). In all cases, it is exclusively the men who are the migrants. A few men in the Maradi *Région* have started to take their wives with them when they migrate, but this is not common in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré.

Table 17: Migration of Men from Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré

	GARIN JAKKA	TCHIKAJI GAJERE
Number of Households with Migrant Workers out of the Total Number Interviewed¹⁰³	16/20 (80%)	14/22 (64%)
Most Common Destination of Migrants	Kano (14 responses)	Kontagora, Nigeria (9 responses)
Most Common Occupation of the Migrants While Away from Home	Butchers (13 responses) Hired field labor (7 responses)	Most answers are different. Six respondents, however, said transporting water to people's homes.
Most Common Amount of Time Away from Home	1-4 months	1-4 months

The changing constructions of masculinity and femininity in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré are linked to the long periods of time that large numbers of men from these towns spend in northern Nigeria. Wife seclusion has become the norm throughout northern Nigeria as mentioned above, particularly in urban areas where Nigerien migrants congregate, and is linked to class and Islamic identity. Many Nigerien migrants to places like Kano and Kontagora in northern Nigeria combine work with religious studies under

¹⁰³ In both communities, there were two households that had conflicting responses from the male and female informants. These were left out of the total number of interviewed households shown here.

Muslim scholars who emphasize the seclusion of women and the responsibility of men to provide for their families.

Also worth some attention, most migrants from Garin Jakka work as butchers and many have inherited the trade. In Hausa society, butchers are considered of a lower class than most other trades. In future research, it would be worth exploring how this class identity affects the way residents of Garin Jakka are seen by others and by themselves in Nigeria as migrants.

In addition to labor migration, animal husbandry, trade, and working as hired field laborers near home are all options open to men for additional income to supplement agriculture. Women have more limited options, focused on raising small livestock, selling food stuffs, and marriage and birth gifts.

Two-thirds of the women in the Garin Jakka sample and a little more than three quarters of the women in the Tchikaji Gajeré sample have their own animals.¹⁰⁴ All of these animals are sheep and goats except for one bull/cow, and the women interviewed have between one and six animals each (Table 18). Keeping small livestock in the home is a type of livelihood more compatible with seclusion than farming. Also, women frequently get small livestock as part of their *sadaki* (gifts given from the groom to the bride and her family when they marry). Some women keep these animals for years after their marriage. In general, men rather than women tend to keep the cattle, which are used for plowing and hauling (Table 19).

¹⁰⁴ This does not include women who are taking care of an animal owned by someone else.

Table 18: Number of Women Who Own the Following Animals in the Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré Samples

	Garin Jakka (out of 22 women)	Tchikaji Gajeré (out of 22 women)	Total (out of 44 women)
Cattle	1	0	1
Goats	13	12	25
Donkeys	0	0	0
Sheep	4	6	10
None	7	2	9
No data	0	2	2

Table 19: Number of Men Who Own the Following Animals in the Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré Samples

	Garin Jakka (out of 17 men)	Tchikaji Gajeré (out of 23 men)	Total (out of 40 men)
Cattle ¹⁰⁵	5	8	13
Goats	2	3	5
Donkeys	1	1	2
Sheep	3	7	10
None	9	7	16
No data	0	1	1

Women who manage to acquire a little capital, often make food stuffs to sell, such as *tuwo*,¹⁰⁶ sauces, *fura*,¹⁰⁷ seasonings, and fried cakes. The income from these is not as much as one gets from farming, however. For example a woman in Garin Jakka said that she can make about 20 naira¹⁰⁸ (US\$0.14) in profit from selling a batch of *fura*. Another who sells seasonings said she makes about 5-10 naira (US\$0.04-\$0.07) a day. By comparison, the average price for a bowl¹⁰⁹ of millet grain in the Maradi *Région* in 2003 was 310 CFA¹¹⁰ (US\$0.58).¹¹¹ The slightly more lucrative peanut processing for oil and fried peanut butter balls is usually dominated by older women in these communities. Furthermore, about half (50%) of the women in the Garin Jakka sample and one-third

¹⁰⁵ These are mostly owned in pairs.

¹⁰⁶ *Tuwo* is a sticky mixture of millet flour and water, and the staple food for this area.

¹⁰⁷ *Fura* is a thick drink made from millet that people in Niger consume daily.

¹⁰⁸ The 2004 exchange rate was approximately 140 naira to one US dollar.

¹⁰⁹ The measure is a bowl called a *tiya*.

¹¹⁰ The rate of exchange for dollars to CFA in 2004 was about one dollar to 530 CFA.

¹¹¹ Price of millet from CARE NER 051's Annual Report (CARE-International au Niger 2004a).

(33%) of the women in the Tchikaji Gajeré sample did not have any trade or small business going on at the time of interview. Nine out of 21 women in Garin Jakka and one out of 21 women in Tchikaji Gajeré for whom I have data¹¹² had no land, no trade, and are secluded. Women in Tchikaji Gajeré, generally speaking, have a little more access to land and a trade than women in Garin Jakka. In both towns it tends to be young women who have no trade.

Women used to spin cotton and weave textiles in the Maradi region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However during the colonial period as trade was monopolized by European trading houses and the *Alhazai*, women's former production of and trade in textiles declined (B. Cooper 1997:53, 98, 103). Today while some elderly women still talk about the cloth that used to be produced years ago, one finds people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré wearing only imported fabrics. No one in these towns makes cloth anymore.

The options open to men for trade and small business in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré are quite different from those open to women. Men engage in supplementary income generating activities such as butchery, construction, trading animals, running convenience stores, sewing, blacksmith work, and selling secondhand clothes. In general, these activities deal with higher priced commodities than women's income generating activities. Furthermore, only 25% of the men in the Garin Jakka sample and about 40% of the men in the Tchikaji Gajeré sample did not have a trade at the time of interview.

¹¹² Part of the data is missing for one woman in Tchikaji Gajeré and one woman in Garin Jakka in my tapes and transcripts.

Men and some women hire laborers to work in their fields (*'yan barema*). Some residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré also work as hired field laborers. Informants say that the use of hired laborers has increased over the last three decades. Laborers are usually hired for either a morning or an afternoon of work. In 2004, rates ranged from 100-300 naira (US\$0.71 - \$2.14) for mornings and 50-100 naira (US\$0.36 - \$0.71) for afternoons, depending on the time of year. Very few women are hired as field laborers. Those who are, tend to be hired by elderly women who pay less for women laborers than for men. These women justify the pay difference by claiming that men are stronger and work harder than the women. All in all, few women hire and few women work as hired laborers. For many men, this is an opportunity to earn some extra money as needed, or relieve themselves of farming duties when they have a little extra cash. Twelve (71%) and thirteen (57%) sampled men use hired laborers in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, respectively. Three (14%) and six (27%) sampled women use hired labor in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, respectively (Table 20). Rather than hiring field laborers, the husband and/or children of a secluded woman with land more commonly farm it for her.

Table 20: Interviewees Who Hire Laborers to Work in Their Fields

	Garin Jakka (out of 17 men)	Garin Jakka (out of 22 women)	Tchikaji Gajeré (out of 23 men)	Tchikaji Gajeré (out of 22 women)
Hire male laborers	12 (71%)	1 (4.5%)	13 (57%)	5 (23%)
Hire female laborers	0	2 (9%)	0	2 (9%) ¹¹³
No data	0	0	1 (4%)	1 (5%)

¹¹³ One of these women also hires male laborers sometimes, so she is included in both categories.

From talking with residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré about hiring men versus women as laborers, it is clear men and women do not work together in a field. Women who hire men do not work alongside the men, even if those women normally farm. And men, whether present or not, would never hire women to work in their fields. This is one more example of the separation of men and women's space in this society.

One might speculate that hired labor supplements dispersed and lost labor on the *gandu*. Indeed, all *gandu* households in my Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré samples use hired labor. This suggests that those families are in need of extra help to keep up large farms, especially since interviewed women in all of these homes are no longer contributing to field work and young men are often away from home looking for work. Hired labor, however, is not limited to *gandu* households. Some households who operate outside of a *gandu* also use hired labor, and some do not. This varies depending on whether or not one has cash on hand and a need to hire laborers. Some men who are not part of a *gandu* still have large amounts of land to manage on their own. Other men are away for a time looking for work in other towns, so they hire laborers to work in their fields at home. And some women are secluded or live alone and are too old to do all necessary field work, so they rely on hired laborers to work for them if they have the means.

Finally, women rely on gifts from their parents—*kayan daki*—at marriage as a kind of savings, as well as gifts from other women at their marriage and children's birth celebrations (*biki*) for capital. *Kayan daki* gifts commonly include enamel pots, bed frames, mattresses, cupboards, and bedding. For a young married woman, they are an important source of wealth and savings. In the case of divorce, they are considered her

property and can be sold in times of great need. As women get older, however, these gifts wear out or are given to younger sisters when they marry. For a *biki*, a woman in these communities can get a total of anywhere from about 3,000 to 10,000 CFA (US\$5.66 to \$18.87) as gifts from celebration guests, not to mention gifts of food that they bring. The woman who receives these gifts will carefully observe how much each woman gives her because she will be expected to return the gift in a greater amount (usually double) at that woman's *biki*.

While *kayan daki*, *biki* gifts, selling food stuff, and raising a few small livestock are important sources of wealth for secluded women with no access to or control of land, they do not rival the income generating opportunities available to men. As women are being increasingly pushed out of agriculture in this region and have few alternative income generating activities available to them, they must rely on their husbands to provide for most of their daily needs in a very precarious economic environment where men also struggle to make ends meet.

Women's Access to Education and Information

In addition to access to material resources, access to information and the right to participate in community and household decision making remain challenges for women in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. As I discussed education (*karatu*) and upbringing (*tarbiya*) with the 84 interviewees, there was a clear consensus that adult men are taught these things by an Islamic teacher (*malam*), while adult women are taught them by her husband. It is not hard to see how difficult it would be for a woman to contradict her husband or participate in debate as his equal when her information is being primarily filtered through him. In addition, most girls only have at most a couple of years of

Koranic school before getting married. In contrast, most men have had more Koranic study (some into adulthood) and an enormous edge over women in terms of Islamic knowledge. Those women with religious knowledge of *bori* healing keep this secret as it is frowned upon publicly as un-Islamic in these communities, even though a number of women still practice it quietly. No one in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré personally admitted to practicing *bori*, although a few acknowledged there are a couple of people in these towns who participate. This is in stark contrast to other towns I have spent time in south of Maradi where women are forthright about their involvement in *bori* and have even invited me to participate in it.

Few boys or girls from these towns get any kind of state-sponsored education. However, Tchikaji Gajeré does share a small primary school with the neighboring town of Aïna. Boy to girl ratios in the school are relatively equal, which is typical of schools receiving aid from UNICEF and demonstrates a partial commitment to the second and third Millennium Development Goals.¹¹⁴ In the Tchikaji Gajeré school, I was pleased to find some very bright students with a good senior teacher. All but one of the students passed their exams in 2004 to proceed from primary school on to *collège*.¹¹⁵ This success seems to be largely due to the teacher, whose students at past posts have also been very successful. Garin Jakka, however, has no state-sponsored school. A few boys from Garin Jakka travel daily to ‘dan Issa for primary school. No girls attend a state-sponsored school from Garin Jakka, although one girl goes to a private *medersa*¹¹⁶ in ‘dan Issa.

¹¹⁴ These read, “Achieve universal primary education: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling” and “Promote gender equality and empower women: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.”

¹¹⁵ *Collège* is middle school (7th through 10th year).

¹¹⁶ School that combines French and Arabic.

Unfortunately none of the students from Garin Jakka I have spent time with have much ability in French, Arabic, or Hausa reading comprehension.

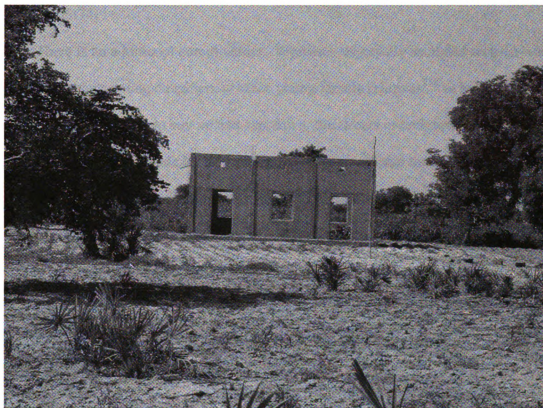


Figure 14: Primary School Being Built for Students from Tchikaji Gajeré and Aïna¹¹⁷

Many girls are kept from attending school in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré because their families expect to marry them early and therefore do not see the need to educate them. The average age of marriage for girls in the Maradi *Région* is 14.9 years (Magagi 2002), although some marry as early as 10 years old. Furthermore, women and girls are not encouraged to travel to other towns to study as boys are and therefore limited to opportunities in their communities of residence. Alidou, speaking of Nigerien parents' opposition to sending daughters away from home for schooling, writes:

¹¹⁷ In 2004, students met in rooms made out of millet stalks, which used to lie in front of this building before being destroyed by a heavy rain.

Their opposition is tied to the strong determination to control female sexuality, to groom female children for early marriage, and to prevent childbearing out of wedlock. Consequently, parental objection to long-distance commuting for education also leads to early female dropout. [2005:74]

There is an additional complication. Women—especially secluded women—are dependant on their young daughters or other young female relatives¹¹⁸ to help them sell the food that they make. At sun up and sun down, the streets in both towns are filled with young girls selling food made by their mothers. Some even send their daughters to ‘dan Issa for the day to sell their products. A woman in one of my towns of research had been given the nickname “*Tallo*” by her mother because she was so happy to finally have a daughter who could do *talla* (selling goods) for her after bearing several sons.



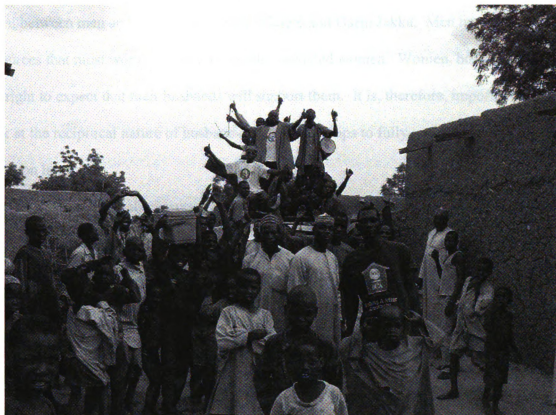
Figure 15: Girls Selling Their Mothers' Food in Tchikaji Gajeré Surrounded by Some Boys

¹¹⁸ Occasionally a boy is used for this purpose, but in most cases it is a girl.

In addition to the lack of religious and secular formal education for most girls, men in these towns tend to dominate radios and discussions with visiting politicians, government workers, religious scholars, and NGOs. For example, I was present in both towns during the 2004 campaigning for municipal elections. When party members came to talk to the communities about their candidates, no women came out of their homes to attend the meetings (Figure 16). In general, women rarely come out for community meetings, unless specifically provoked to do so by, for example, an NGO. Even then, one is likely to get mostly older women for such a meeting. Segregation of men and women in this society makes it very difficult for women—whether secluded or not—to access information shared in male circles. These rural women do not have the opportunities to engage in the public space through means such as writing and the radio that well-educated and middle/upper class secluded women in Niger can (Alidou 2005: 33-56). And going to the well and working in the fields, common ways that women exchange news, are tasks no longer performed by secluded women on a daily basis.

Despite these difficult circumstances for women, there is potential for change. An Islamic teacher in Tchikaji Gajeré shared with me that within understandings of Islam in their society, an educated man or woman is recognized as having the right to speak in his/her community and household. If women had more and equal access to education—especially Koranic studies—they could gain respect and a stronger voice in their communities. Women's right to education within Islam is, in principle, accepted by many Muslim scholars and communities worldwide. In fact, northern Nigeria has a tradition of prominent women Muslim scholars, such as Nana Asma'u, daughter of Shehu Usman 'dan Fodio (Mack and Boyd 2000), and Hajiya Iya and Umma Makaranta of the

Kano Tijaniyya¹¹⁹ (Hutson 1999). The life of a nationally prominent Nigerian Muslim female scholar Malama A'ishatou Hamani Zarmakoy Dancandu has also been documented by Ousseina Alidou (2005).



**Figure 16: Political Campaigning in Garin Jakka for the July 2004 Elections
(No Women Came out to Hear Them Speak)**

Power Relations and Hierarchies in the Maradi Region

Even though there are continuities between many regions of the world in terms of European colonization and Islamization, these have had different impacts on social structures and hierarchies in various places, developing unique histories. The following section looks at how these social structures and hierarchies have developed in the Maradi *Région*, setting the stage for a discussion in Chapter Six on power dynamics in contexts where CARE and UNICEF intervene.

¹¹⁹ Tijaniyya is a Muslim Sufi order, common in Nigeria and Niger.

Marriage

After looking at the data on gender in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré presented in this chapter, it is clear that economic, political, religious, and marital power are not equal between men and women in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka. Men have access to resources that most women do not, especially secluded women. Women, however, have the right to expect that their husbands will support them. It is, therefore, important to look at the reciprocal nature of husband-wife relationships to fully understand what is going on here.

A strong societal pressure exists for a woman to be married. For example, my 34 year old female Nigerien colleague who was divorced and worked as a CARE field agent was frequently told she needed to get married with great urgency. The only female headed households in Garin Jakka are headed by widows who are elderly. As mentioned above, the only female head of household in Tchikaji Gajeré was quick to remarry before I completed my field work in 2004.¹²⁰ Marriage is vital not only to a woman's good reputation in these communities, but also to provide for her basic necessities.

Historically, single women in the Maradi region could live together as *karuwai* (courtesans) without marrying; however, single women have increasingly come under attack in recent years in Maradi as mentioned in Chapter One (B. Cooper 2002). In rural towns such as Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, one does not find a home for *karuwai*, although they still exist in Maradi. The only women who are socially permitted to live as singles in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré are a couple of elderly women. Other

¹²⁰ Her mother-in-law and daughter lived with her in her deceased husband's home prior to remarrying.

unmarried women (whether divorced or never married) normally live with family until (re)married.

Within marriage, people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré understand clear rights and duties of the husband and wife. These were clearly and consistently articulated by informants in their interviews when asked about them. As mentioned above, husbands have the duty to provide for their wife/wives' necessities, including food, water, fire wood, clothing, housing, and beauty products. Some also acknowledge the duty of a husband to educate his wife/wives about Islam and provide money or food for gift exchanges with other women at marriage and birth celebrations. Women in turn have the right to expect these things, and are obliged to obey their husband first and foremost. Women are also expected to prepare and cook food for the family, bring the husband water for prayer and bathing, and greet the husband each day. As one Garin Jakka woman, who I asked about her duties in marriage, put it, "What [your husband] says to stop, you stop. What he says to do, you get up and do for him."

Age and Status

My data have demonstrated that although gender roles and identities have changed over time, gender has been and remains an important (although not the only) marker of social hierarchy in the Maradi *Région*. Age also helps determine one's status in this region, although perhaps to a greater extent in the past than is the case today. For example in the past, only the eldest males owned and managed land. Today in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka, all men have access to land that they own as do some women. Although age has become less critical in terms of property ownership these days, age remains important in other ways. As mentioned above, age is related to women's

mobility. Also in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, younger community members kneel to greet older community members, regardless of gender. This practice has been lost to some extent in towns such as Maradi. However, respect for and obedience to one's elders is a strongly held cultural value throughout the Maradi *Région*.

Sarauta, Alhazai, and Talakawa

People in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka consider themselves to be *talakawa* (commoners, farmers, and non-royalty). *Talakawa* are subject to *sarauta* (royalty)¹²¹ and sometimes *Alhazai* (wealthy traders) around them, and they are accustomed to serving these people of higher rank, although not without the expectation of something in return. As in marriage, these relationships are reciprocal, even though they are hierarchical and sometimes exploitative. As with a wife and husband, *talakawa* and *Alhazai* or *sarakai* (members of the royal family) have certain rights and duties to one another in this society. Maradi historian Mahamane Addo, writing of the 19th century Maradi Katsina kingdom, also links the relationship of the *sarki* (king)¹²² and the subjects of his kingdom with that of a husband and wife:

The *sarauta* order can be explained, to a certain extent, as the act of marriage between the king as husband of Katsinaland and the kingdom. That which makes possible bringing the union of the king and his kingdom together is the union that governs the relationship between a groom and bride. The relationship between the role of king and the role of husband is evident in the mentality of Katsinawa people. The king is the master of the kingdom as the husband is the master of the home. [Addo 2003:169-7, my translation]

¹²¹ Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré are a part of the Katsinawa kingdom with its palace and royal family based in Maradi. Kingdoms are also divided into cantons with a lesser king as head of each.

¹²² A *sarki* is always male. There is also the position of *sarauniya* (queen); however, she is not the wife, but a relative of the *sarki*. Her power and duties are mainly within the royal family, unlike the *Iya* or *Inna*, whose authority extends throughout the kingdom.

Nicolas also notes that the *Sarkin Gobir* is called *mijin 'kasa* (husband of the kingdom) (1969:217). Furthermore, *talakawa* have the right to expect certain duties of *sarauta*. For example, they are called on to resolve conflicts and expected to give gifts on occasion. At the same time, *talakawa* have the duty of paying tribute to the *sarauta* through, for example, gifts of food at the harvest or participating in collective work for a *sarki* at the canton level,¹²³ although less so today than in the past (Olivier de Sardan 1999:144-145). *Sarauta* in Maradi or Gobir also serve a spiritual role to interact with spirits of the land to ensure the health and fertility of the kingdom (Nicolas 1969:220).



Figure 17: Celebration at the Sarkin Gobir's Palace in Tsibiri in April 2004

¹²³ A canton is a collection of towns with a lesser *sarki* under the authority of the *sarki* of the entire kingdom. For example, the kingdom of Gobir is divided up into five cantons: Guidan Roumji, Chadakori, Guidan Sori, Saé Saboua, and the Tibiri *commune* (the capital). Each of these cantons has a *sarki* who is subject to the *sarki* in Gobir.

I differentiate *sarauta* from *mai gari*, or town head (who I discuss further below). In this region, a *mai gari* is not considered a *sarki*. Within the *sarauta*, I also differentiate the *sarki* who governs the kingdom from the various *sarakai* (plural of *sarki*) in charge of the cantons under his authority. The French call the *mai gari*, *canton sarki*, and the *sarki* of the kingdom all the “*chefferie*.” It is evident, however, that they are not the same, nor were they all historically present in this region as the French actually created the cantons and the position of *chef de canton* in the colonial era (Lund 1998:66; Olivier de Sardan 1999:141). For this reason, I am using Hausa terms as much as possible in describing these groups, as this better differentiates their roles than the French and English terms *chef* and *chief*.

Although *sarauta* usually means royalty, it can also be used more broadly to encompass people with regional or national administrative or leadership positions. For example, I was asked by the *mai gari* in Garin Jakka if I was taking up *sarauta* work. When I asked more specifically what he meant, he gave the example of being a customs official or some such position in the government. Members of royal families can, but do not always, serve in such government positions, as I point out further below. So he was indeed associating *sarauta* with something larger than just royalty. This broader definition of *sarauta* has important implications for project and government employees, a topic which I will return to in the next chapter.

Similar kinds of hierarchical reciprocity also exist between *Alhazai* and *talakawa*. The *Alhazai*, already mentioned above, are a particular group of merchants who arose in Maradi with a strong Muslim identity and trade networks. Grégoire explains that *Alhazai* are patrons who have servants/dependents (*barori*). He writes:

The dependents (*barori*) are the first to receive favors (*alheri*) from the *Alhazai*, and the number of dependents provides one measure of an *Alhaji*'s actual commercial networks. The *Alhazai* also give away part of their wealth in the form of gifts and assistance (*saddaka*) to the poor, the sick, and those down on their luck (*arziki*). [Grégoire 1992:148]

Literally, *barori* means slaves. However, these dependents are not slaves in the historical sense, as slavery is technically illegal in Niger today.¹²⁴ This relationship between *Alhazai* and *barori* is, however, reminiscent of former master-slave relationships common in the Maradi region (Grégoire 1992:54). The dependents of *Alhazai* are a particular group of *talakawa*. *Alhazai* sometimes make generous gifts to *talakawa*—both to their dependents and the larger community—earning them respect and status. There are no *Alhazai* of the type that Grégoire discusses who live in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. However, residents of these towns encounter *Alhazai* when in Maradi or other urban settings as migrants. And while they have not directly benefited as a community from an *Alhaji*'s gift, they know of the gifts other rural towns receive on occasion from *Alhazai* and hope to one day receive their own.

Fonctionnaires, the Colonial Legacy, and Development

Colonialism in Niger significantly altered the power of the *sarauta* and created spaces for new kinds of elites to develop, such as the *Alhazai* described above and *fonctionnaires* (also called *évolués*¹²⁵) who work in government administration and are educated in French-style schools. During the colonial period, having a French education came to be more important to entering the colonial governing structures than the claim of being a member of the *sarauta*. French educated elites eventually began replacing *sarakai* as intermediaries between French colonial administrators and Nigeriens. These

¹²⁴ Slavery does still exist in some parts of Niger (although not in this particular context), even though this has been denied by the current Nigerien administration.

¹²⁵ In Fuglestad 1983.

French educated intermediaries were part of the new *fonctionnaire* class that was rising in francophone West Africa and would be instrumental in colonial and post-colonial governance. As mentioned in Chapter Three in Niger, primarily certain Zerma/Songhays were trained by the French as the first *fonctionnaires*. Over time, however, the *fonctionnaires* came to slowly include a more ethnically diverse group of Nigeriens who had been French educated and groomed for administrative jobs. Some members of the Katsina and Gobir royal families near Maradi have entered into this group (B. Cooper 1997:112) as have some *talakawa* and former slaves (Fuglestad 1983:191-2).

As the non-governmental development sector has expanded in Niger especially since the return to democracy in 1999 and because the government has downsized under SAPs, many *fonctionnaires* have moved into private sector development work. Thus, employees of development organizations such as UNICEF and CARE as well as their government collaborators fit within this designation as *fonctionnaires*. In the minds of residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré these days, the boundaries of *sarauta* and *fonctionnaires* are sometimes blurred as both groups do administrative work, are relatively wealthy compared to them, and have some kind of authority over *talakawa*. I will return to this discussion in Chapter Six.

Mai gari in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré

In a rural town, a *mai gari* (always male) can carry a good deal of weight in his community. Niger was, until *communes* were formed country-wide in 2004, the only remaining country in West Africa where “traditional chiefs” were the sole authorities below the then-*arrondissement* level (Olivier de Sardan 1999:140-1). These “traditional” authorities for towns (*mai gari*) and cantons (*sarki*) deal with issues such as conflict

resolution, tax collection, and land distribution. That said, these Nigerien “chiefs” note that their power and status has been diminished over the years. Compared to their counterparts in northern Nigeria, they feel poor and as if they have little influence.

In Garin Jakka, the *mai gari* is by no means the wealthiest person in town, although he is part of one of the four original families who founded Garin Jakka. He, his two wives, and several sons (one of whom is married with no children as of 2004) reside together in a compound of average size and condition. Like most people in this town, members of this household own no special tools for agriculture and food processing beyond the usual hoes, ax, mortar, and pestle. They do have two bulls for plowing, however. The *mai gari* has two average size fields, no money for commercial fertilizers, and his harvest only fed them for ten months the previous year. In comparison, one man in this town has six fields and a few others own income generating equipment such as peanut shellers, grinding machines, and motorcycles.

The *mai gari* in Tchikaji Gajeré is also a descendent of the town’s founder, although men from three other kin groups were *mai gari* at certain points in history. He lives in a compound with one wife, two sons (one of whom spends part of the year in Nigeria), a daughter-in-law, and a grandson. His other wife lives in another part of town with one of their grown sons. The *mai gari* and his brothers have relatively good land (some *fadama* land included), and he has eight fields that he farms with his sons, some of which are quite large. In general, residents of Tchikaji Gajeré have more land than residents of Garin Jakka; nevertheless, the *mai gari* is among those individuals with the most land in his town. He too has bulls to plow the fields, although no other special income generating equipment. The *mai gari* is relatively well off in this town, although

he too copes with frequent drought and no money for fertilizer. Neither he nor the *mai gari* in Garin Jakka have made the hajj, although eleven people (nine men and two women) in Tchikaji Gajéré and five people (at least two of these are women) in Garin Jakka¹²⁶ have found the means to make the hajj. Both the *mai gari* of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré are quite influential in community decisions. However, other community members, including women, also have considerable power in these towns.

Women with Power in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré

Within the hierarchies discussed thus far, women have various positionings. I have already mentioned the effects of class status, education and training, and age on a woman's positioning. However, there are also certain roles that women can have in Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka that affect their social standing in the household and community. First, being the senior wife is a position of power within the household. Her title is *uwar gida*, or the mother of the home. Her co-wife/wives are called *kishiya* (*kishiyoyi*, plural), which translates literally "the jealous one." In extended family households, mother-in-laws also hold a higher rank over wives of their son(s).

Each town in the Maradi *Région* has a woman designated '*Kungiya*. '*Kungiya* in a general sense means a committee or association. However, it is also a title given to the leader of women in each town. '*Kungiya* as a leadership position was a tool of Seyni Kountché's regime to mobilize women through the national women's association AFN in the *Société de Développement*. These women are still recognized today, although any formal links to AFN are dubious. However when a visitor comes to Garin Jakka or Tchikaji Gajéré and needs to mobilize women (whether it be a development project,

¹²⁶ Two of these people (one man and one woman) left in July 2004 when I was doing fieldwork in Garin Jakka.

government worker, or political campaigner), that person goes to the '*Kungiya* to explain what they are doing and rely on her to mobilize women as needed. Her capacity to be able to do so varies according to her influence in town and her personality. In Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka, the '*Kungiya* is an older widow with considerable economic endeavors and social influence. However, these '*Kungiyoyi* (plural of '*Kungiya*) do not seem to use their influence much to mobilize for CARE or UNICEF activities.

Project Volunteers

Certain residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré have emerged as volunteer leaders in CARE and UNICEF. CARE's PN 51 is the only development project active in Garin Jakka. One of the CARE volunteer leaders in Garin Jakka, Daouda, also participated in a non-CARE nine-month training on agriculture and literacy in neighboring 'dan Issa several years ago. Daouda is the CARE secretary in Garin Jakka, the volunteer Hausa literacy teacher for CARE, and grain and money collector for CARE's community cereal bank initiative.¹²⁷ As one of the few individuals who can read and write Hausa in town, he steps up into such positions of leadership and authority. Other community members have participated in CARE trainings and meetings, but do not have the same access to power through project resources that Daouda has (including the *mai gari*) due to their status as literate. Daouda has been able to monopolize project resources for his own gain, an issue I will return to in the next chapter.

In Tchikaji Gajeré, UNICEF has been the long-standing project. However, another project financed by the International Labor Organization helped women get small animals in 1995-1996; and about November 2003, a CARE woman's microfinance group

¹²⁷ This activity, called *warrantage*, entails having community members store their grain in a warehouse to use as collateral on cash loans for income generating activities in the dry season or to sell off when grain prices are high.

started up under the leadership of a CARE volunteer who lives in ‘dan Issa. One man in particular, Ahmadou, has been the point person for all UNICEF activities since they began. He, like Daouda, is one of the few people literate in Hausa in his town, so he was designated UNICEF secretary and selected to teach the adult Hausa literacy classes. UNICEF, in contrast to CARE, paid him 6,000 CFA (about US\$11) a month to do this work several years ago. Since they stopped paying him, he stopped teaching. This is one exception to volunteerism in UNICEF’s aid recipient communities. Ahmadou is always asked to help select participants for various UNICEF trainings and activities.

Numerous others in Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka have served on committees, been trained, and received aid as a result of UNICEF and CARE’s work in their towns. These tend to be members of powerful families in each town, particularly relatives of the *mai gari* and ‘*Kungiya*. Unlike Daouda in Garin Jakka, Ahmadou has not managed money for UNICEF activities. He has tried to position himself as non-partisan in the town and not interested in using UNICEF resources for his own gain.

Conclusion

This chapter has taken us through historical changes in men and women’s positioning in economic, political, religious, and family life in the Maradi *Région* of Niger. In particular, a close look at the data in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré (where CARE and UNICEF intervene, respectively) demonstrates the increasing disappearance of women from agriculture and public life over the last three decades as land has become scarce, livelihoods have diversified, and new interpretations of Islam have been adopted. With these changes, gender and other hierarchies have adapted to new circumstances. Indeed, this is impossible to understand without looking at the complex intertwining of

ideological and material factors. For example, land shortage and drought drive seasonal labor migration to places where male migrants pick up and bring home ideas about seclusion, male provision, prosperity, Islam, and new class identities. Pious living, including domestication of women and male provision, has become another livelihood strategy amidst economic scarcity as people seek God's blessings. Examining the relationships of the ideological and material helps us see the reformulation process of gender roles and relationships as well as shifting patriarchies in rural Niger. Although women are subordinate to men in a number of ways, women's status is far from stagnant.

This chapter also demonstrates that gender identities and relations in the Maradi *Région* are extremely complex. Power relations extend well beyond gender issues to include a web of various positionings and material and social factors that determine one's influence and ability to act. Age, kin group, education, and class in addition to gender affect one's social status in the home and broader community.

Additionally, colonial and post-colonial governing structures have carved out or denied spaces of power for men and women in the Maradi *Région* at different points in history. For example, male "chief" positions were redefined and sometimes invented by the French, while ignoring historical positions of royal women in Hausaland. Women were also largely excluded from French education and subsequent leadership positions in the colonial period. Also, new colonial and post-colonial trade networks ended women's cloth trade, placing it in the hands of male traders. Later, the position '*Kungiya* was used in rural towns to help promote Kountché's *Société de Développement* and has continued to be used by development projects thereafter to mobilize rural women, reinforcing this leadership position. These examples also demonstrate the intertwining of the ideological

and material as colonial and post-colonial policies influenced gender roles and affected access to material resources for certain groups over others.

In the current era of neocolonialism, government restructuring and development projects also create and deny spaces for certain individuals, again shifting social hierarchies. And citizens react to these changes—sometimes resisting, sometimes finding opportunities, and sometimes losing out. In examining the history and social change around gender and other social hierarchies in the Maradi *Région*, categories of global and local again seem overly simplistic. Residents of the region have long been influenced by French colonialism, transnational religious networks, and migration. Keeping this rich history in mind, Chapter Six examines reformulations and translation of development interventions in this social context. It looks more explicitly at how CARE and UNICEF, as the two primary development organizations doing gender and rights-based work in the Maradi *Région*, are impacting and interacting with social hierarchies. More specifically, how are their gender and rights-based policies and programs being understood and translated, reformulated, or rejected in the social context described in this chapter?

Chapter Six

Translation, Reformulation, and Rejection of Gender and Rights in Development Interventions

Building on the social context laid out in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the rich discussions and diverse practices around gender and social hierarchies, rights and duties, and participatory development among CARE and UNICEF paid employees, key government collaborators with UNICEF, CARE and UNICEF volunteers in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, and residents of these towns.¹²⁸ These discussions and practices are translations, reformulations, and at times rejections of notions of gender and rights at various levels of CARE and UNICEF interventions. And as gender and rights are negotiated and made culturally resonant in CARE and UNICEF's work, core aspects of these notions from higher levels of CARE and UNICEF are often transformed or, in Merry's words, "indigenized." In particular, the radical challenge to patriarchy, which Merry found was maintained in her study of translating women's rights, has in many instances from my study been transformed so that patriarchy is accommodated. This chapter, drawing on the background laid out in previous chapters, analyses this process of translation and transformation.

Translations and Reformulations in CARE and UNICEF

Negotiating Male Headship and Female Power

Chapter Five noted many of the power relations and social hierarchies that exist in the Maradi *Région*, among which a strong belief in male headship in the home and in public life is especially prominent. Not surprisingly, CARE and UNICEF find it a challenge to talk about women's empowerment and gender equity in this social context. To a certain extent CARE and UNICEF have to accept or negotiate with Nigerien notions

¹²⁸ In this chapter, when I refer to CARE or UNICEF, I mean CARE or UNICEF in Niger.

of patriarchy in order to gain credibility. Some of the most prominent sites in which this happens are with Islamic leaders and “traditional chiefs” (those titled *sarauta* and *mai gari*). Additionally some of these negotiations play out in the nuances of language and choice of terminology.

Islam and Gender

CARE’s PN 51 has been involved in two main relationships with Muslim leaders since its inception. The first concerns PN 51’s *Communication pour un changement de comportement* (CCC) activities, which include a group of CARE personnel and non-CARE professional colleagues who periodically tour rural towns to inform people about their rights (e.g., inheritance, divorce, voting) and health issues (e.g., HIV/AIDS, nutrition, family planning). Also through CCC, *malamai* in these rural towns have been trained and provided with refresher courses to talk about rights and duties in marriage, women’s rights to education and land, divorce, and wife seclusion according to Islam; these activities are referred to as “*marabout relais*.” Normally male *malamai* participate, although PN 51 says it has started to identify women to be trained. The second main relationship PN 51 has formed with Muslim leaders is through the *Association des Femmes Musulmanes du Niger* (AFMN),¹²⁹ who put PN 51 in touch with prominent *malamai* in the Maradi *Région*. As a result of this relationship, several documents were produced by CARE in 2001 and 2002 based on sermons and teachings of a prominent Maradi (male) *malam* that address marriage rights, inheritance rights, and proper male-female relations. In general, AFMN and the Maradi *malamai* helped PN 51 staff as well as people in towns where CCC toured to better understand Islamic teachings around these issues.

¹²⁹ Muslim Women’s Association in Niger

In talking with CARE administrators and field agents in Niger who are Muslims about CARE's relationship to Islam, I was told that CARE is indeed a secular organization. However, CARE recognizes that Islam is an important part of most Nigeriens' lives and necessary to include in CARE's work so as to be culturally sensitive. In so doing, CARE is taking account of knowledge and cultures in aid recipient communities, a popular theme in development discourses today (Chambers 1997; Helmore and Singh 2001:3) and core to CARE-Niger's organizational culture. Furthermore, CARE staff claim that aid recipients themselves request Islamic content in CARE programs as they would like better information about their religion. From this perspective, including Islamic components in CARE programs can also be considered a participatory strategy. Finally and perhaps the most interesting justification for including Muslim teachings in CARE's work, CARE staff see acquiring a better understanding of Islam as a way to engage in debates about what is truly Islam and what are traditions/customs (*al'adu*). One female field agent for CARE explained to me:

They themselves, people in the rural areas, they said to come, sit, and sensitize them about things—to distinguish custom, to distinguish what religion is. That's why we do that training for *marabout relais*...You get it all out there so one knows religion. It does not say to step on a woman's rights [*hakki*]. It's only people [who do that].

So what is the difference between Islam and *al'adu*? According to one CARE administrator and another CARE field agent I interviewed, customs/traditions are things that change. One of them went on to say that they are not written down. Religion, however, does not change. As far as religion, he adds, people simply decide whether or not they will follow it. This idea that there is a true Islam out there to be understood is central to CARE employees' thinking. When something is done in the name of Islam that

one of them does not like, the usual explanation given is a misunderstanding or ignorance of true Islam.

Lack of understanding and ignorance (*jahilci*) about Islam was brought up again and again in my interviews with CARE employees. For example, I pointed out to two Muslim women employed by CARE the following passage from one of the documents that CARE produced with the prominent Maradi *malam* mentioned above:

Islam has only prescribed rights for a man after having performed his duties [*droits*] to his wife, in accordance with the word of the exalted God when he said, “Women have rights equivalent to their obligations and in accordance with everyday practices. Men, nevertheless, have a preeminence over them.”¹³⁰

Troubled by the last sentence, the women quickly slipped into a discussion about bad interpretations and people’s (especially rural people’s) ignorance of Islam. One of them replied:

I don’t know if this one is in [the Koran]...religion doesn’t say that a woman must stop at whatever her husband says. In fact in the villages, it’s not like the men don’t want this. It’s lack of understanding. There is a lack of understanding. They don’t understand.

Similarly, a male employee at CARE told me, “It’s not understanding Islam. Lack of understanding is what brings deteriorating gender relations.”

The notion of not practicing Islam the right way is invoked by some CARE employees when talking about wife seclusion as well. Several interviewees talked about two kinds of seclusion—one from poverty and ignorance, and another from wealth and following the rules. In other words if a man provides for all of his wife/wife’s needs and she has chosen seclusion, it is permissible. Then they go on to explain that most men in Niger do not provide properly for their wives or respect their wife’s wishes about

¹³⁰ This quote is paraphrased from the Koran 2:228, although taken out of context.

seclusion. By not coming out and saying that seclusion is bad but rather that it is often not practiced correctly, Muslim CARE employees avoid having to critique what they often consider to be a part of Islam itself.

However, some CARE employees (often women) acknowledge that in addition to support for women's rights in Islam there are some problematic teachings in Islam for someone interested in women's equality and empowerment. One female CARE field agent explained to me:

There are a lot of things [in Islam] that don't give a woman freedom/rights ['*yanci*'] to go out in the street, to go out everywhere. These exist, but related to the CCC work, none of these Hadiths are used. The Hadiths that are selected are those that give a woman freedom/rights ['*yanci*'], those that are able to improve a woman's life.

Another woman speaking about seclusion's relationship to Islam and human rights said:

[Seclusion] is not obligatory, only if she wants it. Although religion says so, well, in my opinion, if a man wants to do [seclusion], it is necessary that he has all the means to give his wife everything; she should have no troubles. At that time, he can do it to her, but nonetheless she has made a big mistake since truly she does not have her freedom [liberté]. Total freedom. Therefore on the other hand even though it is true that Islam says so, if one looks at universal rights, one is restricting women from one side of things. Now the problem is how does one balance universal rights and Islamic rights. That's the thing.

UNICEF also has relationships with some Islamic leaders, although to a lesser extent than CARE. From time to time, Islamic leaders are included in meetings UNICEF has with the Association of Traditional Chiefs in Niger (ACTN), mentioned further below and with whom UNICEF has a formal partnership. In the case of one such national forum on early marriage of girls organized by the ACTN, UNICEF, and the Niger government in 2002, one Islamic scholar was asked to give a speech on the topic from an Islamic perspective. As he weaves his way through an eloquent speech on

Islamic marriage, he states that a girl and boy who marry should be old enough to give their consent. Elsewhere, however, he explains that a marriage before puberty is indeed a valid marriage and the bride's relatives' have the duty to decide when she is ready for conjugal life. In the end, he concludes that Islam does not speak for or against early, pre-pubescent marriage (Daouda 2002). In this example, the rights of the individual are blurred with rights of relatives over an individual. One would have a hard time reconciling such conclusions with the CEDAW and CRC that UNICEF upholds so centrally. In particular, article sixteen of the CEDAW ends, "The betrothal and marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory" (United Nations 1979).

In general, however, UNICEF employees are much less engaged in debates about Islam than CARE employees are. UNICEF employees insist that UNICEF is secular and that any collaboration with Islamic leaders is a strategic alliance. UNICEF employees who I interviewed tended to be more critical of seclusion than CARE employees were, even though both groups of employees are all Muslims. In one of the harshest critiques, coming from a male administrator in UNICEF, he says:

Interviewee: It's my personal point of view. Me, I think that it's an institution of men.

KBH: Seclusion?

Interviewee: Seclusion. It's an institution of men to protect their wives against possible conquering or against possible lovers. That's it. In fact, it's a question of jealousy. If my wife stays in her home so that she does not go out, no one else can see her except for me. Isn't that so?

KBH: Yes, it's like that.

Interviewee: I don't trust her. There is that also. This is a relationship of imposition. This is my point of view. It's true that it's a custom, but is it really a foundation of Islam? I am not very strong in Islam but I ask the question—Is it truly an Islamic way?

This informant went on to talk about the violation of women's rights and freedoms through seclusion. Unlike those I interviewed in CARE, this individual is willing to ask the question of whether or not seclusion is really a part of Islam, rather than assuming it is and falling into the rationale of differentiating good and bad types of seclusion. But in so doing, he is still working under the assumption that there is a true Islam out there to be understood and attempts to relegate seclusion to the level of custom—something easier to critique, change, or reject than Islam, as discussed further below.

Other UNICEF interviewees made a narrower critique of seclusion that focused on how it prevents women from taking their children to the doctor, going to the doctor themselves, getting an education, or coming to UNICEF meetings. By focusing on how seclusion affects women's participation in UNICEF's activities, however, some UNICEF employees seem to quietly dismiss seclusion as part of a person's private life without making a bolder critique of the practice such as that of their colleague above. Although making a more direct critique of seclusion than some CARE employees, they avoid taking on any criticism of Islam or a defense of certain types of seclusion in their comments.

Indeed, Islam is a central part of these CARE and UNICEF employees' lives and therefore has to be reformulated rather than simply rejected or accepted as a whole. CARE and UNICEF employees sometimes challenge Islam and seek to redefine it from within, while at the same time making an effort to mark their Muslim identities in their work. This is evident in particular through prayer times that are scheduled into CARE and UNICEF meetings, whether these are in rural communities, just among employees, or otherwise. And Muslim employees usually participate in the prayers. As is typical in

Niger, the men pray outside, and the women pray inside. Furthermore, Muslim CARE and UNICEF employees who I interviewed were quick to clarify in my questions about religious identity that they do not practice any *bori*, *bokanci* (indigenous healing traditions), *arnanci* (pre-Islamic animist spiritual traditions), or *tsahi* (magic)—only Islam. These are considered *al'adu*, not *adini*¹³¹ (religion).

Both CARE and UNICEF employees are concerned about women's rights, but find different ways of negotiating their understanding of Islam with notions of rights. Many do so by focusing on needing to understand true Islam in order to help women, distinguishing *al'adu* and *adini*. UNICEF employees, being considerably more disconnected from the communities where they intervene, have more freedom to critique seclusion and accommodate an understanding of rights that is more in line with the notions of individual freedom or emancipation and UN Conventions and Declarations. Most CARE employees, on the other hand, are deeply engaged on a daily basis with aid recipients and must more carefully grapple with popular Islamic teachings and notions of male headship, couching their work in this social context. Thus, they latch onto examples of rights for women found in Islamic traditions, such as a woman's rights to inheritance and education. In this way, they see the work as participatory and culturally sensitive. UNICEF government collaborators must also grapple in this way with the communities where they intervene. Details on their views are covered further below, however.

¹³¹ *Adini* is a general term referring to certain religions, namely Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Usually when people use it in Niger, they are implying Islam, however.

Traditional Authorities and Gender

Tradition, like Islam, is also something to be negotiated with and reformulated in CARE and UNICEF's work. Traditional authority in Niger is usually understood by CARE and UNICEF to be patriarchal, although we have seen in Chapter Five that there have been prominent female figures in Hausaland royalty and *bori* religion. Nonetheless, those traditional authorities with whom CARE and UNICEF work are mainly male leaders. These include the *mai gari* in towns where these organizations intervene and various *sarakai*. The main exception to this is CARE and UNICEF's work with the 'Kungiya and often also female members of her and the *mai gari*'s family in rural towns. Also UNICEF has begun to talk about including female royalty (called "*les innas*" and "*les reines mères*"¹³² by UNICEF interviewees) in their work.

UNICEF has strategically allied itself with the Association of Traditional Chiefs in Niger (ACTN) to gain credibility with and promote its messages to the public about vaccinations, early marriage of girls, and girl's education. As already mentioned in January 2002, the ACTN organized a national forum on early marriage of girls in collaboration with UNICEF and the Nigerien government that addressed Nigerien legal rights as well as Islamic teachings on the matter. Similarly in April 2004, the "Transborder Meeting between Nigerien and Nigerian Traditional Chiefs on Polio Eradication" was held after some Nigeriens began resisting polio vaccinations, believing they are harmful. Although for years people in northern Nigeria have been suspicious that polio vaccinations cause HIV/AIDS or infertility and are part of a Western conspiracy to limit the black and/or Muslim population, a new surge of rumors began to

¹³² *Inna* is another Hausa title for *Iya*, mentioned in Chapter Five, and *reine mère* means queen mother, which is this informant's generic term for the various "traditional" positions for women in Niger.

fly in 2003 when a group of politicians and religious leaders claimed to have medical proof that the vaccines being distributed in Nigeria could cause infertility. The meeting UNICEF helped organize in 2004 brought together *sarakai* (all male) from northern Nigeria and Niger as well as some Islamic leaders, medical professionals, government dignitaries (including Nigerien President Mamadou Tandja), and UNICEF personnel. Among the medical professionals and UNICEF employees, a few women were present.¹³³ It ended with a resolution and recommendations agreed to by the Nigerien and Nigerian “traditional chiefs” that recognized the importance of vaccinations against polio and acknowledged that they would actively participate in vaccination mobilization.

Speaking with one UNICEF administrator about UNICEF’s work with “traditional chiefs,” he explains:

Why work with the chiefs? They’re a moral authority, a leader of his community. Normally when a chief says something, in our culture, no one can question him because the chief cannot mislead you as your chief. Therefore, one believes in him. So that’s why the chiefs are used because there is this relationship of faith between the chief and his community...So he is used [by UNICEF] like this to do civic education, to do sensibilisation, to convince, for example, parents to send their children to school, to let their children be vaccinated, and so on.

This informant, however, made it clear that UNICEF works with these “chiefs” to promote UNICEF’s agenda, making it a political strategy. Indeed, tradition or custom are used strategically in many ways by UNICEF employees, both positively and negatively depending on the context. For example, one of the doctors who presented at the polio meeting explained to the “traditional chiefs” that a reason why there are problems in polio eradication is *al’adu*. He went on to explain that *al’adu* are behind why people do

¹³³ I estimated about 150 people were present in total. I counted 15 women the first day and six the second day of the meeting, including me. Also, I was one of only three white people at the meeting. The other two worked for UNICEF in Dakar and Niamey; none of us presented or gave a speech at the meeting.

not bring their children to vaccination sites. This is also somewhat ironic since prominent and well-educated Muslim professionals played a large role in spreading suspicion about polio vaccinations in 2003-2004. Nonetheless, the doctor is associating *ala'du* with ignorance. Thus in this case, *al'adu* are bad. Other times, *al'adu* are seen as good, something that can help women and children. In an address at the same meetings, the UNICEF Representative of Niger said to the traditional chiefs:

At once guardians of traditions and grand visionaries of the future, you are also certainly true agents of change. Our traditions are a wealth and we must use them to forge ahead. [Adjibade 2004:3, my translation]

Indeed, some UNICEF employees tend to see traditions/customs in a much more dynamic way than others in this organization. The UNICEF Representative in the above quote is framing traditions as something that can be an integral part of positive social change; they are building blocks for creating a better life. By contrast in a UNICEF consultant's report on UNICEF's work in Niger on gender, she explains:

The participation of all members of a community is essential to the success of the Niger Government/UNICEF cooperative program, but one is forced to notice that it still clashes with the weight of traditions that keep women at a very inferior status to that of men. [Monnet 1998:5, my translation]

In particular the word "keep," or *maintiennent* in the original French text, implies a certain stagnation about traditions. A UNICEF interviewee also mentioned with regard to the high illiteracy level in Niger, "Tradition is still strong/deep (*lourde*). Therefore, it takes time to create the change that one would like." This picture of tradition gives one a sense that it holds people back and resists change. Such comments reveal a view of tradition similar to that of the doctor at the polio meeting—a barrier to UNICEF's work.

CARE employees also invoke tradition, although in slightly different ways. In one interview with a CARE employee, I asked her what prevents women from knowing their rights. She said:

What prevents it? It's all about, concerning tradition [*al'ada*]. Therefore, from the time a woman gets up, since her grandparents' and parents' time, she knows that in the rural areas, a woman is nothing. Therefore, to them, since they wake up, they see their work, this work in the home. The work is threshing, pounding, going to the field, getting wood, getting water. That's their only work. Any work concerning the development of the town that comes along, their intention is that it is not for women. It's tradition, since their parents' and grandparents' time. But also that's not how it is. Now in this time, it changes. So tradition, whenever one says tradition, it's a thing that can be changed. So necessarily, this tradition is what prevents them [from obtaining their rights].

In this statement, she acknowledges both tradition's negative impact on women, but also the dynamism of tradition and potential for change. In social scientist terms, she understands that tradition is "socially constructed," albeit certain traditions are bad for women. In the following statement from one of her coworkers, tradition is also seen as dynamic. I asked her about CARE's goals concerning gender, and she replied:

Our goal, we want, since everyone knows that women are left behind. There are matters like religion and tradition too. They cause, even if women want to develop/progress, there is something oppressing them. Because sometimes, women don't know. Sometimes too they know but don't have the information. What can they do to get out of this problem? And sometimes too, it's the men who cause things to not go well. Therefore, our goal in CARE, is not to change customs and tradition [*al'adu da gargajiya*], but we get to teach women strategies, we give them complete information, we give them full training. Some of them, they themselves struggle to get out of this situation.

Although she acknowledges that some traditions are bad for women, they are not the target that CARE is aiming at. Rather, she argues, CARE seeks to give women tools to change their lives as they see fit.

CARE has less formal ties with the *sarakai* than UNICEF, although they do keep them up to date on what they are doing and periodically invite some to come and see their work. CARE, however, does work closely with the *mai gari* in each rural town, as does UNICEF. Any time that CARE or UNICEF begins work in a rural town, the *mai gari* is consulted. Similarly as activities and trainings unfold, the *mai gari* continues to be consulted about them. For example if people from Garin Jakka or Tchikaji Gajeré need to be chosen to attend a CARE or UNICEF training (e.g., learning about conflict resolution in the household or animal husbandry) or to form a village committee, a CARE field agent or government worker collaborating with UNICEF will talk to the *mai gari* and usually also the '*Kungiya* and a few other prominent men in the community about who to select. Working through already established authority figures is familiar and facilitates easier entrée into rural communities.

Al'adu is therefore something that can be used strategically when it serves the purposes of CARE or UNICEF, as is Islam. And CARE and UNICEF recognize that as strong social forces in Nigeriens' lives, traditions/customs and religion can be used as tools for change to help women, children, and vulnerable households. However, *al'adu* tends to be critiqued more harshly than Islam and is understood to be more amenable to change. It can be good or bad, and there is no "true" *al'adu* to be practiced. However, Islam is usually considered good; Muslims tend to attribute the incorrect practice of Islam to what makes things bad. In this sense, traditions/customs are seen by many CARE and UNICEF employees to be dynamic, unfixed, and changing. True Islam is not any of these; it remains the same. And it is often believed that one can and should seek to understand true Islam. These perceptions of *ala'du* and Islam make implementing

gender-oriented programs in CARE and UNICEF a challenge, but in different ways. Islam is harder to critique, especially if a belief or practice is based on a passage in the Koran or a Hadith. On the other hand, Islam itself often serves as a critique for *al'adu*. Nevertheless, both Islam and *al'adu* in Niger embrace versions of patriarchy. So in this debate over what is Islam and what is *al'adu*, patriarchy itself is critiqued only selectively. For example, issues such as women's inheritance rights, marriage rights, and the right to education are raised by Muslims as part of Islam and a critique of *al'adu*. Other practices such as wife seclusion become harder for Muslims to critique. And male headship itself is even harder as it is affirmed by both *al'adu* and Islam.

Choosing Terminology I: Équité and Égalité

Terminology becomes important for understanding the goals that those affiliated with CARE and UNICEF have reformulated in terms of gender and human rights. For many Nigeriens, women can be empowered to make their lives better as long as they do not become equal with men. For such people, male headship is an important part of their worldview and the proper social order. Several employees of CARE and UNICEF told me that they do hope for equality or women's emancipation, but are careful who they say this to.

For example, a CARE administrator who advocated for true equality explained to me that most Nigeriens prefer the term *équité* (equity) rather than *égalité* (equality). She said, "If one says equality, it's like a woman becomes equal/level (*daidai*) with a man. Whereas in the Koran, a woman and a man are not equal." She goes on, providing examples to distinguish the two terms:

Since they know, equality, men and women are able to go to school, able to have a job, right? They are equal [*égaux*]. But equity, it's not the same

thing. It's still possible they have equal work; they don't have the same salary...It's less strong.

In PN 51's Workshop Guide for Gender Sensibilisation in Rural Areas, it states that *égalité* means "That which is identical, the same in number, rights, power." *Équité* means, "Something fair; it's the equality of opportunities" (CARE 2002:53, my translations). *Équité* connotes, in this context, a sense of justice or fairness without having to mean completely equal. Diarra (1974) also makes such a distinction in Niger using the term "complementarity" rather than equality. In other words, men and women have different roles and positions in a society; they are not meant to be the same. By using "equity" rather than "equality," many Nigeriens can acknowledge the importance of some women's issues without having to deal with the seeming contradiction created between their religious beliefs and the idea of gender equality. For example, one can say that women have rights to inheritance according to Islam by using "equity," since women and men do not inherit equally. Equity can still accommodate female domesticity, wife seclusion, and male provision as *better* alternatives to historical household economic systems around Maradi in which women worked hard to fend for themselves much of the year.

Choosing Terminology II: Hakki and 'Yanci

As with many words in Hausa, there is no direct translation of the English or French terms "right" (*droit*) or "human rights" (*droits de l'homme*). Right is sometimes translated *hakki*, which implies something is owed to you by someone, and sometimes *'yanci*, which implies a sense of freedom, power over, or ownership of something. CARE and UNICEF employees tend to use the two terms interchangeably. In fact, the two terms are frequently used as synonyms in casual conversation in Hausa. However, as

I describe in more detail further below, there are important distinctions that native Hausa speakers in CARE, UNICEF, the government, Tchikaji Gajeré, and Garin Jakka pointed out to me as I compared *'yanci* and *hakki* with numerous individuals.

The discussion of rights and duties in marriage from Chapter Five illustrates well the notion of *hakki*. For example, a husband fully provides for his wife (his duty and her right), while she fulfills her duty and his right by being obedient to her husband. This understanding of rights is reciprocal and relational. *'Yanci*, however, better captures the Enlightenment conceptions of individual Rights of Man in Europe, the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and civil rights movements in the U.S. that form the basis of “rights” in Western traditions (Cowan et al. 2001; Merry 2001). *'Yanci* (or *'yancin kai*) is used, for example, to express Niger’s independence from France. One native Hausa-speaking male UNICEF administrator made a distinction between the two terms by explaining to me that Nigeriens are not ready to hear about *'yancin mata* (or as he translates it *émancipation des femmes*¹³⁴), which includes, for example, the right not to marry or to do as a woman pleases. UNICEF can, however, talk about *hakkin mata*¹³⁵ (or as he translates it *droit femme*), which is compatible with Islam and includes, for example, improved opportunities for education, health care, and work. He confessed to me, however, that UNICEF’s ultimate goal is *'yancin mata*.

These nuances in translating and choosing terminology are significant tools Nigeriens use to accommodate or critique male headship. *Equité* and *hakki* allow male headship to remain, while *égalité* and *'yanci* leave less room for it.

¹³⁴ Women’s emancipation/liberation.

¹³⁵ Women’s rights using *hakki*.

Defining Gender in CARE and UNICEF

Translating Gender

First and foremost when studying gender in the Maradi *Région* of Niger, one must acknowledge a language and translation problem. There is no Hausa word for “gender.” One translation for gender, which is used by some CARE employees, is *jinsi*; however, *jinsi* better translates as “type,” “color,” or “race” rather than gender. While one can talk about what one means by “gender” in Hausa, a single term will not translate this concept. For example, a common phrase development professionals use to explain gender in Hausa is “*hul’da ce tsakanin mata da maza*” (it is relations between women and men). This problem in translation exemplifies a larger disconnect between competing discourses on gender in the Maradi *Région*, especially over the last 30 years with the entrée of transnational aid organizations such as UNICEF and CARE as well as increasing Islamization, domestication of women, and wife seclusion.

Most conversations, meetings, and printed materials of transnational aid organizations and the Nigerien government are in French. Furthermore although literate in French, very few development professionals and civil servants can read and write in Hausa, Zerma, or other indigenous languages, even when it is their mother tongue. On the other hand, most rural aid recipients have had no French education, although most towns have a couple of exceptions to this. Many aid recipients have attended Koranic school, but cannot functionally read and write in Arabic. Also a few have attended adult literacy classes in Hausa or other indigenous languages, but have minimal abilities to read and write in those languages. In other words, these rural populations are largely functionally illiterate in any language, although they speak one or more indigenous

language (and usually not French) fluently. All this is to say that there is a language divide between CARE and UNICEF employees and the rural populations with whom they work. Even though all of the UNICEF and CARE employees based in Maradi speak Hausa fluently, they prefer to hold staff meetings in French (a second language for all of them). During breaks, they slip back into Hausa to chat with each other.

So why use French, if they are native Hausa speakers? I argue that the answer to this question, at least in part, lies in the problems of translation that I have already brought up. Many of the ideas that CARE and UNICEF discuss as central to their work are rooted in a certain set of languages and traditions coming from donor countries. In the case of CARE and UNICEF, development discourses in English and French are the greatest influences in this regard. Words like “gender,” “human rights,” “development,” “modernization,” and “empowerment” have become such popular terms that they are used in a jargony way by development professionals. Nigerien CARE and UNICEF employees learn about such concepts in French (or occasionally English) discussions with development colleagues. Thus when with other French-educated development colleagues, it is easier to just continue to talk about these concepts in French rather than Hausa. Furthermore, all or most of their formal education has been in French, so in an educational or professional setting, it may feel most comfortable to use French. In some cases, demonstrating one’s fluency in French can also be a way to mark oneself as part of a certain social class of professionals.

In the interviews that I conducted, I asked native or fluent Hausa speakers questions in Hausa (my language of preference), although sprinkling in French development terms such as “*genre*” when asking about such concepts. However, often

the interviewees chose to answer partly or wholly in French rather than in Hausa. Again, they may have preferred to talk about development concepts in this language that is more closely connected to the concepts themselves. And some may have persevered with the idea that as a white person I would be more comfortable in French than in Hausa, although Hausa is clearly my stronger language. In general, UNICEF employees used more French in their interviews than CARE employees, probably reflecting the fact that UNICEF employees less frequently have to converse about development ideas in Hausa as administrators who do not spend much time in the field. CARE employees regularly spend time with Hausa-speaking communities who receive aid. Interestingly, the person who insisted on answering all of my Hausa questions in French is the native Hausa-speaking UNICEF employee who had the harshest critique of seclusion of women, cited above. Was he so immersed in development circles in the capital city that he could afford to critique patriarchy head-on since he did not have to negotiate on a regular basis with attitudes of aid recipients in the field?

Defining and “Doing” Gender in CARE

Beyond choosing a language and term to use, there are also different ways to define a single term. Several key interactions with CARE, UNICEF, and government employees helped me realize the different ways in which they and I were conceptualizing gender (*genre*). First, at a CARE workshop that I attended with PN 51 employees, we were asked to come up with a definition of gender in small groups. Trying to quickly summarize a slew of academic readings on gender I have studied over the years, I suggested the following definition to my small group and later the group at large: “All aspects of culture that touch on masculine or feminine identities, and social roles

according to these identities.” Several people critiqued my definition because it did not include a means/way for change or did not have rights in it. It was just gender, not *doing* gender. The three small groups eventually each agreed on the following definitions (translated from the original French):

Group One: Together the actions that aim at an equitable sharing of benefits and risks between men and women all while taking account of their needs in order to transform power relations for a harmonious and sustainable development.

Group Two: Gender can be defined as a way by which man and woman accept a sustainable development through equitable sharing of risks and benefits.

Group Three: An approach taking account of attitudes and aptitudes of men and women, of their needs and their rights, the roles and responsibilities of each at the same time that it permits an equitable sharing of risks and benefits. This is in the perspective of sustainable development.

Some of the comments the rest of the staff made about these definitions were revealing. “Does ‘taking account of’ actually mean *helping* women?” one man asked. “Why weren’t rights included?” wondered someone else about the first two. The following day in the same workshop, someone suggested that “gender” (relations between men and women) is passive while “gender and development” is active. I was beginning to see that with this group active change to improve women’s lives was understood to be central to “gender.”

Also worth noting in the three definitions above is a relationship acknowledged between sustainable development and equitable sharing of risks and benefits between men and women. First, it is significant that “equitable” is chosen by each group over “equal” in light of the above discussion on equity and equality. Therefore, sharing risks and benefits does not have to be equal between men and women in order to be a part of

sustainable development. Sustainable development is closely related to the concept of *lahiya* (well-being), mentioned in Chapter Five. There I suggest that women acquiesce to seclusion and male headship as they seek well-being for themselves and their children. In this context, hierarchical, reciprocal, and relational rights and duties of men and women can be seen as equitable (not equal) and associated with well-being, development, and prosperity. *Lahiya* seems in such contexts to be a viable option for translating “development” into Hausa, circumventing the politicized term *ci gaba* and not presuming concepts such as modernity and progress often implied in the English term. Second, a sharing of risks and benefits is invoked in all three definitions, but only in the context of a household and gender relationships. As I will point out later in this chapter, sharing risks and benefits also has implications for class relations.



Figure 18: Most of the CARE PN 51 Staff Members in August 2004

Part of CARE's discussions about defining gender also involve distinguishing it from sex. In the opening vignette to this dissertation, I cite an exchange that CARE employees have in a workshop as they try to distinguish gender and sex. The woman who says that gender can change while sex cannot reiterates a common belief among CARE employees. In the CARE PN 51 Workshop Guide for Gender Sensitization in a Rural Setting, the chart found in Figure 19 appears.

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Gender</u>
-Universal	-Different according to region, country, context
-Biological	-Cultural
-Determined at Birth (Therefore cannot be changed)	-Determined by society (Therefore can be changed or can evolve)
Examples:	Examples:
-Only women can give birth	-Men and women can work as an engineer.
-Only men can procreate	-Women and men can take care of children and the elderly

Figure 19: Sex as Opposed to Gender in CARE Workshop Guide¹³⁶

The same chart appears in materials that UNICEF has used in years past to do gender trainings. This sort of division between sex and gender is not uncommon in Western contexts.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, I find it problematic for several reasons. First, linking culture to change and seeing biology as fixed does not allow room for the dynamic world of biological change. For example, age changes a body over time. Also, someone's "sex" can be changed, as in the case of hijras of India (Nanda 2000:27-40) or those who have had a sex change operation. And universal classifications of sex are problematic as biology is extremely diverse. For example, a person can have all the physical traits to be

¹³⁶ From CARE-International au Niger 2002:25.

¹³⁷ The "only men can procreate" line would be challenged by many Westerners today as assigning men an active and women a passive role in human reproduction (for example, see Martin 1997). But this concept is certainly a part of the history and even some contemporary attitudes in the West.

called a woman but be unable to conceive, or a person can be intersex, carrying some physical attributes that are socially ascribed to a man and some ascribed to a woman. Second, gender also sees tremendous change and variation, but this is not only between cultures. It is also between individuals living side by side in the same place, speaking the same language, and sharing many cultural similarities.

Thus, implicit within the way that CARE discusses sex and gender are two sets of dualism or oppositions: 1) sex versus gender, and 2) men versus women. I argue that historically Hausa culture and “gender” categories are not deeply rooted in dualistic thinking as they are in many Western societies and transnational development discourses. In fact, “opposite,” a concept at the core of dualistic thinking, is another concept that is difficult to translate into Hausa. Furthermore in terms of marriage and household relationships, I have observed that rivalries or competitions occur at least as much if not more between co-wives as they do between wife and husband. In fact, the Hausa word for co-wife, “*kishiya*,” translates as the jealous one or a rival. Hausa-English dictionaries often list “the opposite of something” or “opposite” as one of *kishiya*’s definitions as well (Abraham 1962; Awde 1996; Newman and Newman 1977), although this is not an exact translation. Additionally, studies of homosexuality (Gaudio 1998) and *bori* relationships in Hausa cultures (Echard 1991; Masquelier 2001) further raise the question of the relevance of conceptualizing “gender” as a strictly bounded opposition of male and female. For example, what about metaphors of marriage and sexual penetration between spirits and the spirit possessed, or women who marry one another in trance through the *bori* religion? What about ‘*yan daudu* (male homosexuals and/or transvestites) who vary from the role of *namiji* (man) in Hausa culture? Falling outside a dualistic gender

framework, these types of individuals have been overlooked or villainized in both development and Islamic discourses. Speaking more generally, development discourses on gender worldwide have not adequately problematized the dualistic assumptions woven throughout them. In some ways, this contributes to the further marginalization by development projects of *bori*, *'yan daudu*, or other Nigerien traditions and persons that exhibit gender variation, while also further supporting a sharp dualistic divide between male and female. Such a divide is also characteristic of contemporary Nigerien Muslim conceptions of proper sexuality and gender roles. Sharp dualisms such as this are usually accompanied by hierarchy and firm boundaries, which is the case in south-central Niger.

Nevertheless, I found that CARE employees in PN 51 as well as in other CARE projects were able to discuss the meaning and applications of a gender approach to their work in great depth. And they certainly challenged me to rethink in certain ways my sometimes highly theoretical ideas about and approach to studying gender. Their in-depth discussions on gender, however, stand in sharp contrast to UNICEF.

Technocratic Gender and Fabricated Gender Relations in UNICEF

UNICEF put on no specific gender trainings in Madarounfa *Département* during my field work, although they have done some in the past. However, materials on these past trainings, interviews with employees, and other UNICEF activities in 2004 showed me some distinct ways that UNICEF tends to view gender in Niger.

First, some UNICEF employees saw incorporating gender as a part of UNICEF's mandate. When I asked a UNICEF employee about UNICEF's goals for gender policies and programs, he replied:

It's written in UNICEF's mandate. Therefore it's an obligation for UNICEF as long as it does its activities to consider the specific roles of

each sex...It is a question of mandate. It is a question of rights. UNICEF must be vigilant about this. It's UNICEF who is a representative and—what is it called?—signatory of CEDAW. Right? OK, therefore, one is vigilant about putting into practice the CEDAW. Thus, it's become like a law for us, CEDAW. The CRC too.

Such language of mandates and laws are not uncommon in UNICEF. There is a keen awareness of what New York says to do or, in the case of the Maradi sub-bureau, what Niamey says to do. A hierarchical order certainly became apparent as I invited various UNICEF personnel to be interviewed. All of them required that I show written authorization from the UNICEF Representative before consenting to be interviewed (by contrast no CARE or government personnel were very concerned about authorization from their superiors). Several UNICEF employees, even when I showed this authorization, either refused the interview or told me they would have to ask special permission because they did not think they had the authority to speak for UNICEF about gender.

This leads to another observation of UNICEF—within this hierarchical structure, UNICEF is very compartmentalized. During my first few months on the field, I was struck by the conflicting messages I received between UNICEF administrators in Niamey and UNICEF administrators in Maradi. Those in Niamey (as well as published materials) were telling me that gender had been mainstreamed throughout UNICEF. However, one administrator in Maradi insisted that UNICEF did not integrate a gender approach in its SBI activities. She explained to me that CARE uses a gender approach, not UNICEF. She also was referred to me by several UNICEF-Niamey personnel who said she had some expertise in gender. She refused an interview with me because she claimed she was not authorized to talk about such matters and insisted that the UNICEF gender focal point

person in Niamey is the person who I should talk to about gender in UNICEF. He would tell me everything I needed to know, she told me. I explained that I had already spoken with him several times but was interested in hearing the points of view of other UNICEF employees. I invited her numerous times to be interviewed, but she always refused. We discussed logistics of my stay in Tchikaji Gajeré, but never development concepts or approaches. Eventually, I managed to interview another administrator in Maradi. This administrator insisted that only the UNICEF Representative can officially speak for UNICEF, so he asked not to be tape recorded. He limited his comments to speak mainly about gender and education as this is one area in which he has some training.

The confusion over what gender is and if UNICEF is actually doing it continued in other interactions. A Nigerien government employee, Omar, was one of the teachers for a UNICEF-sponsored training for Integrated Community Development. Male and female representatives from the intervention units¹³⁸ where UNICEF works in Madarounfa *Département* attended. Omar led a session in which he talked about reasons why women often do not enter into community development planning. The class listed barriers that prevent women from participating, such as lack of education or not getting permission from their husbands. After the session, I greeted Omar and said I was happy to see he integrated some gender issues into the lesson. He returned my comment with a blank stare. Then he proceeded to tell me that the lesson was not about “*genre*,” but integrated community development. I tried to explain that I thought talking about what prevented women from participating in community development planning was related to “*genre*.” It was clear that he did not understand what I meant. I knew that Omar had been trained in gender issues. In fact, he was the one person from his office who had

¹³⁸ These consist of between two and ten rural towns grouped together in a geographic area.

attended a gender training (put on by CARE) and taught at a gender training for school teachers (sponsored by UNICEF). We had already talked about these events at great length in an interview. “Who wrote the class materials?” I then asked him. He said he did not know, but that a UNICEF administrator had given them to him. Later I found out that one of Omar’s superiors, a fellow civil servant, wrote them with some of his government colleagues.

I was baffled by this interaction for some time. However thinking about it in light of the compartmentalization of UNICEF as a whole, it started to make some sense. Gender is a certain development approach seen in a reductionistic way in UNICEF. It is a technique, a technical and specialized area. But even for those working with UNICEF who have been exposed to ideas about gender, they have a hard time seeing how it relates to the day-to-day SBI activities UNICEF is doing in rural Nigerien communities. As I learned more and more about what UNICEF is doing in Tchikaji Gajeré and neighboring communities, I could see that gender was in fact taken into account in planning the activities. For example, resources and training were given to women as well as men, women representatives were required for certain committees, and gender differences and relations were sometimes discussed. As mentioned in Chapter Four, even rural aid recipients involved in UNICEF trainings had noticed and remarked to me that UNICEF now works with both men and women. However, lower level UNICEF personnel in Maradi and their collaborators in Madarounfa seemed to have a hard time seeing that these activities take account of gender relations. Perhaps they were not told that this is gender. Perhaps they were never encouraged to debate what gender is, as CARE employees do. Thus, how “gender” is understood and implemented in UNICEF reflects

the hierarchical and compartmentalized organizational culture that exists in UNICEF.

Gender is incorporated at higher levels of program planning, but lower level employees and government collaborators do not always know what it is and why it is included.

Because of this and the infrequent contact UNICEF personnel have on the ground in aid recipient communities, they sometimes misunderstand gender roles and relations in these communities. For example, the extent to which seclusion was practiced in Madarounfa *Département* was greatly underestimated by a key UNICEF administrator for that geographic area. At the start of my field work, this person informed me that UNICEF does not do much work in towns in Madarounfa *Département* where there is a lot of seclusion. Later, I reported back that the majority of women in Tchikaji Gajeré, where UNICEF has been active for eight years, are secluded.

The most striking example I found of a disconnect between UNICEF rhetoric on gender relations and social change on the ground in and around Maradi is evident in a report on UNICEF's gender approach by a UNICEF consultant (Monnet 1998). In this report, the author recounts a story from her brief trip to an aid recipient community near Maradi. The *mai gari* of this community told her about a man in his town who decided to reduce the household tasks that were expected of his wife, namely going for firewood, getting water at the well, and working in the fields. However with no recognition that these are core attributes of seclusion, the consultant naively attributes this positive change in household work distribution to the success of UNICEF's program in that village that has sensitized men to share work responsibilities with their wife(s). Ironically, the author shows no evidence of speaking with any women in this community for her gender report; all of her quotes are from the *mai gari*.

If, however, one looks at the training materials that have been developed and used by UNICEF, clear definitions of gender are laid out. For example, sex and gender are distinguished in one UNICEF manual on gender and development as follows:

Sex is generally defined as being “together the biological and physiological characteristics that permit distinguishing in most living beings the male gender from the female gender. The word indicates as well the external genital organs of men and women...Gender, as with age and socio-economic status, is considered as an aspect of social construction. It’s a way to show that identities of men and women have essentially social origins and that social relations between men and women are defined by social organization. [Mindaoudou 1999:7, my translation]

The materials Omar used for the training of school teachers he led were largely taken from this manual and some of CARE’s materials. A few pages from UNICEF’s manual with an exact copy of the above definitions as well as CARE’s table found in Figure 19 constitute the majority of his notes and visual displays used for this training. Even with these materials available, I was unable to stumble upon or initiate a serious debate with most UNICEF employees over what gender is and how to apply it in programs and policies as I had done numerous times with CARE employees.

Government Collaborators on Gender, Rights, and Development

As already explained in Chapter Four, the Technical Services at the *département* (formerly *arrondissement*) level carry out UNICEF-sponsored programs in rural areas. The Technical Services who work in Tchikaji Gajeré are based in the town of Madarounfa. Indeed, Madarounfa is the place where I found civil servants doing development work who were knowledgeable about the rural towns in the *département*. Unlike UNICEF employees, they visited these towns on a regular basis and knew many of the residents in them, including Tchikaji Gajeré. While most in the Technical Services

had a good knowledge of events and people in aid recipient towns, few had training in gender.

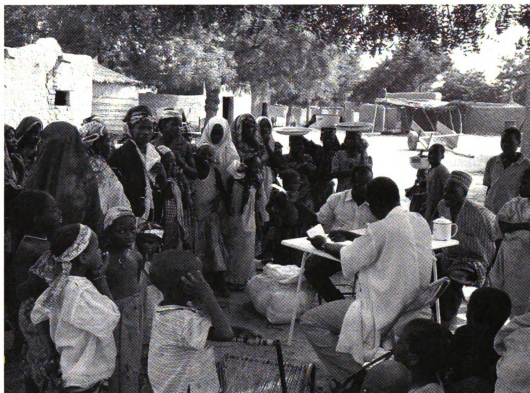


Figure 20: Government Workers Distributing Mosquito Nets from UNICEF for Tchikaji Gajeré Women and Children in July 2004

Fifteen people from the Technical Services in Madarounfa had been trained in gender issues, and no rural communities have had a training in gender through the Technical Services/UNICEF as of 2004 in Madarounfa *Département*. This comes out to about one trained person per unit of the Technical Services (i.e., one person from Agriculture, one person from Environment, and so on). One such person is Omar, already mentioned in the section above. Omar received training in 2000 from CARE because he helped them with a research study. I talked to Omar in his interview about how UNICEF worked with women and/or used gender in the past and today. He explained that in the past:

Men would dominate things too much. They would lead things too much. It was like it was theirs. It wasn't us who did it, but if you went to a place—if you went for example to a town, if one wanted to, one could go and see—you would have a meeting. You know, one would see there is a meeting being held or something. Only men would be doing it. That's it. One would see only men undertaking the thing. Women were left behind them. They put—them, it was them—they put themselves behind. They did not want to enter into the thing. Then afterwards when it was realized, it was said this is not appropriate since they too are many. They are more in number than men. It is not right to say that one has left half of the people behind and say that development has been reached.

Shortly thereafter, I asked him, “Did you ever work with only women? For example, you saw the problem of men not wanting women to enter in.” But before I finished my statement, he corrected me:

No, it's not the men who didn't want women to enter in. It's the women. They were not coming...[Now] they have been really sensitized/educated. Before when a person would call a meeting, it was difficult for men and women to sit together in one place. But now it's all of them. Now, they all sit together.

Omar's statements reveal two aspects of how he thinks about gender. First, he does not see men at fault, but rather women at fault for not getting involved in development programs. The problem, rather than a biased development project or patriarchal society, is that women were not educated or sensitized (*ba a waye masu kai ba*) to know that they should participate.¹³⁹ Second, this passage hints at his understanding of what gender is. This understanding, like many in the Technical Services, is couched in participatory development thinking, which is the predominant framework through which they plan and perform their work. Just prior to Omar's comments above, he explained to me the process by which participants are selected for UNICEF activities. He said, as have some

¹³⁹ Other Technical Services employees expressed similar attitudes in other contexts as well. For example, one man explained to me that rural men understand that girls should go to school, and it is actually the women who keep girls out of school to help them sell foodstuffs door to door.

of his government colleagues, that they never tell aid recipients it is mandatory to include women. It is up to the community to choose the participants.

Omar: Therefore if the person doesn't do the work, they don't come crying to us since we didn't choose. Them, they chose. You see?

KBH: Yes, but how does this relate to gender [*genre*]?

Omar: Oh, it relates to gender since there are men and women in it.

KBH: But sometimes people in the rural towns, won't they only pick men?

Omar: Well, there are times too when you see a job that's all women.

KBH: So you are leaving them to choose who they want to?

Omar: Yes, we leave them to choose who they want.

Gender, in his understanding, seems to mean simply that both women and men have a chance to participate. He was not sympathetic in this conversation to barriers that prevent women from participating.

Others in the Technical Services also talk about including gender as simply a dimension of participatory development. Participatory Development was almost always mentioned as the most important approach used by Technical Services employees who I interviewed. One Technical Services administrator, crediting Mahatma Gandhi, used the saying "Whatever you do without me, you do against me" to reinforce the importance of participatory development efforts. This same person, however, also had the most cynical view when talking about including gender and women in their work. He said that if development professionals want to get financial support, they have to tell the men to include women in the work.

On the other hand, gender is talked about by a few individuals as a matter of rights. For example, the director of one of the Technical Services units connected women's participation in project activities to women's rights. He explained to me:

It is [now] being explained to people—men first—that women have rights [*'yanci*]. Just as I, a man, have rights, this woman has rights. She is a

member of the town, a citizen of the country. Therefore, just as I have the wisdom to give an answer, just as I have enthusiasm to work, she also has enthusiasm to work. If one looks, women here in Niger are 52% [of the population]. Is it possible to put all the women out in the bush?¹⁴⁰ It's not possible...It's necessary in everything that is to be done to ask her opinion. If something is her right [*hakki*], give her her right.

Interestingly, this individual had collaborated a few times with CARE PN 51 as well as with other CARE projects. In fact, one of his trainings in gender was by CARE. As he explained to me that few girls in the past would stay in school for very long, he adds:

Now with all this, with this getting attention, the CARE PN 51 project, especially around 'dan Issa here, they have started to understand that a woman has a status among people. In town, a woman has respect. Therefore her work is not pounding and making food and getting firewood. No, everything that is necessary to develop the town, she is involved. And her rights are given to her so she too develops.

Indeed even though CARE's collaboration with the Technical Services is minimal in comparison to UNICEF's, CARE seems to have the greater impact in terms of gender training. UNICEF, however, has done more to educate people about their rights in general than they have to educate people about gender issues. One Technical Services administrator who I asked about whether they were educating UNICEF aid recipients about their rights explains:

Since UNICEF's work was started, this is being done—that kind of training. Always if a training is to be done, first, a person knows his rights [*yanci*]. For example, one would say he knows what he must do for his country and what his country must do for him.

Although this Technical Services administrator uses “*yanci*” to talk about rights, the context suggests a reciprocal relationship of rights and duties. As already mentioned, sometimes these terms are used interchangeably in conversation. Nevertheless, UNICEF

¹⁴⁰ He is expressing that women can be left out much like people in rural areas or the bush (*'kauye*) have been largely left out of participating in and benefiting from many political or technological developments in Niger.

has made an effort to include information about rights in its trainings, which some aid recipients have also confirmed to me.

Finally, there are few women who work in the Technical Services, Madarounfa. Most who do work in primary education or health services. Table 21 lays out the number of male and female employees in several key government units with whom UNICEF collaborates, CARE PN 51, and UNICEF-Maradi in 2004.

Table 21: Number of Male and Female Employees in Selected Key Madarounfa Government Units, CARE PN 51, and UNICEF-Maradi in 2004¹⁴¹

	Male Employees	Female Employees
Government: Community Development	4	0
Government: Social Development, Population, the Promotion of Women, and the Protection of Children ¹⁴²	0	1
Government: Agriculture ¹⁴³	12	2
CARE PN 51	8	6
UNICEF-Maradi Office	3	2

When I asked Technical Service employees about the number of women working in their unit, several spoke of the short duration for women in government positions. One man who works in the literacy sector of the Technical Services said:

Here in our workers, we—some places there are women—but us here, we don't have any women. If you went to Maradi, there are two women in the [literacy] department. There are two women. All the same, here, you know, if you get married, you are in your husband's place. All of them are living in Niamey. All of them got married.

His colleague from Community Development explained:

¹⁴¹ I have excluded drivers and administrative assistants from this count. These personnel are sometimes shared among CARE projects or government units, so the comparison would not be fair.

¹⁴² The one employee in their office just started this position in mid-2004.

¹⁴³ One of these women commutes from her home in Maradi by motorcycle each day.

Some women, you'll see, if they get married, they go follow their husbands....Now if you go somewhere, you'll find lots of women at Community Development. Or as you've seen here, we do not have them since that's how they are. If a woman gets married, she follows her husband.

In this environment, there are few female employees at all, and those who are there generally stay for a short duration. This in combination with scant training in gender issues provides an environment in which patriarchy is seldom recognized or questioned. It is true, however, that some employees recognize that women have certain rights and that they should participate in development efforts. This, however, can be and is done without questioning male headship and bringing up equality.

On top of these issues, as mentioned in Chapter Four, Technical Services employees are severely under-resourced. They see UNICEF as a much needed source of resources and personal income. Thus, the cynical comment about including women in order to get financial resources should not be tossed aside. This, indeed, seems to be an important reason for including gender or women-oriented programs. And for those who have not had training in these issues, getting money and appeasing donors may be the only reasons they see for doing such programs.

CARE and UNICEF Volunteers on Gender, Rights, and Development

Like CARE and UNICEF employees, CARE and UNICEF volunteers in rural towns where these organizations intervene reformulate project ideas and activities. These volunteers have varying degrees of training and exposure to development discourses in CARE and UNICEF. Therefore the ways in which they reformulate project ideas and activities differ among them and is distinct from employee's reformulations. The data in

this section come from interviews with volunteers and my observations in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré and at regional trainings in which volunteers were involved.

Gender

Translating gender becomes even more problematic in a social milieu where one cannot resort back to French to express a concept. Few rural residents are fluent in French in Niger. In Tchikaji Gajeré, some school children in the upper grades of primary school are functional reading and writing in French, but adults are not. In Garin Jakka, neither children nor adults function in French. When I asked residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré about gender, I broke it down to find out about issues such as relationships between men and women (whether this be husbands and wives or other relationships), access to resources for men and women, CARE and UNICEF project activities for men and/or women, the content of trainings that volunteers received, women's participation in CARE and UNICEF activities, and so on. Clearly, using *jinsi* would have been confusing and inappropriate. Table 22 gives the responses I received from CARE and UNICEF volunteers interviewed in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré when I asked what *jinsi* means.

Table 22: CARE and UNICEF Volunteers' Definitions of *Jinsi*

	CARE Volunteers- Garin Jakka	UNICEF Volunteers-Tchikaji Gajeré
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A color, like red, green, black, white - A mother tongue or ethnicity like Hausa, Fulani, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Things that are all one type (e.g., Muslims, Hausa people, black people, men, or women) -Different types. For example, Hausa or Kanuri people. - Different language groups or regional identities (e.g., Katsinawa, Gobirawa) - For example, Hausa, Zerma, Arab, European
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Does not understand the term -A man and woman staying/living together; marriage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Does not understand the term -Does not understand the term -Does not understand the term

Amina, the woman who referred to *jinsi* as marriage in Table 22, had just returned from a CARE training in Women's Leadership. She had also attended numerous CARE trainings in the past and was, in the opinion of one of the CARE field agents working around 'dan Issa, the person in that area who best retained the teachings CARE gave. She also is the only woman volunteer I interviewed in Garin Jakka or Tchikaji Gajeré who understood the term *jinsi* in any sense, and clearly her understanding was in relation to CARE's teachings. However, understanding gender as marriage is still quite different from the definitions presented above in CARE staff debates. The men knew of another definition of *jinsi* that means a certain type of something—usually a language or ethnic identity of some kind. One male interviewee explained that *jinsi* is a term that he has heard of, but it is not commonly used where they live. It is likely that male mobility has allowed the men interviewed to understand this term that is not common in these towns, while women who do not usually travel far or listen to the radio were unfamiliar with it. In general, women also seemed less familiar with being asked to define terms. Men easily understood what I was asking them to do when I said, "What does *jinsi* mean?" or "What does '*yanci* mean?" Women were often confused by such questions, although more so by *jinsi* than any other terms I asked about.¹⁴⁴

Beyond debates about literal translations for *jinsi*, the message about gender/*genre* that CARE and UNICEF are communicating in towns around 'dan Issa is often heard and interpreted in different ways. Residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré recognize that CARE and UNICEF have a special interest in helping women, as some of their activities are only for women such as helping women acquire goats, loans

¹⁴⁴ Other terms I asked about were: '*yanci*, *hakki*, *gargajiya*, *zamani* (modern or the time of), and *jahilci*.

to women in the case of UNICEF, and a women's credit and savings group in the case of CARE. Sometimes it is understood that this is done to help women when their husbands are away from home, or people are simply thankful for the extra support that UNICEF or CARE provide for the household no matter who receives it. At times, however, men are puzzled by this explicit help for women. Several men in Garin Jakka are of the opinion that CARE should also help men acquire animals; however, it should be cattle instead of goats as this is what men tend to own. One of them explained to me that men are the ones who support their wives; therefore, they also need this kind of help from CARE. By helping the men, he explained, you are also helping women. In fact, the husbands of some of the women in Tchikaji Gajeré who received cash loans in 1996 from UNICEF took the money intended for their wives. Some of these men had still not repaid the money in 2004.¹⁴⁵ I inquired with a number of UNICEF volunteers in Tchikaji Gajeré about this. In one instance I asked:

KBH: So the men have not paid?

Interviewee: The men, you know, men spend a lot of money. Everything is on him, everything is on him. There is spending on something for the home, clothing, and stuff. Here we are in the rainy season, and some years it comes and there is not much of a harvest. That's why up until now they have not fully paid, I think.

The socially accepted role of men as providers as well as women's obligation to obey their husbands makes it easy for men to justify capturing project resources that are intended for women.

Some of the men in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré were particularly interested in assistance from UNICEF specifically so that they would be able to better keep their

¹⁴⁵ A group of 40 women was given 1,500,000 CFA total, divided amongst them. Some of the women were given six months to pay it back, and others were given one year. With interest, they were to pay back 1,725,000 CFA. As of April 2004, 1,427,700 CFA had been paid back and 297,300 CFA had not.

wives at home. For example at the end of an interview when I asked if a UNICEF volunteer had any questions for me, he said:

As far as UNICEF's work with us here in town, is there some step that we can take so that we can get more support from you and better convince our women so they can agree to [seclusion]?

He goes on to explain that the problem in town of acquiring water requires women who are not secluded to be gone from home for long periods of time waiting in line at the pump. If they are gone from home, their children can get into things that are dirty while they are away, he explains. Because of this, a new well would be helpful for those who do not seclude their wives. According to Islam, however, he says, getting water should be a man's responsibility. Women should stay at home to look after the children and the home. He goes on to explain what else he wants from UNICEF:

Convince [the women] even more because, as I told you, some of them, if [the men] want to seclude them, some of them don't want it because they go around here and there. They think they received a little freedom. But if she is secluded, she doesn't go out, and she thinks she is restricted...Help us with our wives. Teach them a trade in the home, or help us with a sewing machine to give to a woman and teach the woman how to sew. She is, you see, all this work is in the home.

Indeed, UNICEF's efforts to empower rural women was seen by this man as a way to keep them secluded in the home.

In a random sample interview in Garin Jakka, a woman in her 70s who farms had similar thoughts about CARE supporting seclusion. She first explained to me that she had never been secluded and that when she was young seclusion was not practiced. I asked her why people today practice seclusion. She replied:

Interviewee: Because of education/sensitizing [*wayewar kai*].

KBH: Who is sensitizing?

Interviewee: This thing, it comes from the project [CARE]. Before the project too, everyone was secluding. Now too the project has gone out and caused everyone to. They are going from town to town and giving advice. They gather and talk with all the men and women and give them the history of this. You see, even if someone has not yet started, he will do it. You say you will take a woman and leave her to wander about? It's not right. You can forbid her to go to the well, to get firewood, and to do threshing too. Now the women in our town, you see...we [the older women] are the threshers now. We do the threshing for women. And that's it. You can forbid a woman everything and provide her clothing, soap-- hey if you have the opportunity and the means-- buy everything for her to maintain the home.

KBH: Then, if I understand, you said that the project is doing the sensitizing?

Interviewee: Yes, they are causing people to. They are giving people advice.

Indeed, she was recounting the *marabout relais* and CCC activities from her own perspective. CARE was sponsoring these discussions with *malamai* about women and Islam, and she understood this to mean that CARE was supporting seclusion of women through the *malamai* talking with people about it. Her detailed accounts of other educational events put on by CARE about HIV/AIDS and other health issues led me to believe she was a careful listener in general to what was said in such meetings. Yet somehow she got the idea that CARE is advising men to seclude their wives. In Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, project aid and seclusion seem to be linked in people's minds in terms of bringing prosperity.

Also, men in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré sometimes had a response similar to Omar's regarding blaming women for not participating in project activities or for certain cultural practices, while omitting a critique of men or patriarchy. For example, I asked one project volunteer in Garin Jakka about relationships between men and women in town in the context of CARE's work. He replied:

As for us, you see, we have obtained it because women have been sensitized as to how to live with their husbands. Now, there are not lots of ignorant women or bits of gossip. That's because it is known what paths to follow for reconciliation without veering off somewhere, right? Now everything has started going correctly between women and men.

Later in the interview, he also blames women for not participating in CARE. "All women who you see not participating, it's not because of her husband. It is only if she does not intend to." I knew from other sources that there are some men in Garin Jakka who forbid their wives to participate in CARE activities. Most of them also refuse to participate. However, this informant seemed convinced that problems with women in terms of participation or gender relations simply required women to change.

Another example of such thinking is from the UNICEF Integrated Community Development training for rural aid recipients. Participants (a group of about 2/3 men and 1/3 women) were asked to identify sources of the problem early marriage of girls. The following list was generated by the group:

- Parents' greed
- A girl's bad manners/behavior
- Not putting girls in school
- The head of household not feeding the family

While in this case, the responsibility and blame is shared by the parents and the girl, it never falls on the husband or potential husband. In other words, male sexual desire and dominance over young women in terms of age and gender are not recognized in this group as sources of or reasons for early marriage of girls.

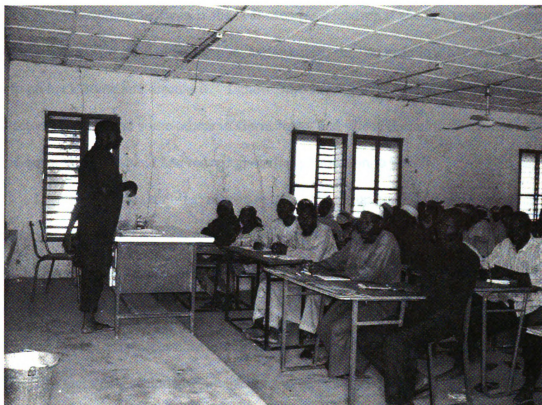


Figure 21: UNICEF-sponsored Training on Integrated Community Development

A few critiques of—or at least recognition of—patriarchy did surface, however, in my interactions with people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré. In one training, Amina from Garin Jakka seemed to continually remind CARE instructors about the social constraints she has as a young secluded woman.

“Can a woman be a leader?” a CARE employee asked the group of women trainees.

Amina confidently replied, “If there is a man, he is the leader.”

The CARE employee then asked, “Why has this been designated something for men?”

Amina explained, “Even if she is chosen [as a leader], if she is a young woman (*karamin mace*),¹⁴⁶ not an older woman, and married, she has to follow her husband. She has to go back home and discuss it.” I knew from talking with Amina and her husband that after *Kungiya* and some others in Garin Jakka had selected Amina to represent them at the training her husband had indeed given her permission to attend.

Later in the same training, Amina reminds the group again of a woman’s constraints. “How does a leader call people together?” a CARE instructor asks.

The group starts listing off answers, “announce it at the savings and loan group, at the well, a naming ceremony, or on the radio.” Again Amina speaks up and points out that radios are not very accessible to women.

The fact that a secluded woman like Amina could travel to attend a CARE training is not common. Men in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka told me that most men do not let their secluded wives go to another town for a couple of days to attend a training. One of them explains:

You keep your wife from farming, going to the well, and getting wood. You do all of these. Then someone says a car will come and pick her up to go somewhere. You, who are hiding your wife, there she is, they are going from town to town with her. And someone says he doesn’t know where they are taking her to sleep.

Some even keep their wives from attending CARE or UNICEF meetings in their home town for various reasons. One explanation given by some men in Tchikaji Gajeré is that their wives do not need to attend because they are not educated (i.e., illiterate). Indeed, education and literacy are important factors in some cases for project participation. I will return to this issue further below.

¹⁴⁶ Literally *karamin mace* is a “small woman,” meaning in terms of her social stature.

In terms of gender, few people in Tchikaji Gajeré and Garin Jakka have had any formal training by CARE or UNICEF to understand what they mean by it. Instead, some residents see programs for women and assume transnational aid organizations and employees have a view similar to theirs of female domesticity, male headship, seclusion, and prosperity that they are supporting through these programs. Others see views of CARE and UNICEF on these matters as contradictory to Islam. Their resistance to these organizations is discussed further below. Nevertheless, patriarchy is seldom critiqued in this social milieu.

Rights

In Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, I asked CARE and UNICEF volunteers what the terms *'yanci* and *hakki* mean. As noted above, the meaning of these words is similar, and they are often used interchangeably. However when I asked people to define and distinguish the two terms, certain continuities emerged in their responses. Table 23 summarizes definitions and examples given to me by the CARE and UNICEF volunteers I interviewed in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, broken down by town and gender. For the most part, *'yanci* implies ownership or having the status to be able to act and speak as one chooses. Two people, however, note a relational aspect to *'yanci* (i.e., husband and wife, and government and tax payer). *Hakki*, however, is more consistently understood to involve relationships and duties in the definitions and examples given. It is often used in a negative sense such as when something is owed to or taken from someone. Three of the women chose to define *hakki* by talking about *'dauki hakki* or *'daukar hakki*—denying rights or oppressing a person who has no control over the situation. Perhaps

their own experience as women being told to be obedient and patient when their *hakki* is denied provoked this response.

Table 23: CARE and UNICEF Volunteers' Definitions and Examples of 'Yanci and Hakki

	CARE Female Volunteers- Garin Jakka	CARE Male Volunteers— Garin Jakka	UNICEF Female Volunteers- Tchikaji Gajeré	UNICEF Male Volunteers- Tchikaji Gajeré
'Yanci	-Does not know. - 'Yancin gari (town rights): everyone knows that something is yours, and you are involved with what is happening in town. - 'Yancin mace cikin gida (woman's rights in the home): If she does what she is supposed to do, so should her husband.	-Permission has been given for something. -Something you have the power to say or power over (i.e., you can sell it, give it away, or do what you want with it). It is yours and you have it.	-Someone has the 'yanci to do something or not. -Does not know. -If something enters into or leaves your life, you have the 'yanci to enter in or leave. -Someone has the 'yanci to enter into and leave a task/job.	-Someone who has his own house and field, and is written as a town resident who pays taxes has the 'yanci to be a town citizen. -Someone speaks their mind and is knowledgeable -Having a certain status or responsibility to speak about or do something. -All that you do and get is yours; you can give it away.
Hakki	- 'Dauki hakkin mutum (deny a person's rights) is a matter for God to fix. - If something is your <i>hakki</i> , stop and do it for God's sake.	-Something owed to someone, like a field or salary. -It is yours, but you have not yet received it. For example, an inheritance.	- 'Dauki hakki (deny someone's rights) means you do something you should not, but people cannot do anything about it. -Does not know. - 'Daukar hakki means to oppress -It is a child's <i>hakki</i> that his parents provide for him.	- Right to your home and field, and the duty to pay government taxes. -Something is yours, but you do not have it yet. -Something owed to someone. -Owed to someone who is oppressed, stolen from, or falsely accused.

During a CARE training on Women's Leadership, women volunteers from rural communities around 'dan Issa listed examples of 'yanci and nauyi (a duty) that exist in their communities. The responses given are listed in Figure 22.

<u>'Yanci (Right)</u>	<u>Nauyi (Duty)</u>
Teach children in school teachers	Provide food and shelter for school
Women's inheritance	Development work for the town
Women can meet together	Pay taxes
Food to eat	Get an identity card and papers
Health care	
Problems between pastoralists and farmers*	
Grinding mill*	
<i>*Indicates that these answers were offered by participants, but not acceptable to the CARE employee facilitators. Nevertheless, they were written on the board for everyone to reflect on.</i>	

Figure 22: CARE PN 51 Training Exercise on Rights and Duties

The CARE facilitators went on to explain that 'yanci and nauyi have a relationship much like a man and a woman. One of them asked the group, "Why do you have rights ['yanci]? Why is it necessary that the government do this for you?" He went on to answer the question himself, "You pay taxes. The government has to do these things for you." This seemed to make sense to people. Later in the review session at the end of the training, a participant repeated this example to explain 'yanci and nauyi. The CARE employees had chosen to translate right as 'yanci rather than hakki in this case, although the meaning they were attaching to it would have perhaps been better expressed with hakki, based on the definitions and examples given in Table 23.

Some volunteers also recall talking about rights in CARE or UNICEF past trainings. For example, Amina recalled CARE's teachings about obtaining birth certificates and other forms of identity,¹⁴⁷ not forcing one's children to marry against their will, and not marrying girls. One man who had attended several UNICEF trainings explained to me that he agreed with most of what UNICEF said about rights, but there were some points with which he disagreed concerning women's rights. For example, he said:

One thing that we disagreed with, [UNICEF] said a woman, you can, when you are a young unmarried woman (*buduruwa*), when you become a young woman, you know, you have boyfriends who you chat with. So they said that even after you are married, you can, this boyfriend of yours, this male friend of yours, you can call him over and you act like you did before, when she was not married... We do not agree with this. It is not possible that in Islam you marry a woman so that she can act like an unmarried girl and go to some town to date someone.

In these communities, *hakkin mata* (what is owed to and expected of a woman) is well accepted, while *yancin mata* (freedom or emancipation of women), which UNICEF was expressing in the example above, is an uncomfortable concept. The idea that a woman would be emancipated or free to do as she pleases, which implies she does not need a husband or elder over her, is unacceptable. Not only a woman, but all community members see themselves as part of the social community and hierarchy, according to age, kin group, gender identity, education, occupation and wealth. It is important to know one's place, and one's rights and duties within these relationships. Even the example given about paying taxes and government obligations demonstrates this. An overly individualistic notion of rights and freedom implies disrespect, isolation, and irreverence for one's community and superiors.

¹⁴⁷ Getting identity papers was considered a duty in the previous example, but is often also considered a right.

Projects, Literacy, and Power

As already mentioned in Chapter Five, being educated and literate affects one's status in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré. It also partly determines who some of the most powerful actors are in CARE and UNICEF programs in these communities. Two men, Daouda and Ahmadou, who had some training in reading and writing in Hausa prior to CARE and UNICEF's work in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré, respectively, were selected to teach CARE- or UNICEF-sponsored literacy classes in these towns. In Garin Jakka, only a class for men took place. Amina was supposed to be trained to teach the women, but she was unable to attend the initial training she needed to begin learning how to read and write. She and I did some literacy lessons in her home for a few weeks in 2004, but she was still learning the alphabet and phonics at that point. In Tchikaji Gajéré, there was a literacy class for women and one for young, unmarried men that stopped in 2002. The men's class in Garin Jakka was also no longer taking place as of 2004.

As one of the few literate people in their respective towns, Daouda and Ahmadou have certain privileges. Both serve as record keepers for loans, vaccinations, and/or other project related activities. In the case of Tchikaji Gajéré, Ahmadou helps recommend people to attend UNICEF trainings based on their ability to read and write. UNICEF and government Technical Services employees prefer that communities select representatives with some reading and writing abilities to attend the trainings. In the case of Daouda, a disagreement developed between him and certain CARE PN 51 staff over money management with Garin Jakka's CARE cereal bank in 2004. He was serving as the leader and record keeper in this particular activity. When I left Niger, the issue had not yet been resolved. Like many, he was waiting to hear if PN 51 would continue or not as

it was reaching the end of its funding cycle. This may have caused him to wonder if it was worth paying back the money.

A fellow resident of Garin Jakka shared with me his skepticism about Daouda ever starting up the literacy program for men again. Daouda stopped teaching because of an injury to his hand, but had never continued the program again since then. He does not want anyone to get ahead of him in their literacy skills, his fellow resident commented. Indeed, literacy is a way to stay ahead and keep a position of power in this community. In Tchikaji Gajeré, Ahmadou also stopped teaching, although in this case he says that it was because UNICEF stopped paying him to teach and people in town would not continue paying his salary.

As mentioned above, illiteracy is sometimes used as an excuse for women not to participate in CARE or UNICEF activities. When I asked one UNICEF volunteer in Tchikaji Gajeré if his wife participated in UNICEF, he said no and went on to explain:

She does not know how to do that work yet. Only when she has studied/been educated (*yi karatu*). Definitely, those [participating in UNICEF], they have gone and some of them have studied. Yes, some of them have. She is just a young girl (*yarinya 'karama*). She has not started. She has not started studying.

This informant's emphasis on needing to have some education and literacy for any participation in project activities is more extreme than most. But certainly many opportunities for more intensive UNICEF trainings are commonly recognized as being for people with at least some literacy skills. That said, sometimes Tchikaji Gajeré has sent illiterate women to trainings, which Technical Services employees have complained about. The truth is that there are few women in this town with even the most basic abilities to write down a few words and numbers. Without the literacy program

functioning, a cycle of low and poor quality participation is created, and people cannot move into the more powerful positions that people like Daouda and Ahmadou maintain. Those who are illiterate often see themselves as ignorant and inferior.

Rejecting Development Ideas and Practices

Besides reformulating development ideas and practices, a few people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré choose to outright reject CARE and UNICEF interventions. In these two towns, I have identified three main reasons why people resist or are suspicious of CARE and UNICEF's work—risks versus benefits, religious beliefs, and suspicion of *turawa*.

Risks versus Benefits

First, participating in CARE or UNICEF activities requires an investment of time, energy, and scarce resources. Some people choose not to participate in CARE or UNICEF because they find investing their time in other activities, such as farming or trade, is more profitable. As I was interviewing one CARE volunteer in Garin Jakka, he explained to me why some people in town lost interest in CARE activities after a while:

When [CARE] started coming, it was being said that they are coming to give out money to people, a loan. So [people in Garin Jakka] waited for a year. They waited a year and a half. They waited for two years. They saw that nothing was said about it. Then they said, "Oh, these people are nothing. They just want to waste people's time. That it! Let's forget about them."

If people do not see a benefit, why should they participate? Certain volunteers or other community members I knew ran away to hide on occasion when they heard CARE, UNICEF, or government vehicles approaching town. They did not want to get bogged down in wasting a lot of time answering questions or having a meeting. Similarly, the woman in Tchikaji Gajeré who had been trained by UNICEF to regularly monitor baby

weighing in town explained to me why women do not bring their children to her to be weighed.

KBH: So women do not want to bring their children?

Interviewee: Yes. They say that if there is no medicine to be given to them.

KBH: Because they are sick?

Interviewee: Yes, they are sick. But if they are told that the doctors have come [from 'dan Issa] and they should go for weighing, well, let's go! We don't know if our child will be given medicine or not.

In other words, weighing just to track the growth of a baby or young child using only a UNICEF volunteer is not considered a good use of time by these women. In many cases, it would simply confirm what a struggling mother already knows—her child is sick and not eating enough. However if mothers can possibly get some medicine for a sick child from visiting health professionals, they are more likely to come to a weighing session.

Sometimes too choosing to participate or not is not just about making good use of time and energy, but also about whether or not to take risks. In particular, some people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré do not want to take loans for fear that they will not be able to pay them back. Some are afraid to spend money on recommendations that projects make. For example, CARE had an educational session in Garin Jakka for the entire town on acquiring proper documentation for voting. When I asked people in Garin Jakka what they thought about it afterwards, the most common response was that they would like to get proper documentation but do not have any money to spend on that now. Using money that is needed for food or other necessities on documents is a risk that they were not willing to take.

Islam

Second, a few individuals refuse to participate in CARE activities in Garin Jakka, because CARE is not Islamic. The senior *malam* in this town is very suspicious of CARE; he refuses to have anything to do with CARE and forbids his wives to participate as well. I realized this soon after I arrived when I greeted one of his wives at home to introduce myself and she told me emphatically that they are not involved in CARE and she could not talk to me! A few other men in town have followed this *malam*'s lead and refuse to have anything to do with CARE. One CARE volunteer told me:

There are some who say that it is straying from the path because it's like Christians...If we start talking with [those who resist CARE], we say to them, you say this, but we ourselves, if we go and it is time to pray, [people in CARE] tell us to get up and pray. And from among us, we choose someone to get up and lead the prayer for the people. So you see, if this is Christianity, it would not be this way...The reason why they do not participate, mostly, he, the *malam*, says that [CARE] is going to change their religion.

While the notion that CARE, a secular organization, would want to convert people to Christianity may seem far fetched on one level, these men may be thinking of values and lifestyles promoted by CARE that they associate with the Western world and predominately Christian societies. One such example is the place of women. In another discussion with a volunteer in Tchikaji Gajeré, he told me some men there are suspicious of UNICEF's co-ed trainings, thinking that by doing these UNICEF intends to make them into *turawa* (Europeans or white people).

One of the young men who chooses not to participate in CARE for religious reasons nonetheless agreed to an interview as he was part of my random sample. He explained to me another reason for not participating is that some Muslims believe that

charging interest on a loan is *haram* (an unlawful act according to Islam). CARE credit and savings groups do charge interest.

As a rebuttal to those who are resistant, a CARE volunteer in Garin Jakka recounted to me how in past generations Hausa people resisted putting their children in school, while the Zerma were not as resistant. As a result, they have found Zermas dominating over them in Niger. He sees the same thing potentially happening with development projects. If Hausa people do not stick together and cooperate, he says, they may again miss an opportunity and be left behind.

Relationships with Turawa

Finally, some men in Garin Jakka who resist CARE's work are suspicious of the intentions of transnational aid organizations with strong links to the Western world. This kind of suspicion has good reason. People in Niger have been colonized by *turawa*, experiencing violence, forced labor, resettlements, and other hardships. In the colonial era as well as today, Europeans and other foreigners have profited off African labor and resources, or use Africans for unethical medical testing. What is it that these *turawa* want, many Nigeriens wonder? Even though CARE and UNICEF employees and government collaborators who work in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré are all Nigerien, residents of these towns are well aware that financing and ideas for these projects come from outside of Niger. I had numerous discussion with people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré who were trying to figure out the motive for CARE, UNICEF, and my interventions in their communities. In an interview with Ahmadou in Tchikaji Gajéré, he asked me:

A: This work that is coming out of your countries, I wonder if it is coming so that you convince people, you educate/sensitize them? Or do you have some other goal in the future?

KBH: If you say “you,” who do you mean—UNICEF?

A: Yes, like UNICEF.

KBH: OK

A: People say that there in *turawa* countries you give up a lot of wealth and come to give it to black people to help them. And too they are not your race/ethnic group [‘*yan uwan jinsin*¹⁴⁸ *ku*]. So that’s all, I want to know, this help that you give them, do you want to convince them in the future to do the kind of work that you do? ...For example, now if there are some nice cars, they say America or France helped Niger. Or some medicine, they say that America helped Niger. That’s what I wonder—are you being compassionate towards us and helping us? Or do you want all of us to do your kind of work?

After he shared his question I launched into an explanation of the UN system, the many actors involved in UNICEF’s work, and other kinds of aid that come to Niger.

Nonetheless, Ahmadou’s comments reveal several important points about how people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré see Western countries and people as well as foreign aid. First, while Ahmadou said he meant “like UNICEF” by “you,” he went on to talk about a much broader range of topics such as aid from France and the United States as well as *turawa* in general. *Turawa* is a lumped category of people from countries outside of Africa and the Muslim world. Often people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré do not realize the ethnic and racial diversity of places like the United States. Likewise, they do not realize the diversity of the UN. While well aware of who Kofi Annan is from listening to the radio, one man I was chatting with in Tchikaji Gajeré was surprised to find out that Annan is a black man from Ghana, not a white person. Frequently, people from non-European countries like Japan or China with fair skin are called *turawa*. Or as

¹⁴⁸ A rare casual use of *jinsi* in conversation.

has been the case with me a few times, white people of European descent have been mistaken for Japanese or Chinese, especially by youth in Maradi. Thus, *turawa* becomes a vague category of “other,” implying people with white or light skin, Europeans, and sometimes Christians or Jews. So when people suspect UNICEF or CARE of wanting to turn people into *turawa*, this can mean a range of possible conceptions of “other.”

Second, Ahmadou seems to recognize the economic implications of capitalism for Nigeriens. Are wealthy *turawa* trying to get Nigeriens to participate in their business ventures or work for them? He seems to be having trouble reconciling known examples of this past and present with the apparent charity of UNICEF. One reason this may be is his assumption that *turawa* (including me) are acting together in some kind of cohesive way when the fact is that *turawa* engage in Nigerien affairs for very different reasons and with very different interests. While I do not mean to deny that being a *baturiya*¹⁴⁹ certainly means something in terms of collective social identity, privilege, and power in Niger and elsewhere in the world, I simply mean here to recognize the overgeneralizations and social construction of *turawa* in informants’ minds.

Obviously, I was constantly lumped into this category, asked to speak for all *turawa* or at times suspected of being involved in exploitative activities. At one point while I was looking at people’s fields in Tchikaji Gajéré to see what amount and type of land individuals in my sample were farming, some people in town became suspicious that I would give information on the whereabouts of their property to a large corporation who would kick them off their land. I assured them I would keep the location of their fields confidential, but this required them to trust me in a world where these events indeed

¹⁴⁹ Singular feminine of *turawa*.

happen.¹⁵⁰ Also although I often explained that I was not hired by nor a person of administrative stature in UNICEF and CARE but only a student who was collaborating with them to give them helpful data, people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré primarily thought of me as part of these organizations. They also assumed that being a *Baturiya*, I must have some influence in CARE and UNICEF. The fact that I lived with them in town, however, was distinct and unique.¹⁵¹

The resistance to polio vaccinations that Niger was experiencing in early 2004 in the Maradi *Région* was also rooted in suspicions of *turawa*. The idea that polio vaccinations are part of a ploy by the West to sterilize Africans and infect them with HIV/AIDS trickled up into Niger following the new surge of resistance in Nigeria in 2003. While this may sound odd to those unfamiliar with the area, suspicion of Western drugs is understandable in Nigeria, where people have been unethically used in pharmaceutical company clinical trials such as Pfizer's 1996 Trovan experiments in Kano, which led to 30 Nigerian families suing Pfizer in 2001 (Kelleher 2004). Why would UNICEF be any different than these other *turawa*? Furthermore, people in northern Nigeria and southern Niger are keenly aware that Western governments and organizations are promoting population control, an idea most are not receptive to and some are deeply suspicious of as an attempt by the West to limit the power of African nations. Thus, what seems to some to be altruistic intentions to save children's lives through vaccinations has been met with grave suspicions by others. In Garin Jakka and

¹⁵⁰ I gave informants the required contact information for the MSU IRB office should they have any reason to file a complaint about the ethics of the study; however, how many of them could afford the phone call or find someone to communicate their complaint in English? And how would MSU respond to them? Overall, they were not familiar with this kind of legal action and basically had to choose to trust me or not trust me with information about their lives.

¹⁵¹ Peace Corps workers in neighboring towns had done this before, but it is not typical of CARE and UNICEF employees.

Tchikaji Gajeré, however, I was told by residents that they did not have any people resistant to polio vaccines in their towns.

Class and Participatory Development

CARE and UNICEF employees as well as civil servants in the Technical Services all integrate participatory development in their work. They seem to work under the assumption that the participatory approach they use should involve aid recipients to the extent that they take ownership of programs and understand the benefits for their community. However, as already mentioned, development professionals do not always acknowledge social hierarchies and other power relationships that allow people to act more in their own interest rather than that of the community or prevent certain people from participating. Furthermore, there is little reflection on the part of development professionals about how class relations between themselves and aid recipients influence participatory efforts.

While discussing how UNICEF works with communities, a UNICEF administrator said to me:

[The populations] themselves must understand the outcomes that they want—not the government's outcomes, not UNICEF's outcomes, their own outcomes...It is all a long process, especially since from the beginning, they are well-informed on how the program will be built and put into place. They are truly the actors and beneficiaries of the activities. Yes, they are the actors, and they are the beneficiaries.

In her comments, she, like many development professionals, tries to take herself out of the picture. Yet who is truly benefiting most from UNICEF? Who is paid well and has a prestigious job at UNICEF? By focusing the gaze on aid recipients, she ignores this. She tries to make it sound like it is the aid recipient community who decides what to do and how, and then does it. Very rarely is this the case, though. CARE and UNICEF

programs and activities are usually planned at higher levels, and aid recipients are asked to participate. For those who do choose to participate, why?

At the same time, many UNICEF and government collaborators maintain a distance from rural communities, a sort of class divide. A number of them speak negatively about rural people, who they consider ignorant (*jahilai*), sneaky, and lazy. When they do visit a rural town, it is usually brief, whipping in and out in their car or on their motorcycle. There are certainly exceptions to this, especially among the Technical Services, where I found a handful of individuals who are knowledgeable and respectful to rural people. Nonetheless, such negative and condescending attitudes are quite common. For those who embrace this class divide, their stereotypes of rural farmers become a place to lay the blame for poverty and unsuccessful aid programs, especially in the context of participatory programs that aid recipients are supposed to take ownership of.

Similarly, CARE also sees initiative and ownership of programs among aid recipients as key to their work. Because the same CARE employees who have close contact with rural communities are also involved in programming and intensive training, there is a better understanding of the causes of poverty and more sympathy towards rural people overall. Although there are occasions when CARE employees fall back on negative stereotypes of rural people being ignorant, there is also evidence of some reflection on class relations. A CARE administrator explained to me, “We are partners/allies [*abokan hulda*] with the people in rural towns, not masters and slaves.” However, seeing middle class professionals as *partners* with poor, struggling families seems to be a superficial gloss to a deep class divide. People in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré have a different perception of development professionals.

Residents of Tchikaji Gajéré and Garin Jakka tend to see their relationships with CARE and UNICEF in terms of various hierarchical relationships that they are familiar with—for example, government/citizens, *sarauta/talakawa* and *Alhazai/barori*. Like people of higher social status and authority such as the government, *sarauta*, and *Alhazai*, CARE and UNICEF workers have considerably more resources at their disposal than most *talakawa*. And, as discussed in Chapter Five, those of a higher social and economic standing are expected to use some of their resources for the benefit of those of lower socioeconomic rank. In return, lower ranking people are usually obedient and respectful to those above them. These kinds of hierarchical and reciprocal relationships carry over into project work and play out in interesting ways in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré.

The notion of altruistic development interventions with the goals of empowerment and self-sufficiency, which are key to how UNICEF and CARE see themselves today, is not well understood in Tchikaji Gajéré or Garin Jakka. Instead, many tend to see CARE and UNICEF as institutions looking for workers in order to make their projects successful for reasons of self interest. And these *talakawa* are willing to work for them, if there is some benefit they will get out of it. They expect some kind of salary, compensation, or considerable access to project resources for taking the time to participate in project activities and trainings. After all, middle class CARE and UNICEF project staff are clearly compensated in this way and can live a comfortable middle class lifestyle. In fact, working for a transnational aid organization is a highly desirable job in Niger. When asked what kinds of improvements he would suggest for CARE, a volunteer in Garin Jakka replied:

Interviewee: Yes, I definately have an opinion on this. That is, all of the problems that they have regarding CARE's work, regarding the rural

towns, certainly the representatives¹⁵² that are taken to go and work with them, well, they do not do much for them. This is the thing, [CARE] kind of insults the people who they take because if one goes with them they do not get anything.

KBH: Like money?

Interviewee: Like money, yes. Say you leave your home here, and there they are—look here—my three wives, OK? Say [CARE] picks me up and goes with me [to a training]. Each morning, they give me 1000 CFA. Each morning, I don't do much partying. Goodness, it is not even enough for one day if I am not in my own home. Each day, I eat in the morning, I eat at noon, and I eat at night—one thousand CFA. I stay for a week, and at the end of it, I come back home with only 1000 or 1500 CFA. When I arrive, I find I have to pay for the water, me. Then I have to pay for firewood that was taken, and I pay for food for the family. When I arrive, I find that 3000 CFA has been borrowed. So then I go into the grainery and thresh some of my millet to sell. I put that 1500 CFA together with the 1500 CFA that I brought in order to pay the loan. Then too, people here in town, if [CARE] has picked you up and gone with you, then they keep on saying that they gave you lots of money there...Definately some step needs to be taken for the representatives that are picked up. Make an effort so that they too are made employees. Can't one say that people in the rural towns are, if they are also made employees, they too are doing work? They are not just working in town, but they are also working for the project because the project cannot work unless it is together with these representatives.

The idea that CARE's project is building capacity, educating, and encouraging self-sufficiency is not the message that this volunteer seems to be getting. He, like most people in the world, is concerned about earning a decent salary for life's daily needs. He spends his time piecing together farming with odd jobs at and away from home in order to do this. Is the time spent with CARE truly worth it if they are not paying him or even giving him enough per diem money to compensate for his lost labor at home for a week? In other words if they expect him to work for them, he expects to be paid decently.

In addition, community members in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré express frustration over why UNICEF and CARE do not just come out and tell them what work

¹⁵² What I am calling "volunteers."

they want done, rather than go through the exercise of numerous questionnaires and community meetings to talk about their town. At the end of an interview, one CARE volunteer in Garin Jakka asked me:

Why is it that, for example, you or project employees, if they come, they do not just come out openly and say this is the work that I am going to do? Instead they come and keep talking with you and talking with you. But you don't say here is the work that brought us, that which we are going to do. Such and such work we are going to do here in town.

When I went on to explain the importance of understanding the needs of the community and getting people's input before beginning an activity, he remarked, "That takes a lot of time before you start anything!" In other words, he seems to be suggesting that instead of this participatory approach, can't those in charge simply tell people what activity CARE (or I) is going to do? Also invoking a top-down approach, another volunteer in Tchikaji Gajeré explained UNICEF's goal in their town to me. He said, "What they want for us and for them, oh, our work, if they give us something to do, we then do the work. Things move forward with all of us. Everyone is happy." Such comments suggest that the idea of participatory development with the goals of empowerment and self-sufficiency are often overshadowed by familiar hierarchical class relations and a legacy of top-down governance and development.

A second critique that these aid recipients may be making is that the link between the questionnaires or meetings and the activities CARE and UNICEF do are not so clear. For example, I had people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré express numerous requests for help (what some development workers in Niger cynically call "the shopping list" approach to development) in the course of my interviews and conversations. I also collected reams of data on their household economies. Although I shared much of this

information with CARE and UNICEF as well as each town respectively, people in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré are probably left wondering how this information directly relates to the activities offered by CARE or UNICEF in their particular town. After several days sitting in a UNICEF training that I attended, a man from a rural town near Madarounfa stood up and complained that UNICEF says that it will help with all kinds of things, but so far all they have seen is twenty goats for women¹⁵³. “You, who are imposing on us this responsibility, we need to be happy about this work!” he exclaimed. In other words in his opinion, UNICEF was requiring all kinds of things of them, but not holding up its end of the relationship by providing adequate resources. UNICEF has nice vehicles (Figure 23), wealthy employees, and the power to bring all of these leaders from around Madarounfa together for a week. He then expected them to do something more for him!



Figure 23: A UNICEF Vehicle, Considerably Nicer than the Average Car in Niger

¹⁵³ This was probably an exaggeration to make a point. Most communities where UNICEF has been intervening get more aid than just goats.

When viewed from below—the point of view of aid recipients—class relations become key to understanding development in rural Niger. Because aid recipients rarely have the power to speak in development circles, however, which usually requires knowledge of a European language and Western-style education, this perspective is rarely included in development discourses. I argue that the notion of participatory development is never really actualized when power relationships and hierarchies are left unexamined and unchanged. This is the case for gender relations just as it is in class relations.

Conclusion

Ideas, institutions, and social hierarchies are in a state of constant reformulation and negotiation. However, these reformulations and negotiations take very different forms depending on who is involved, even among people in the same country or people affiliated with the same institution. In the case of CARE and UNICEF, we have examined in this chapter how employees, volunteers, and government collaborators reformulate and negotiate gender and human rights-oriented development programs in different ways. We have also seen these groups of people broken down even further to see differences between and among them in certain regards. In so doing, several themes have emerged in this chapter.

CARE and UNICEF employees both have to negotiate with patriarchy in their work to gain credibility and address gender and rights issues. In this regard, CARE, being largely concerned with cultural sensitivity and knowledge from aid recipient communities, often focuses on discussions about Islam that seek common ground with CARE's goals to improve gender relations and human rights. UNICEF has a different emphasis in its negotiations with patriarchy, seeking strategic alliances with influential

parties in order to promote UNICEF's agenda concerning gender and human rights. This plays out largely through work with "traditional chiefs." Thus, CARE finds itself deep in debates about terms such as "*équité*" and "*égalité*" as it seeks to talk about gender issues in a culturally sensitive way. UNICEF, being more disconnected from debates with aid recipient communities and *malamai*, can at an administrative level maintain a position closely aligned with the CEDAW, CRC, and other UN conventions and declarations. However, people in both organizations find themselves in situations where they have to guard their personal beliefs in order to gain credibility and *entrée* into many groups.

In addition to *équité* and *égalité*, other negotiations and reformulations also play out in CARE and UNICEF. *Al'adu* (traditions/customs) are invoked strategically to promote CARE and UNICEF's agendas. Sometimes *al'adu* are viewed as negative, static, and oppressive. Other times they can be dynamic and building blocks for positive social change. Islam, on the other hand, tends to be viewed by UNICEF and CARE employees as unchanging. True Islam is seen as something good that is out there to be discovered. Using Islam to critique *al'adu* has proved to be an effective strategy. However, Islam is more difficult to critique, especially for practicing Muslims. Some UNICEF employees, though, find more room to critique certain practices associated with Islam such as wife seclusion than CARE employees do, again, most likely due to their distance from aid recipients and from in-depth discussions on Islam and gender.

CARE employees also see gender in an active and dynamic sense. It is often defined as something that can change, in contrast with sex which cannot. While I argue these definitions are overly simplistic, CARE employees' views of gender and traditions/customs that recognize social change give CARE employees essential tools for

thinking about improving the lives of women and the poor. By contrast, UNICEF makes less of an effort to train all of its employees and government partners on gender issues or gender approaches to development. UNICEF employees in Maradi were unable to talk at length about these subjects, and those Technical Services workers I interviewed in Madarounfa who spoke about gender tended to see it largely as a dimension of participatory development. A few, however, do invoke a human rights framework when talking about gender. Having few female employees in the Technical Services also makes it harder to bring to light issues that women face in program planning. In addition for those women who do get positions in the Technical Services, patrilocal practices make it hard for them to remain in a position for very long. Thus, we see how gender is translated quite differently in CARE, UNICEF, and the government.

People in rural aid recipient communities such as Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré—considerably more distant from the professional development world, French or English development concepts, and formal education—have their own ways of reformulating development interventions. Indeed, sometimes they even choose to reject CARE and UNICEF's work. CARE and UNICEF interventions are sometimes understood as validating social norms in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré such as female domesticity, male headship, and a hierarchical and reciprocal view of gender relationships and rights. Indeed it seems at times that CARE and UNICEF may be doing so, such as when CARE talks about rights and duties as a reciprocal relationship or when UNICEF decides to give loans to women for trade in the home but not advocate for land rights so that more women can have access to more profitable agricultural resources. Very few aid recipients have participated in trainings on gender or human rights to know

what CARE and UNICEF programs are about, although many have benefited from CARE or UNICEF resources through participating in various activities. Therefore, people draw their own conclusions about CARE and UNICEF's work as best they can.

There are, however, those who are suspicious of CARE and UNICEF, believing that these organizations do not embrace the same values that Muslims should. For example, UNICEF's ideas about women's '*yanci*' are too extreme for some in Tchikaji Gajeré, who perceive that UNICEF is trying to make them into *turawa* or change their religion. Others in Garin Jakka perceive that CARE encourages practices that are considered *haram*, such as charging interest on loans. Some are suspicious of what *turawa* want from them, knowing the ways that some *turawa* try to exploit, convert, or impose themselves on Africans. Is this aid really just a gift, or are there strings attached? Besides these reasons, some people simply find that CARE or UNICEF require too many risks or do not bring enough benefits to choose to cooperate with them. Life in the Sahel is indeed fragile and people who are struggling to put food in their mouths are careful about how they spend their time and resources.

Finally, these two groups—employed development professionals and rural volunteers—are both affiliated with either CARE or UNICEF, but at different levels and with different benefits. Middle class professionals enjoy a salary and access to vehicles (although CARE and UNICEF have much nicer and many more vehicles than the Technical Services). They see the work they are doing as helping the poor to help themselves. Besides that, it is a job, a career for them. CARE and UNICEF volunteers are expected to participate for the good of their community. However, some seem to be motivated to work with CARE or UNICEF by potential rewards. Volunteers hope to reap

some of the benefits of these wealthy transnational aid organizations through loans, gifts, or salaried employment. They are less interested in meetings, planning, and research, but rather would like to be told what to do and expect some reward for their obedience and cooperation. UNICEF and CARE employees are often conceived of in familiar hierarchical relationships such as with *sarauta*, *Alhazai*, or the government. Thus viewing development from aid recipient points of view, one sees the importance of class in project interventions.

Gender and right are reformulated, translated, and/or rejected in multiple ways by actors at different levels and layers of CARE and UNICEF's development interventions. The examples given in this chapter highlight the process by which reformulation and negotiation occur in translation. In these examples, the meanings of gender, rights, and CARE and UNICEF's interventions have been transformed or "indigenized" by Nigeriens. And in this process, accommodation of patriarchy rather than a radical challenge to patriarchy has occurred.

By looking at not only translators who are the sorts of middle persons or intermediaries Merry (2006a) and Booth (2004) focus on but also giving equal attention to aid recipients and those who resist aid, the dichotomy of the global and the local again seems inadequate. Residents of aid recipient towns also translate ideas and practices from transnational organizations. Actors in aid recipient towns and actors who are development professionals all draw on the transnational, national, regional, and personal in their translations and reformulations. And they translate in a variety of ways, depending on a number of factors, including most prominently organizational structure and culture, religious beliefs, gender, education, and class.

PART III
CONCLUSION

Chapter Seven

Actors, Power, and Histories in Translating Gender and Rights

In this dissertation, we have heard multiple voices translating gender, rights, and development interventions in various levels of CARE and UNICEF. These voices are speaking from different positions and negotiating in different ways with complex, multilayered power configurations regarding gender and rights-based development programs in Niger. Actors in this study continually negotiate and reformulate ideas and practices within these webs of power. This study contextualizes these actors in structures, power configurations, and histories of transnational aid institutions, the state, rural towns, and households that limit and influence their agency to act.

Revisiting an Actor-Oriented Approach

An actor-oriented approach examines struggles over knowledge and power among many actors in negotiation with one another (Arce and Long 2000, Long 1992a, 1992b). In this study, I have illustrated some of the ways in which this plays out in CARE and UNICEF interventions. Donors, employees, government collaborators, prominent national and regional “traditional” and religious leaders, volunteers, aid recipients, and resistant residents in aid recipient towns all act with different interests and from different social positionings with regard to CARE and UNICEF’s gender and right-based work. Furthermore, differences in gender, class, age, and education are apparent in terms of actors’ engagements in economic activities, politics, religion, and CARE and UNICEF’s interventions. And a single actor finds him/herself exerting power in certain ways while being subject in other ways. For example, individuals with literacy skills (who are disproportionately men) in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré enjoy their positions of privilege and better access to project knowledge and resources than most others in their

towns. At the same time, they are struggling to piece together a livelihood in a fragile ecological environment as are their neighbors. They also feel socially obligated to their superiors—project employees, civil servants, *sarauta*, *Alhazai*, elders, and senior wives and men in the case of women—in a strongly hierarchical society. In other scenarios, CARE and UNICEF employees or government collaborators carefully negotiate and translate between various discourses on gender and rights in Niger. Most endorse Islam and *alad'u* when it supports their message, but only selectively critique patriarchy so as not to alienate strategic political partners, colleagues, or aid recipients, and as they negotiate their own subjectivities as Nigerien Muslims working for gender and rights-based development programs. In such negotiations, these actors often find ways to talk about rights and women's empowerment without necessarily embracing equality or autonomy.

In this way, an actor-oriented approach allows us to ask to what extent do rights-based and gender policies and programs of CARE and UNICEF endorse or challenge social hierarchies (Nyamu-Musembi 2005). Indeed there is evidence of both in this study. In the process of reformulation and translation, ideas about rights, gender, and development take on new meaning, sometimes in ways that were not the intention of those translating. For example CARE's collaboration with Muslim leaders in the Maradi *Région*, an attempt to make their work culturally sensitive, is perceived by one woman in Garin Jakka to be CARE supporting wife seclusion. UNICEF's loans to support women's small businesses in the home are perceived by a male volunteer in Tchikaji Gajéré to also be a potential source of support for wife seclusion. Indeed, critiques of gender relations, wife seclusion, or Islam that embrace equality and autonomy are hard to

find in Niger, even among some working for CARE and UNICEF. More frequently an understanding of gender relations and rights in terms of reciprocal rights and duties within a familiar hierarchical framework is invoked. However, patriarchy is being challenged in small ways. For example, women are becoming more widely recognized as important political leaders through the Quota Law and CARE's trainings in Women's Leadership. And schools receiving UNICEF support require equal participation of girls and boys.

Revisiting the Local and the Global

Through ethnographically examining a range of actors and connections associated with transnational organizations, this study problematizes a global-local framework. In particular, this research emphasizes how actors—development professionals, volunteers, aid recipients, and resisters of aid—are picking up and using fragments of transnational flows, and resisting and reinterpreting them. By contrast, categories of local and global can gloss over and homogenize the rich diversity of these various actors' perspectives, actions, and engagements with a wide variety of discourses. For example, we have seen UNICEF employees grapple with reconciling UN mandates and conventions in a context of strong popular resistance to equal rights for women in family matters. Yet attributing this resistance to so-called "local" traditions is somewhat misleading as colonial legal legacies, transnational religious movements, and pre-colonial divisions of labor in Hausaland all play a role. On the other hand, we have seen through the examples of CARE and UNICEF how so-called "global" development institutions and discourses are situated in particular histories, organizational structures and cultures, and networks of donors.

Structural Spaces for Maintaining Patriarchy

Actors at various levels of CARE and UNICEF interventions have helped us see processes by which translation and reformulation occur. Nigeriens affiliated with CARE and UNICEF navigate between powerful religious, traditional, and national legacies of patriarchy and hierarchy, and ideas about women's empowerment and human rights promoted by CARE and UNICEF as institutions. In so doing, they resist and inhabit social norms in complex ways as they negotiate between different discourses. To better understand the negotiations these actors partake in, we must contextualize them in prominent structures and social forces.

Law and the State

Merry rightly argues that in order for actors to see themselves as rights-bearing citizens, institutions in their society must take rights seriously and the state must prosecute offenders and protect individual rights (2006a:179-217). In the case of Niger where the legal system provides spaces to ignore equal rights of individuals, it is no wonder that few people see themselves as bearers of human rights of the sort laid out in the CEDAW or CRC. Family matters continue to be dealt with largely through customary or informal legal channels, which treat men and women unequally. Furthermore, reservations to the CEDAW and strong popular resistance to a unified Family Code in Niger have resulted in the state allowing gender inequalities in the law to remain.

The failure of the Nigerien state to implement measures to ensure equal and individual rights is reflected in the way that Nigeriens in my study tend to understand gender and human rights in terms that often accommodate patriarchy or other social

hierarchies rather than challenge them—for example, *équité* rather than *égalité*, and *hakki* rather than *'yanci*. *Équité* implies a sense of justice and fairness without any guarantee of equality. *'Yanci* contains the concept of individual freedom and ownership whereas *hakki* is relational, hierarchical, and owed to someone. *'Yanci* better corresponds with the CEDAW and CRC. However, this concept of citizens' rights in Nigerien law and society is not widely recognized. In general, Nigeriens seem to be more familiar and comfortable with *hakki*, and the idea of *'yancin mata* is not well accepted in Niger. CARE's PN 51 has had relative success advocating for women's inheritance rights (especially land) because there is a basis for it in Nigerien Islamic practice and customary law. Inheritance in Niger is best conceived of, however, as *hakki*. In some sense, this is indeed an encouraging development for women as well as for junior males, who historically did not own land in the Maradi *Région*. Nevertheless, women today in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré (and likely elsewhere in the Maradi *Région*) inherit smaller portions, later in life, and less consistently than men. Furthermore in the Maradi *Région*, women who do own land and are secluded are presented with the challenge of controlling and managing this resource by proxy. And men and women in my study very rarely knew that their rights to inheritance are guaranteed by state law as well.

Working towards equal inheritance in state law, however, remains a critical challenge for women's rights activists in Niger. Finding a basis for talking about and convincing the public of *'yancin mata* in addition to *hakkin mata* is key to realizing gender equality in inheritance, marriage, divorce, reproduction, education, and other matters. The tough stance that UNICEF has taken at times to talk about *'yancin mata* in Niger plays an important role in this.

Translating Rights in Transnational Aid Organizations

As noted in Chapter One, Merry's study of the CEDAW and translating women's rights focuses on international law, transnational activists, and governments (2006a). By contrast, my research examines translation of gender and rights in transnational development interventions. What are the consequences of choosing to focus on certain actors and structures over others in a study of translation of gender and rights? First by choosing transnational development institutions as the focus of my study, systems of accountability are different from those of national and international legal orders. Development institutions such as CARE and UNICEF seek to directly please a wide array of donors. These donors are in the private sector in addition to governments and IGOs. Second, there is more leeway to define gender issues and human rights in a variety of ways in development institutions than in international law. For example, organizations such as CARE are not bound to documents such as the CEDAW or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, leaving them free to draw on other conceptions of rights in Islam and elsewhere. Third, my research is in a West African, majority Muslim context. Certainly the social norms, values, and types of social movements in Niger differ considerably from the places in Merry's study (Fiji, China, India, Hong Kong, and Hawai'i). Thus, different constructions of patriarchy are contended with in Niger. Finally, the inclusion in my research of aid recipients and those who resist aid from CARE and UNICEF widens the range of translators being studied and the potential for reformulations of gender and rights in CARE and UNICEF interventions. These differences in terms of actors and structures being studied are key when comparing the different conclusions about translation and vernacularization that Merry and I have

argued. Unlike Merry, I found that in the process of translating women's rights a radical challenge to patriarchy was often *not* maintained, nor were notions of autonomy, equality, or choice.

Education

Educational structures also have a bearing on accommodating or challenging patriarchy in Niger. Clearly the status of a person in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajéré is linked to their level of education, whether it is Koranic, *medersa*, Hausa, or French-style education. As mentioned in Chapter Five, people in these towns acknowledge that a man or woman who is educated has the authority to speak in his/her community. Also in project interventions, literacy has become a gateway to manipulate or influence project activities, or get further training. In general, education and literacy open doors to positions of leadership and authority. This is especially important in the new governing structures under decentralization and increasing emphasis on municipal level responsibility for solving problems. Literate communities and individuals are at an advantage in terms of accessing project or government resources, understanding formal governing structures, and being exposed to new ideas. People in rural areas commonly refer to themselves as *jahalai* (ignorant) not because they are not intelligent, but because they do not have access to knowledge (largely through literacy) that will help them penetrate powerful institutions, access economic resources, and speak with authority on religion. UNICEF's strong emphasis on education—especially girls' education—is indeed right on track in this matter. CARE-Niger has a growing interest in education as well. Girls' education is critically linked to deterring early marriage of girls and using girls' labor to assist secluded women in selling foodstuffs. However, state schools are

struggling and few in number. It is equally important that Muslim girls and women have the opportunity to learn about their religion in quality and safe schools so as to make choices about their lifestyles, including whether or not to practice seclusion. More research and resources from the state and international community on education and empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups in Niger are crucial.

Poverty, Privatization, and New Strategies for Prosperity

A partial analysis of the data I collected on CARE and UNICEF in Niger could be used to support privatization of the state and development services on the basis of CARE-Niger's successes in gender mainstreaming and cultural sensitivity, using a largely private model of providing services. Yet how sustainable is this model when CARE does not see itself as permanent in Niger? And how adequate is it when critical rights and needs of Nigeriens are not being met?

Both CARE and UNICEF are in fact responding to a struggling state and economy in Niger. The larger issues are Niger's external debt, diminishment of state services due to government downsizing, and few valuable economic resources or fair opportunities for trade in the world market. Absolutely essential services to achieving well-being and equality in Niger such as education and health are not adequately provided by the government (or even the non-governmental sector) to meet the needs of the population. Because UNICEF has chosen to collaborate with the Nigerien state to provide services, these larger problems of the state appear more prominently in their work. However, continuing to move towards privatization of government and development services is not a solution to Niger's poverty. While the Bretton Woods Institutions should be applauded for beginning to relieve debt in HIPC's, they must also

realize and take further responsibility for the failure of their policies that encourage privatization in developing nations around the world. Nigeriens need to be given autonomy in their new democracy to set their own policies and engage more fairly in international trade. In this way, international financial and development institutions must realize that political and civil rights need to be joined with economic, social, and cultural rights as many of them promote rights-based development and democratization in developing countries.

Amidst the increasing poverty that SAPs have brought in Niger, not only transnational aid institutions but also individual Nigeriens have developed new strategies to cope with this situation. First, gender roles have shifted. An approach that links the ideological and material has helped us see how this is taking place. As Niger has sunken more deeply into poverty, many Nigeriens have felt they have been failed by the West and by their own leaders. And new strategies for development are being sought throughout the country that link piety and prosperity. In Madarounfa *Département*, people battle drought, poor soil, land scarcity, and poor health with little or no aid to subsidize their hardships. Men have increasingly relied on labor migration for income, bringing home new ideas about wife seclusion, male provision, and prosperity. Through pious living (including men providing and women being in the home), they hope to be blessed by God. Women acquiesce to new gender roles as both a rest from their demanding work burden historically and in hopes of also finding blessings and *lahiya* for themselves and their children in a precarious environment. For some, seclusion seems to be an attractive option compared to other alternatives. These new strategies in the aftermath of structural adjustment offer new dimensions to debates on SAPs and gender.

Much of this literature focuses on women's increased work burden as a result of SAPs. However in Madarounfa *Département*, quite the opposite is occurring. Residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré seek material blessings from God and attempt to achieve a certain class status through pious living. Certainly matters of faith and religiosity are deeply intertwined with strategies for material prosperity and changing gender roles. And quite a different vision of development and *lahiya* is created compared to visions at higher levels of UNICEF and CARE.

Second, CARE and UNICEF are potential sources of wealth for Nigeriens, although not always in the ways that people at higher levels of these institutions intend. For employees, CARE and UNICEF provide them with prestigious and coveted jobs with decent salaries and benefits in a country where these are few and far between. Residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré seek rewards for obedience to development professionals (their social superiors) and do not always use project resources as they are intended. Household and community members with more power and stature sometimes manipulate programs that target vulnerable persons for their own gain and to maintain existing social hierarchies. In this way, individuals strategically seek to tap into much needed resources of transnational development organizations amidst poverty. These materials and class matters often take precedence over discussions of gender and rights issues or participatory development approaches in aid recipient communities.

Histories of Gender, Rights, and Development

Familiar histories and stories about development are often told by academics, policy makers, and development professionals over and over. These may include monolithic or "global" narratives of the entrée of prominent development policies (e.g.,

structural adjustment, women/gender, human rights, environment, sustainability, neoliberalism); significance of world conferences, conventions, and declarations; and the role of transnational development institutions. And while understanding prominent discourses, events, documents, and structures is critical to development studies, these are privileged in many narratives—whether they be stories told from a neo-Marxist, Modernist, or post-structuralist perspective—over actors. Furthermore, things that are in reality quite different are sometimes essentialized as a monolithic entity rather than broken down and examined intricately. For example in this study, CARE and UNICEF, two transnational aid organizations in Niger, were found to have quite different organizational structures and cultures. Furthermore, various levels of and individuals in these organizations have different interpretations of policies and programs. And outside of these institutions, significant discussions and debates about gender, rights, and well-being (*lahiya*) take place. An actor-oriented approach leads us to look for these different histories and stories about gender, rights, and development.

Stories of Transnational Aid Organizations

Transnational aid in this study takes different forms even when two organizations are implementing gender mainstreaming, rights-based development, and similar kinds of activities within the same country and *département*. This is due largely to actors operating in distinct organizational structures and cultures. Organizational structures of CARE and UNICEF in Niger contrast in terms of the degree to which CARE has privatized its services and UNICEF has continued collaboration with a down-sized state. Following these structural differences, gender, rights, and development have been reformulated in different ways in CARE and UNICEF's contrasting organizational

cultures in Niger. CARE-Niger highly values cultural sensitivity, multiple knowledge sources, and service; and its employees act as middle persons between aid recipient and transnational development discourses. For example, CARE-Niger's PN 51 employees negotiate with patriarchy and Islam to achieve project goals of equity and security for aid recipients. They carefully chose terminology that does not directly contradict male headship or Islam in the contexts where they are working. UNICEF-Niger successfully lobbies for new pro-children and women legislation according to its mandate, although it tends to view knowledge in more singular terms and has less discussion and training on gender and rights than CARE-Niger. UNICEF-Niger employees also find themselves negotiating with patriarchy in their formal partnership with "traditional" authorities and less formal ties to Muslim leaders. However, UNICEF is strongly wedded to conventions, declarations, and bodies of the UN as its primary obligations. Its employees tend to stay closely allied to these and relatively disengaged from aid recipient communities, although government collaborators are just the contrary. They carry out most of the field work for UNICEF-Niger with little if any training in gender or women's rights, primarily invoking what they view as a participatory approach to development. However, their approach usually does not take account of structural and cultural barriers for women's participation. And even among development professionals in the same organization, one sees a range of views. For example in UNICEF, some are adamant about advocating for women's equal rights while others do not think that UNICEF integrates gender issues into their programs.

Stories from Volunteers and Aid Recipients

Beyond these salaried employees, others are affiliated with CARE- and UNICEF-Niger as volunteer leaders and aid recipients. This research project has looked closely at one rural aid recipient town where each organization intervenes—Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, respectively. Both towns have seen dramatic changes in gender roles over the past three decades as wife seclusion has become the norm, new Islamic theologies are being adopted, women are largely disappearing from agriculture, land has become scarce, food security is tenuous, and livelihoods have diversified. Although women and junior males now more commonly inherit land than in the past, women's access to agricultural resources is stifled by land shortage and new theologies of wife seclusion and male provision. Indeed, material and ideological factors around changes in gender roles in this context are intimately intertwined. Drought and little or poor land drives male labor migration, which in turn frequently exposes men to ideas linked to Islam about male provision and wife seclusion as paths to prosperity and well-being.

Poverty in this region also beckons transnational aid organizations to intervene with their own ideas about gender, rights, and development. Social hierarchies and power relationships constructed around gender, class, age, religion, education, and kin group affect how project interventions play out. Those of higher rank often manipulate project activities meant to help the most vulnerable community members for their personal gain. Also various actors in Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré reformulate and translate concepts related to gender, rights, and development in many ways. With little if any training in gender, rights, or other development concepts that define CARE and UNICEF's work, they often assume that project interventions are reinforcing gender roles

that they uphold, including wife seclusion and female domesticity, male provision and headship, and a hierarchical and reciprocal view of gender relations and rights. Some, however, do not make this assumption and see CARE and UNICEF's work as contradictory to proper Muslim practices around gender, rights, and management of economic resources. Others are simply suspicious of why transnational aid organizations and *turawa* would want to help them. Is there an ulterior motive? Will they be exploited by *turawa* as many Nigeriens have been? Still others choose not to participate in CARE and UNICEF interventions as it is not considered a good use of time and resources in an economically fragile environment.

Stories of Class, Race, and Nation in Development

As I have suggested above, transnational financial institutions as well as development organizations and governments all play a pivotal role in setting policy, planning programs, and distributing resources in developing nations. Furthermore, those working for development organizations tend to see their work as charity, service, help, and education for the poor; those working for the government tend to see themselves as public servants meeting a population's basic needs and protecting their interests. Thus in transnational development institutions, the gaze is often on the poor and those who are "developing." This is the public face of development in many places. Yet when the gaze is turned back on development institutions and professionals by listening to voices from aid recipients, class, race, and nation become core components of these institutions' and governments' identities. Aid recipients tend to view their relationships with salaried, middle class professionals in familiar terms reminiscent of *sarauta-talakawa*, *Alhazai-barori*, or government-citizen relations. Those participating as volunteers for CARE- and

UNICEF-Niger expect to be rewarded by wealthy transnational aid organizations for their work for and obedience to them. In this context, participatory development, sustainability, and self-sufficiency are difficult concepts to convey as actual practices reinforce rather than challenge social norms.

Although in my study race/ethnic relations or nationality were not prominent markers of difference between Nigerien aid workers and residents of Garin Jakka and Tchikaji Gajeré, in other settings of Niger these could be significant. Certainly in my work as a white, American anthropologist in these communities, race and nation were prominent. For those working at higher levels of transnational aid organizations or government aid agencies, their positioning in terms of class, race, and nation is highly visible when viewed from below. They hold positions of power due to their socio-economic class, race, and/or nationality, and this affects how they are perceived by aid recipients. Just as many institutions and governments have come to reflect on gender relations internally as well as in the aid they provide, these other markers of difference need equal reflection.

Histories of Women's Leadership in the Maradi Région

As mentioned in Chapter Five, women leaders play a prominent role in the history of Hausaland, a cultural resource barely tapped by those doing gender and development in Niger. Women have served in particular as *Iya/Inna*, powerful politico-religious arbitrator, in Hausa kingdoms. *Jekadiya* and *Magajiya* are other important women's roles, and women were (and continue to be in some parts of Niger) active participants in *bori* religion. This history is a rich resource for talking about women's leadership today. However in the face of Islamic theologies that are critical of *al'adu* and *bori*, some

people critique this history as a time of *jahilci*. Nevertheless, many Nigeriens still practice *bori* and maintain close ties to royalty. For them, telling or retelling this rich history of women leaders could provide a basis for better acceptance of women in political and religious leadership positions today.

Also within the history of Islam in Hausaland, great women leaders and scholars have emerged. These include Nana Asma'u and others mentioned in Chapter Five. Chronicling more lives of Nigerien Muslim women scholars and leaders and telling their stories would be an invaluable resource for women's education and leadership in Niger. Sharing stories of Muslim women leaders outside of Niger too would demonstrate the many positions Muslim women can hold in society and the fact that not all Muslims practice wife seclusion.

Actors and Histories

These stories and histories of gender, rights, and development in Niger and more specifically in the Maradi *Région* are not a part of the canon of WID/WAD/GAD/WED, gender mainstreaming, rights-based approaches, or UN agendas, although these sometimes enter into Nigerien stories in translated forms. Histories of development told in the West generally do not stretch across wide enough nor back far enough to see their relationship to other Western or transnational interventions in the developing world today nor as intimately intertwined with colonialism. Nigeriens have their own histories of gender, rights, and *lahiya* (well-being), which are rooted in Islam as well as non- and pre-Islamic traditions. These histories converge and diverge with the standard Western canon and history of development, gender, and rights. Nigeriens tend to see their relationships with *turawa* and transnational aid organizations in a historical and more holistic

perspective, though. It is a focus on these Nigerien actors that has allowed me to tell about the richness of language and complexity of power relations around gender, rights, and development, while still taking into account structural factors in Nigeriens' everyday lives.

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