

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIG/015 project, "Rural integrated Development Project in Dosso", is an extension of NIG/010 project, which focused on rural integrated development in Dosso. NIG/015 project started in October 2005 and will end on 31 December 2009. Lux-Development has commissioned the consultancy firm AFC Consultants International of Bonn, Germany, to carry out the final evaluation of the project. The evaluation mission took place in Niger from 6 to 24 September 2009 with the participation of Dr Agnes Gerold, Mr Ali Sekou and Mr Moussa Garba.

The main objectives of the mission were to analyse

- the specific results and objectives achieved at the time of the evaluation compared to the plans set out in the respective project documents;
- the results achieved by the project in terms of capacity development, management and monitoring, paying particular attention to monitoring the various levels of intervention (inputs, tasks, results and specific objective);
- the project in accordance with the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, also taking into account the cross-cutting issues (poverty eradication, governance, gender and the environment);
- the lessons learned and make recommendations for future projects in the Dosso region in Niger.

The performance of the project should correspond to **the overall objective: contributing to improving the living conditions of the populations in the Dosso department.**

In agreement with its **specific objective**, the project should "**promote a dynamic of local development in the Dosso department by encouraging access for rural people to economic and social opportunities; by improving the management of natural resources and by developing the capacities of public institutions and rural organisations.**" The evaluation mission estimates that it is justified to conclude that the project activities have contributed to the development of the Dosso department, even if the quantitative data required for the verification of the indicators are only partially available.

For the achievement of the specific objective, the **following results have been specified:**

Result 1: communes have drawn up and adopted their communal development plans in a spirit of regional integration. In accordance with the planning, almost all the communes (apart from one) have drawn up and approved their commune development plans. The lacunae observed are located above all at the level of establishing operational stakeholder frameworks at different levels (communes) and a regional information system. Setting up a framework for inter-commune exchange may be considered, in this context, as a preparatory measure for establishing these stakeholder frameworks.

Result 2: the communes in the area have been opened up and they have strengthened their socioeconomic infrastructure. In taking into account the indicators formulated and the activities carried out at the project level, it can be concluded that the result has been achieved: the villages in the area can be considered as opened up, communes' socioeconomic infrastructure has been considerably strengthened and the communes are contributing (financially) to carrying out commercial investments (rural markets, slaughter yards, etc.).

Result 3: access for rural people to development opportunities and the capacities of initiatives and local actors' intervention (state technical services, farmers' organisations, NGOs, civil society, economic interest groups, etc.) have been strengthened. The local population has had access to various support services to increase production (agricultural and livestock), although the corresponding indicators have not been verified. However, due to a lack of adequate data, it has not been possible to state as yet the resulting effects. The largest lacuna identified concerns the dynamic development of institutional structures, such as the farmers' organisations and associations.

Result 4: socioeconomic infrastructure and natural resources are managed sustainably at the local, commune and supra-commune level: in its entirety, sustainable management (of financial and organisational aspects) of the socioeconomic infrastructure created is not yet in place. This is also due to the fact that some of these investments has only been made recently. Often, the management committees are not sufficiently operational to provide sustainable management; the systems required (especially with regard to the financial aspect) at the supra-commune level still do not exist.

The mission has arrived at the following conclusions:

The public sector and the private sector have been explicitly introduced and recognised through the process of decentralisation. The public sector is represented at the micro level by the communes, their mayors and elected representatives, while the private sector is represented by agricultural producers, livestock breeders and local artisans. The farmers' organisations represent the private sector. However, support of the farmers' organisations, the key institutions of the private sector, only has relatively reduced importance in the project. The project has put in place a process to support the farmers' organisations: inventory, action plan in 2006, support/assistance to the farmers' organisations through the NGOs.

The institutional management systems must take into account the private sector. **However, the project activities are mainly based on the concept of village communities and community management.** However, village communities do not have personality status, either natural or legal. Niger is now seeing the beginnings of delegated management (cf. drinking water supply systems, commercial equipment) and the project is assisting this process.

The promotion of a dynamic of local development **requires explicitly taking the market into consideration**; the project's interventions regarding the promotion of agriculture are based above all on the notion of production.

The communes **and the farmers' organisations (service provision, advocacy) are beginning their process of establishing** and developing capacities. In order to support future consultation at the supra-commune level and to facilitate the identification of opportunities to cooperate, the project has acted with a high degree of flexibility. It has set up regular meetings at the supra-commune level between the mayors and the elected representatives of the various communes. The representatives of the farmers' organisations also take part in these meetings.

The results of the **development of institutional structures are only faintly apparent at present**, compared to the construction of markets, storage warehouses etc. However, the development of these structures is vital for the management and sustainability of the investments made.

A fair distribution (50:50) between men and women of the jobs created as part of the project activities is not sufficient for "gender" purposes. The distribution of the jobs created should be: 80% for women and 20% for men (cf. HIMO over 4 years).

Therefore, the mission makes the following recommendations:

Explicit formulation and implementation of a strategy for local economic development orientated towards the market, taking into consideration the existing possibilities at the production and demand level (urban, in Niamey) within the marketplace.

Increase support for the farmers' organisations (more responsibility given to population via professional organisations representing social groupings) and strengthening of the farmers' organisations to increase their service provider capacities for their members.

Give the farmers' organisations, as representatives of the private sector, responsibility for managing production, supply and marketing infrastructure. The first concern is for farmers' organisations to be regarded by the mayors and other actors as genuine development actors. This is under way, through each commune's drawing up of a support plan for the farmers' organisations, including budgets, even if they are still insignificant.

Support cooperation between the public sector and the local private sector. An important issue to address in this context is the analysis of the specific situation of each village and the identification of the potential synergies between the public sector (the commune) and the private sector, farmers and livestock breeders and their organisations.

Draw up a “gender” strategy which will enable the project activities to be orientated appropriately.

Formulate specific indicators (of impact) **to give more consideration to the institutional development activities** (especially of the farmers’ organisations) that are long-term jobs.