

MID-TERM EVALUATION

NIG/801

Supporting the Training and Employment
Integration of Young Girls and Boys in the Regions
of Agadez and Zinder towards Contributing to the
Socio-Economic Development of those Two
Regions

PROJECT SUMMARY DATA

Country	Niger
Long project title	Supporting the Training and Employment Integration of Young Girls and Boys in the Regions of Agadez and Zinder towards Contributing to the Socio-Economic Development of those Two Regions
Short project title	A-FIP
LuxDev Code	NIG/801
Version of the Report	November 2018

RATING OF THE PROJECT BY THE EVALUATION MISSION

Global rating (Effectiveness)	2 On a scale of 1 (excellent results, significantly better than expected) to 6 (the project was unsuccessful, or the situation has deteriorated on balance)
Rating using other evaluation criteria	Relevance: 1 Efficiency: 3 Sustainability: 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the mid-term evaluation of the project titled “Supporting the Training and Employment Integration of Young Girls and Boys in the Regions of Agadez and Zinder Towards Contributing to the Socio-Economic Development of those Two Regions” - A-FIP (project code: NIG/801).

NIG/801 project is in line with the objectives of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Control of the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The overall budget of the NIG/801 project is EUR 6 900 000.

In November 2016, LuxDev received a mandate from the European Union for the implementation of NIG/801 project. NIG/801 project was validated on 7th November 2016 by the European Union. The programme was planned to span a period of 36 months and kicked off on 14th November 2016.

The overall objective of NIG/801 project is to contribute to the socio-economic development of the two regions of Agadez and Zinder through training, boosting the employability and job integration of girls and boys. NIG/801 project is supporting the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Education.

More specifically, NIG/801 project aims to improve the employability of girls and boys through vocational training and the development of small-scale businesses. To this end, the expected project outcomes are two-fold: to improve the management of Vocational and Technical Education and Training in the regions of Agadez and Zinder and to improve access for over 6 000 youth to a wide-profile training and to support measures in order to facilitate their employment integration.

This report highlights the outcomes of the interim assessment mission carried out in Niamey, Agadez and Zinder from 17th September to 4th October 2018 by the SOGEROM Team on behalf of LuxDev. SOGEROM SA mobilized a team of two evaluators¹ towards completing the mission successfully in Niger.

Based on an overall rating scale ranging from best grade 1 to grade 6, the mid-term evaluation team awards:

- grade 1 for the relevance of the project. The NIG/801 project is, in fact, in line with the logic of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund with relevant short-term trainings (three months) and integration of over 50% of the 1 995 young people trained in various promising sectors, aged between 15 and 30, living in rural settings, out-of-school youth or youth with little school education, lacking professional skills, facing unemployment and underemployment. The project is consistent with the national priorities set out in the 2014-2024 Education and Training Sector Program: effective support to Regional Directorates of Vocational and Technical Education and to the two branches of the Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund helped improve the management of the Vocational and Technical Education and Training sub-sector at the local level and an inclusive mobilization of public actors as well as private operators in the implementation of successful work-study programs. Thus, the project contributes effectively to the improvement of Vocational and Technical Education and Training leadership at the local level, to the increase in the number of qualified youths in various growth occupations in the project intervention zone which covers 65% of the Niger territory and to improving the employability of young people;
- grade 2 for the effectiveness of the project. Outcomes were achieved, following 22 months into the project out of the 36 planned months, leading to the attainment of the specific objectives of NIG/801 project. The project experienced almost a year delay after launch. Main causes of the delay are attributed to:
 - successive postponements of the first Steering Committee meeting,
 - challenges in defining the training and placement procedures for youth, particularly the selection criteria for training operators.

¹ Mamadou Moustapha FALL (Head of Mission) and Moussa HAMBALI (National Expert).

Despite this delay, for outcome 1 (*O1, Vocational and Technical Education and Training piloting at central and especially regional levels has been improved*), tangible progress has been noted in terms of concerted steering of the Vocational and Technical Education sub-sector at the local level. The successful holding of two Steering Committee meetings within the two regions by local bodies showcases the level of independence acquired by the stakeholders trained by NIG/801 project. In addition, an Integrated Capacity Building Plan for Regional Directorates of Vocational and Technical Education stakeholders and regional branches of the Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund Agadez and Zinder is already available. The implementation of this Integrated Capacity Building Plan has been planned. The multi-stakeholder momentum and monitoring system initiated by the NIG/801 project contribute to a more effective management of the training and learning system at both local and national levels. For outcome 2 (*O2: Access of youth to wide-profile training and to support measures promoting employment integration has been improved*), the progress of the project is well known to all. The identification of training needs in Agadez and Zinder in a dozen of sectors, the mapping of craft businesses as well as private and public training centres, the strengthening of the technical platform of craft businesses and selected training centres have widened access to and the quality of training provisions. People's perception of Vocational Training has grown very positive and the employability of youth has increased. All stakeholders who were interviewed in the field including beneficiaries' parents, young beneficiaries, local and national authorities, Master craftsmen and training operators expressed satisfaction and optimism at the good ending of the project with all objectives reached. "Our children now have a job and have been trained with high quality equipment, they have been certified and integrated in such a short period of time... we want to show appreciation to the project", said a mother and a father of young beneficiaries in Zinder. However, youth pay system introduced in craft businesses needs to be improved and made known to them. An external expertise was mobilized during the first quarter of 2018 to support the project team in defining an employment integration approach with an operational mechanism for facilitating access to credit for youth. As for guidance and information for youth, six youth guidance platforms (three in Agadez and three in Zinder) have been identified to benefit from support for rehabilitation, equipment and individual capacity building for youth guidance counsellors;

- the mid-term evaluation team awards grade 3 (outcomes achieved but opportunities exist for improvement) for the efficiency of NIG/801 project. Project efficiency is evidenced by the sound management of available financial resources. The disbursement rate is only 24% (for 55% of the project duration). This is therefore low. However, despite this low rate, owing to the lost year and the performances achieved, NIG/801 project has succeeded in setting up public-private partnership mechanisms that prove conducive for the rapid implementation of training/integration activities and therefore the achievement of the expected outcomes by the end of the project. Thus, all O2 expectations have been met, while some O1 activities are scheduled after this mid-term evaluation mission;
- the mid-term evaluation team awards grade 1 for sustainability. NIG/801 project based its implementation strategy on the exclusive use of public and private bodies (Regional Directorates of Vocational and Technical Education, Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund regional branches, training centres, local authorities, craft businesses, etc.), whose mandates and responsibilities are related to training and professional integration. The project also benefits from III Indicative Cooperation Programme's bilateral program funded by the Luxembourg Cooperation, developed and implemented according to the program approach and based on support to national, regional and local institutions created by the Government of Niger. This program is based on national policies and strategies for vocational training and integration and contributes to the diversification and sustainability of national and international funding. The strategy deployed therefore affords institutional and financial sustainability to the project. The social sustainability of the project's achievements is ensured by the building of human resource capacities in charge of the vocational training at local level and by the mobilization of local stakeholders for the selection of growth occupations, the definition of practical implementation modalities of activities, the monitoring and assessment, awareness raising, information and guidance for project beneficiaries and targets. As for the technical and methodological sustainability of NIG/801 project, this is guaranteed by the use of the human resources trained in the Competence-Based Approach as part of NIG/017 project (funded by the Luxembourg Cooperation) prior to NIG/801 project, the qualitative and quantitative improvement of the technical platform for 288 craft businesses as well as private and public training centres.

The **lessons learned** mainly include:

- the “faire-faire” approach by LuxDev in the project implementation, the upstream organizational diagnosis of capacity building needs, the participatory and inclusive identification of promising sectors and training needs are items that promote the achievement of the expected project outcomes;
- for the sake of alignment with national procedures, the project is implemented by national, regional and municipal stakeholders from Niger technical bodies and services supported by a project Management Unit;
- the quality and number of equipment, tools and working materials supplied to craft businesses and training centres have increased the opportunities for learning and integration of youth, and have improved working and living conditions for beneficiaries;
- planning follow-up missions of the project in Agadez in accordance with military convoys granted maximum security to field teams.

The main identified **areas that call for improvement** in the implementation of NIG/801 project include:

- delays in the validation of Non-Objection Notice with impacts on the carrying out of activities;
- delays in the validation of the procurement plan;
- absence of a manual of procedures within Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund;
- lack of job descriptions for Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund branch heads;
- strategy and quality of integration call for improvement;
- projects funds for trained youth must be disbursed as youth expecting funding for their projects start growing eager;
- Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund financial reports are far behind schedule. Nevertheless, the checking of supporting documents by LuxDev is very rigorous. Should such strictness be applied in the technical and pedagogical follow-up, the project will reach the expected outcomes with utmost quality in learning provisions;
- lack of logistical means for Regional Directorates of Vocational and Technical Education - Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund teams in covering the vast territories of Zinder and Agadez (only one vehicle available);
- Zinder project team did not carry out any technical monitoring mission. While the team is a freshly-hired one (staff was hired about five months ago), this does not prevent the National Technical Assistants and Chief Technical Adviser from being more frequently present in the field and provide a better support to national stakeholders running the project;
- the National Technical Assistant responsible for developing the integration strategy did not carry out any field mission for an inclusive production of the integration strategy, while the Agadez National Technical Assistant carried out several field monitoring missions;
- lack of involvement of Regional Councils in the activities of the Steering Committee and in the implementation of project activities;
- lack of resources for information and guidance platforms;
- lack of training standards and tools for monitoring and evaluating the skills acquired by youth;
- complete lack of technical and pedagogical monitoring missions for the activities of trainers, who often happen to be inexperienced;
- lack of harmonization of training contents: two different training operators offer different contents for the same training in the same profession;
- lack of harmonization in training certificates formats: each operator prints “their” own certificates and subsequently have them signed by the Education Inspectorate;
- non-involvement of Educational Inspectors in the selection of content and assessment tests;
- the training period of three months is deemed inadequate for some professions by trainers, professionals and beneficiaries’ parents;

- some equipment was made available to centres and craft businesses with delay; therefore, the training was purely theoretical in some cases;
- integrated youth do not benefit from a clear and transparent remuneration system. The signed undertaking form serving as an “employment contract” is not legally binding. The team did not come across any youth who received a remuneration;
- a lot of effort should be stepped up in a bid to change representations and to raise awareness in young girls on the opportunities offered by trades traditionally practiced by boys, such as the maintenance of motor pumps.

Due to the one-year delay, the governor of Agadez strongly insisted on an extension of the duration of the project in order to carry out all the activities for such a “relevant” project. All stakeholders say they are “ready and motivated” to carry out the remaining activities provided logistical means are made available to them.