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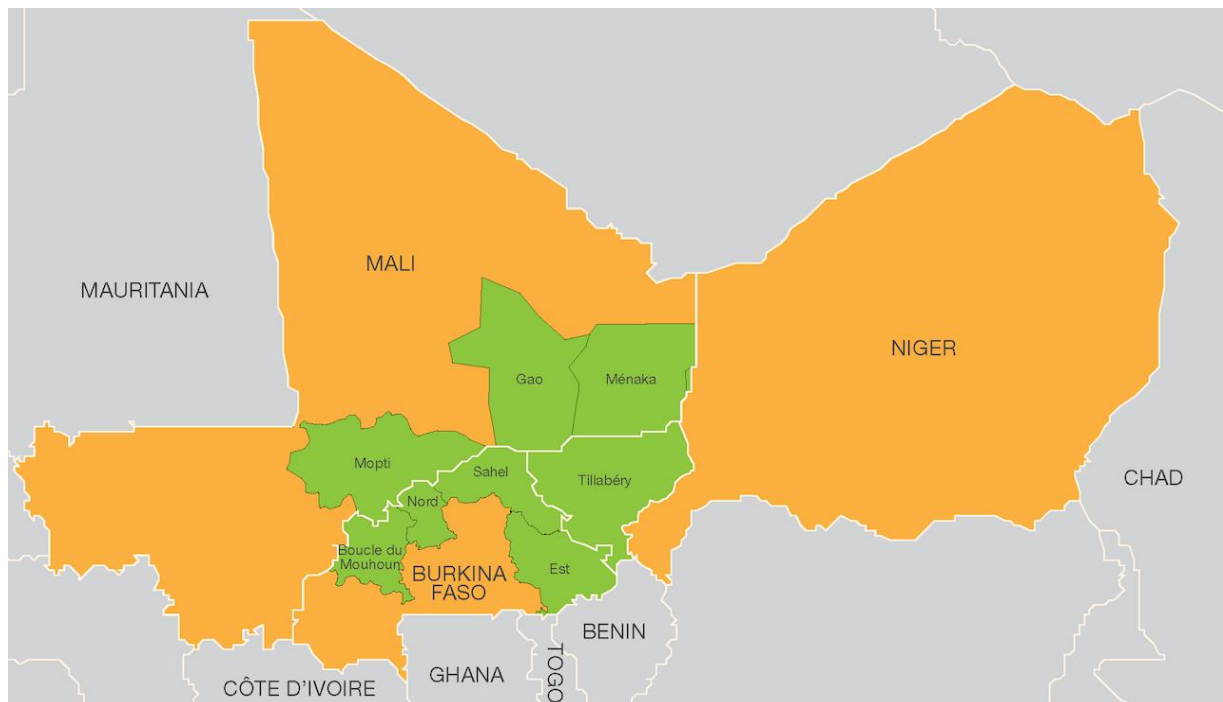


PROGRESS REPORT

Programme Conjoint de Coopération Transfrontalière dans la Région du Liptako-Gourma

Presented by UNDP Regional Hub for West and Central Africa, Dakar

December 5, 2020



1. INTRODUCTION

The UN Joint Programme was elaborated following a request from the Liptako Gourma Authority (LGA) to the UNDP Africa Sub Regional Hub in Dakar to support the LGA's efforts at strengthening the effective management of human development activities on the cross border areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger - here in referred to as the Liptako Gourma Region. The overall aim is to support the LGA to establish an enabling environment; planning and coordination of frameworks to improve response to challenges; aid effectiveness and innovative approaches for crisis prevention, resilience, livelihood creation and economic revitalisation. This with the grand vision to promote peace and prosperity in the LGA region (the hitherto Central Sahel crisis epicentre).

The Joint Programme was the first to be conceived as a pilot under the aegis of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and its recalibrated United Nations Sahel Support Plan (UNSP). The joint programme is implemented by nine agencies UNODC, UNOCHA, UNICEF, UNECA, UNWOMEN, ILO, UNESCO, OHCHR and UNDP across three main pillars of the UNISS-Governance, Resilience and Security. Through a nexus mapping, the programme aims to deliver four integrated UN collective outcomes in support of the LGA's efforts. These are set out below:

- Promotion of cross-border cooperation for stability & development - Institutional and legal frameworks for better cooperation by strengthening regional, national and local mechanisms;
- Promotion of inclusive and equitable growth and access to basic social services – Early recovery and stabilization of societies;
- Prevention and resolution of conflicts, violent extremism and crime; promote access to justice, human rights and the rule of law;
- Building resilience to climate change; reducing scarcity and managing natural resources.

The Joint Programme is being funded by SIDA and was inaugurated in November 2019. Implementation commenced immediately with the establishment of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) as a vehicle for funds disbursement. Thus far, all agencies except OHCHR and UNODC, which owing to their internal arrangement and management decision will commence active implementation of activities in 2021. Consistent with the normative Standard Cost Sharing Agreement with the MPTF, the latter will be responsible for sharing the financial progress report on the Joint Programme activities.

The current report, therefore, provides a narrative of the following: (i) status of implementation of activities including highlights of some key achievements so far (ii)

key implementation challenges (iii) prospective plans for 2021 activities (iv) Way forward and strategies for accelerating implementation of activities.

2. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Joint Programme implementation mechanism occurred at two levels: (i) agency based led implementation and (ii) Humanitarian-development based interventions at cross border country levels coordinated by UNDP Country offices of Burkina, Mali and Niger under the guidance of the respective Liptako Gourma region local authorities. [*NOTA BENE: It is important to underscore that the commencement of activities was hampered by the covid-19 situation soon as they took off. This report, therefore, by and largely, provides activity updates rather than results achieved*]. The status of implementations so far are detailed below:

Agency-Specific Progress

ILO: Two activities are currently underway. These are (i) mapping and analysis of vocational and technical skills for job creation for youth. The mapping process has been commissioned, and the exercise is underway. At the same time, the process of evaluating value chains for promoting agribusiness activity within vulnerable communities has also been commissioned. This will be complementary to the vocational skills mapping. Related activities involving actual skills-building for promoting entrepreneurial development among youth and women will take place in earnestly in 2021.

UNESCO: The progress of main activities includes the following: the mapping of the local radio stations for promoting durable education in crisis-affected epicentres of the region including the process of selecting local partners completed. In addition, a concept note and Terms of Reference (TORs) have been finalised for the environmental conservation and monuments preservation programmes. This will commence active implementation in 2021.

UNWOMEN: Activities were concentrated in the Mali-Niger cross border area. Focal points of the agencies met to identify a consensus on the areas of intervention and carried out a joint mission to present the project to the authorities of the communities concerned. The Women's Network for Peace, a local NGO, has been selected to implement the project. These projects will start in January 2021. In Mali, ODI SAHEL has been hired to assist in the implementation of field activities. In Burkina, WANEP has been selected and contract signed. Funds were disbursed in November 2021 and implementation has started immediately after that.

UNICEF: The support activity for small projects in Mali will be implemented by the government's technical services (DRDSES and DRPFEF) beginning in January 2021.

The terms of reference (TOR) for the activity are being finalised, including the proposal of specific intervention areas given the particularity of the project. For WASH activities, a local NGO (IMADEL) has been engaged to commence implementation of the activity in Mopti and Douentza areas. In Burkina, in collaboration with local actors, UNICEF is in the process of identifying a community host among those targeted for the Joint Program. Ten planned communities and schools will be targeted for Education Cannot Wait and WASH activities in schools. Also, the implementing partner for community mobilisation activities (local association, preferably with the possibility of capacity building has been identified. Regarding promoting WASH activities in Schools, an Agreement has been reached with a construction company capable of intervening in the area for the building of sanitation infrastructure in 10 schools.

UNECA: The production of the annual analytical report on the socio-economic and prospective situation of the Liptako-Gourma Region has been prioritised. The TORs for the selection of a firm has been finalised, and the recruitment process has begun. In addition, a junior consultant has been recruited for three months and is already working to support the main consultant. The inception report is expected by December 15, 2020.

UNHCR: Indicated that administrative and financial requirements imposed by its head office had prevented the transfer of the funds allocated to it on time. This challenge has been addressed, and therefore activities are planned to begin in 2021.

UNODC: As previously indicated, UNODC has rephased all activities considering the covid-19 situation as well as internal management decision to commence in 2021.

UNDP: UNDP's activity directly supports the LGA as part of the reinforcement of its capacity. Thus, UNDP is supporting the implementation of institutional reform of the LGA overall. Also, in the context of the implementation of the LGA Priority Action Plan 2021-2025, UNDP is supporting the LGA with the following activities:

- Elaboration of a visionary strategic plan to accompany the Priority Action Plan 2021-2025. This will guide the LGAs activities for the next five years.
- Feasibility study for the establishment of a mechanism for aid management, resource planning and allocation under a decentralised management for local administration.
- A feasibility study for a cross-border project to support local development for the benefit of Burkina Faso and Niger, linked to environmental protection, including conservation of associated high biodiversity value forests, would be conducted. TORs have been elaborated, and the activity will commence in 2021.
- Conflict mapping for effective cross border cooperation and management.

- The establishment of a mechanism for the management of "cross-border" conflicts related to pastoralism. This will commence in 2021.
- Support to the ALG for the conduct of a regional study on the state of the art of educational institutions in the field of non-formal education (religious education, literacy, etc.). This activity is being carried out in collaboration with UNESCO, which is planning to conduct a similar study in the field of formal education. UNESCO and the ALG have worked together to develop the ToRs with a view to launching the recruitment of a consultant.
- Support for the organisation of steering committee meetings and inter consultative local governance forums for the Liptako Gourma region. The next governance forum is scheduled for early 2021. Date to be announced.

Country Specific Progress (cross border regions of Mali-Niger, Mali-Burkina and Niger-Burkina)

UNDP Niger: Activities pursued are within the framework of coordination and synergy around the humanitarian-development nexus. The major activity commissioned is installation of Multifunctional Platforms (MFPM), for which work is in progress. The MFPM is an integrated system powered by solar for use to transform agricultural products for value chain marketing and distribution. Products such as millets, soya, shea butter are being targeted as pilots by women out-grower farmers.

UNDP Mali: Activities so far include support to the jurisdictions of Koro and Douentza, the establishment of security advisory committee and the revitalisation of land commissions in the targeted communities. Activities related to local justice and administration of rule will commence in 2021.

UNDP Burkina: Due to accessibility challenges, UNDP has engaged the local NGO-APESS, which operates in the targeted area to implement locally based crisis prevention activities. The national UN Volunteer in charge of monitoring the project activities was recruited and took office at the end of September 2020. This will strengthen the effectiveness of programme activities' execution. In terms of local activities, the communities of Sollé and Thiou in the Northern Region and Titabé in the Sahel Region were selected for the installation four water points/positive boreholes for domestic and pastoral use, on the one hand, and for training sessions for youth and women involved in the sustainable management of natural resources. Solar power has also been installed in these communities to provide energy for services such as education, sanitation and health.

3. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Critically, the implementation of the programme was grossly hampered by the incidence of Covid-19 in all areas targeted for activities. Especially in terms of travel and physical access to communities. Therefore, activities which have not been implemented have been rephased to 2021.

Other agencies also reported challenges with access to targeted communities identified as zones of intervention. There were also delays due to administrative snags between transfers of funds from MPTF to Headquarter accounts of Agencies before being released locally. This issue has been resolved now that most agencies (partners) have received their funds.

4. PROSPECTIVE PLANS FOR 2021

Given that most activities were hampered primarily by the incidence of Covid-19, a recent project steering committee was held in November 19, 2020 to critically evaluate the impacts as well as define strategies for accelerating activity implementation for 2021. The meeting agreed to, among other things, an active engagement of local authorities on the ground to support the acceleration of activities through access guarantee (following Covid-19 protocols). All agencies were also admonished to rephase residual activities, which they were unable to implement to 2021.

5. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

The following actions have been taken by UNDP (the managing agent) to fast track implementation of activities as well as monitor and communicate results for visibility. These are:

- All implementing partners (UN Agencies and LGA) to review the portfolio of programme activities with the view to identify and rephase un-implemented activities to begin immediate implementation in January 2021.
- All partners to develop implementation acceleration plans for 2021 to be approved alongside signed activities by the steering committee in January 2021.
- UNDP has put in place a robust M& E mechanism for active monitoring and reporting on activities. This is to strengthen the effective delivery and communication of visible results.
- Partners will convene a meeting in January 2021 to develop joint program implementation plans to guide activities for 2021.