

Integrated Management of Oasis Ecosystems of Northern Niger (IMOE -NN)

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

9405

Countries

Niger

Project Name

Integrated Management of Oasis Ecosystems of Northern Niger (IMOE -NN)

Agencies

UNEP

Date received by PM

5/30/2019

Review completed by PM

11/6/2019

Program Manager

Jean-Marc Sinnassamy

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

FSP

PIF

CEO Endorsement

Project Design and Financing

1. If there are any changes from that presented in the PIF, have justifications been provided?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

No change between the PIF and the project document.

Response to Secretariat comments

2. Is the project structure/ design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

Cleared.

Since we started the review, the context has evolved:

It seems that the government has declassified 50,000 km² of the reserve of Termit, and there are on-going discussion on the management with agreement with an international NGO. How this project related to this reserve. Please, clarify.

November 4, 2019

Point taken. We invite UNEP to follow the evolution of discussions around the Termit Reserve. Even, if the current project is not affected by these changes, a coherent approach and response from the GEF is indispensable. About a Foundation, we wonder if a specific foundation for oases is the right response. A more broader approach would have our preference for a sustainable financing mechanism targeting sustainable landscapes (including oases, protected areas, buffer zones). to be discussed during project implementation and the next PIRs.

Response to Secretariat comments

14/10/2019

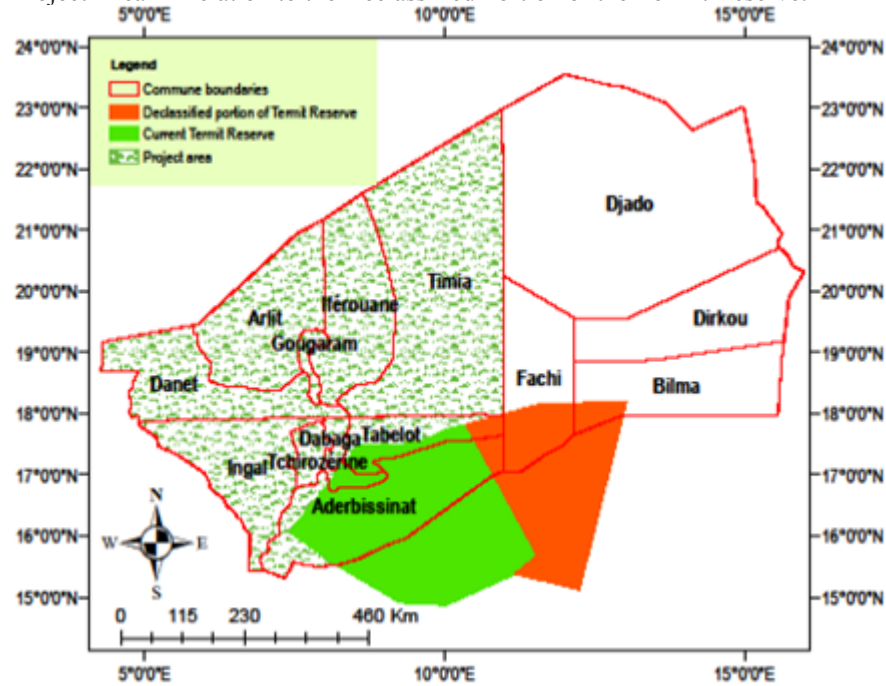
The Government of Niger and UNEP appreciate the GEF secretariat concerns on the issue of the declassification of part of Termit Reserve and potential impacts on the project. The Integrated Management of Oasis Ecosystems Project in Northern Niger is built around four main components, with a global focus on: (i) the creation of a favourable environment for the conservation of oases and forest ecosystems in arid valleys (Strategy for oasis conservation), (ii) Integrated planning of forest ecosystems in the oases and arid valleys of the Air Massif; (iii) Conservation measures for oases and dry forests of the Air; and (iv) Project management component.

General 'software' activities under component I are more relevant to the regions of Agadez, Diffa and Zinder, while the activities of components 2 and 3 (which are mainly field investment activities) are planned to be undertaken in the Region of Agadez. In fact, the activities in Agadez region will be implemented in the Air Massif which covers the communes of Arlit, Danet, Timia, Iferouane, Gougaram, Dabaga, Tabelot and Chirozérine and in the Tadress-Irhazer which includes the communes of Tchirozérine and Ingal. As shown in the maps below, this area of investment concentration is not located in the revised Termit Tin Touma reserve (green and orange patches on map 1). The concentration zone of the PGIEO -NN Project is related to the Air Reserve Ténéré which is in the north of Termit Tin Touma Reserve which has just been revised.

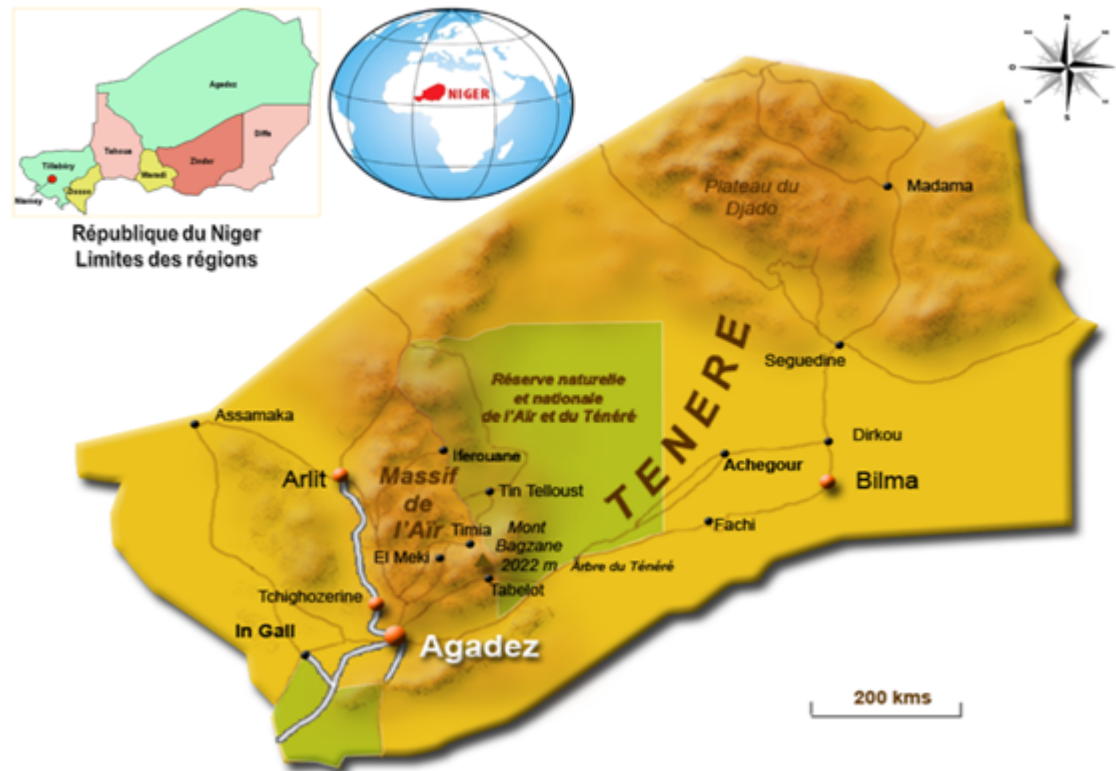
It should be noted that the Government is already in discussions with certain partners such as IUCN and CMS for the establishment of an appropriate management framework for the Termit Tin Touma Reserve taking into consideration its revised status and boundaries to improve biodiversity conservation in the Reserve. The

PGIEO-NN is considering the implementation of a Foundation on oasis preservation. The financial resources of this Foundation will come not only from voluntary contributions from local communities but also and especially from the private sector, particularly the mining and mineral exploration and exploitation companies. This is being planned to be part of the implementation of the companies' Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMP) as well as their Corporate Social Responsibility. The fact that a little part of Tabelot and Aderbissinat (see map below) provide the legal right (Law on the distribution of mineral and fuel exploitation dividends) for these 2 areas to receive a portion of the resources for local development and environment protection. It is anticipated that the Foundation of Oasis, to be established by the project will benefit from these funds as planned for the mining dividend already operational in Agadez region.

Project Area in Relation to the Declassified Portion of the Termit Reserve.



Localisation du massif de l'Air



3. Is the financing adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objective?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Cleared

Response to Secretariat comments

4. Does the project take into account potential major risks, including the consequences of climate change, and describes sufficient risk response measures? (e.g., measures to enhance climate resilience)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Yes

Response to Secretariat comments

5. Is co-financing confirmed and evidence provided?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

- For letters of cofinancing in another language, an informal translation is the usage. Please, provide.

- Please confirm that the \$500,000 per commune provided by the Regional Inter-Municipalities platform in the "Annual Investment Plans" can fully be considered as a cofinancing in grant. It is not clear in the letter, and it is not clear in the project document if all these activities are connected to the current project. Please, clarify.

September 13, 2019

Addressed.

Response to Secretariat comments

06 September 2019

The unofficial translation is provided in Project Document from Page 98 to 107

The letter from Inter-Municipalities Platform indicates clearly that this cofinancing will support the Observatory and the Foundation to be established by this GEF Project. Furthermore, clarification now provided in the Project Document on the purpose of the Annual Investment Plans from Mining Returns. The returns are intended to support local development including land restoration and improving local communities' resilience.

See Paragraph 129 of UN Environment Project Document

6. Are relevant tracking tools completed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

- It seems that the target is 60,000 ha. Please, confirm.
- However, it seems that there is double-counting, as we can read 40,000 hectares in both 3.2 and 4.1. The 40,000 ha figure is targeting SLM in production systems, which is 4.3. Based on the results framework, we suggest the following changes for indicators 3 and 4:
 - 3.1 (degraded agricultural lands restored) – please change the value to 19,000 ha
 - 3.2 (forest and forest land restored) – please change the value to 1,000 ha
 - 4.1 (area of landscape under improved practices to benefit biodiversity) – please delete the value here as we suggest it move to 4.3
 - 4.3 (area under sustainable land management in production systems) – please use the value of 40,000 ha.
- For greenhouse gas emissions mitigated, you reported the carbon sequestered under 6.2 and only the emissions avoided under 6.1. Both should be under 6.1, as 6.2 is for emissions mitigated outside the AFOLU sector. Please combine the values for 6.1 and 6.2 and use this as a new value for 6.1.
- Please also provide more details on the assumptions made in estimating CO₂e mitigation with the Ex-ACT tool. We would also be happy to have a look at the full EXACT excel tables.
- Please, consider a 20-year period as per policy (and not 10 years).

September 13, 2019

Addressed.

Response to Secretariat comments

06 September 2019

Yes the target is confirmed at 60,000 ha

The value of the Indicators in Annex E: GEF 7 Core Indicator Worksheet, have been adjusted to consider the guidance provided by the review.

The assumptions on the carbon calculations have been strengthened in Annex N and the EXACT spreadsheet included in the submission.

7. Only for Non-Grant Instrument: Has a reflow calendar been presented?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement NA

Response to Secretariat comments

8. Is the project coordinated with other related initiatives and national/regional plans in the country or in the region?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Yes, We appreciate the effort to coordinate with other programmes and initiatives as the PRODAF and the 3N Initiative.

Response to Secretariat comments

9. Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

10. Does the project have descriptions of a knowledge management plan?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

Yes, following observations made at PIF level and from Council Members, a KM plan was designed.

Addressed.

Response to Secretariat comments

Agency Responses

11. Has the Agency adequately responded to comments at the PIF stage from:

GEFSEC

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

STAP

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Yes.

Response to Secretariat comments

GEF Council

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Yes

Response to Secretariat comments

Convention Secretariat

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement NA

Response to Secretariat comments

Recommendation

12. Is CEO endorsement recommended?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

The project cannot be recommended for clearance yet. Please, address the comments above.

September 13, 2019

The project is not recommended for CEO endorsement. See item 2.

October 21, 2019

The project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

November 4, 2019

The project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

December 4,

Comments from PPO were not addressed.

- 1) Still Executing Partners type is not correct – please ask the Agency to amend.
- 2) Co-financing letters: The English translation of the co-financers (i) General Directorate of Water and Forest/Ministry of Environment, Urban Sanitation and Sustainable Development; and (ii) National Centre for Ecological Monitoring are missing – please, provide such translation;
- 3) Still the M&E Plan in ProDoc (page 91) includes Audit, which should be charged to PMC – please, amend

- 4) The budget still includes \$650,218 in vehicle – maintenance – fuel – insurance. These budget lines must be removed and charged to the co-financing portion – Please, amend;
- 5) Still with the current budget format, it is not clear whether the project staff is charged to PMC or to the project's components. Please ask the Agency to present the budget using as categories the components + PMC and differentiating between GEF funds and Co-financing funds.

December 31, 2019: all points have not been addressed.

- Point 1 and 2 cleared.
- Point 3, 4, and 5:
 - Please confirm the titles of project staff and consultants and their budget lines. Project staff (coordinator, M&E, administrative staff) should be covered by pmc. The position of "project focal point municipality" is not clear. Please, clarify.
 - All the budget items related to administrative support should be covered by the pmc.
 - All monitoring related activities should be covered by pmc (please note that some formulations are unclear: #1302, 1602, 1603).
 - We take note that the budget for vehicles has dramatically decreased from \$650,218 to \$60,000. Please explain the role of cofinancing for vehicles.
 - \$60,000 are budgeted for international travels in the component 1 "Enhanced enabling environment for oasis and arid valley forests ecosystem conservation in Niger". It is difficult to understand the need for international travels for this component. Please, clarify and amend.
 - The budgets for mid-term and final evaluations (5501, 5502) should not be covered by technical components, but by a M&E plan (please, refer to the GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01, if needed).
 - There are still discrepancies of \$100 between tables A and D for BD and SFM. Please, correct.

February 11, 2020

All points are addressed. The project is recommended for CEO endorsement.

Response to Secretariat comments

10 December 2019

- 1) The Executing Partners type can only be corrected by the GEF secretariat. UNEP has requested the Secretariat to do the correction

- 2) The cofinancing letters from the (i) General Directorate of Water and Forest/Ministry of Environment, Urban Sanitation and Sustainable Development; and (ii) National Centre for Ecological Monitoring are now included and translated in English
- 3) The audit cost in the M&E Plan in ProDoc (page 91), has now been removed in the M&E plan and charged on PMC – See budget line 5581 in Annex F1
- 4) The budget has been amended to consider the review comments and guidance. Only those costs eligible under Table B of the GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01 June 9, 2017 of GUIDELINES ON THE PROJECT AND PROGRAM CYCLE POLICY are now considered. The vehicle and related cost (maintenance, fuel, assurance) maintained but reduced to \$60000. The purchase of a vehicle in this remote project area is planned instead of travel on official business using hired cars to allow the project to have means of timely travel for mission and avoid delays of receiving Government vehicles or paying costly for hired vehicles. The project area is large enough and different sites in distant locations which necessitate the project coordination to have a vehicle for easy implementation including monitoring of project and outputs delivery by different contractors.
- 5) The budget as Annex F1 is presented per component +PMC differentiating between GEF Funds and Cofinancing funds

23 January 2020

-Please confirm the titles of project staff and consultants and their budget lines. Project staff (coordinator, M&E, administrative staff) should be covered by pmc. The position of "project focal point municipality" is not clear. Please, clarify.

The staffing has now been revised. Government covering through co-financing the Project Director and Project Coordinator. The M&E and other staff will be contracted as consultants on need and ad hoc basis.

The position of "project focal point municipality" is now reformulated to “6 Local (Municipalities level) Natural Resources Management Technical Specialists”. The municipalities are the project administrative entry point for the project implementation. As these entities do not have technical experts capable of supporting project technical execution at municipal levels, the project will recruit 6 experts to be placed in the 6 main municipalities where the project will be executed. The remoteness of the municipalities renders it difficult to support local project execution from the regional capital. For example, to reach Iferouane one of the municipalities from the regional capital Agadez, one has to travel a whole day.

- All the budget items related to administrative support should be covered by the pmc.

Addressed as advised. Project Finance Expert now charged on PMC

- All monitoring related activities should be covered by pmc (please note that some formulations are unclear: #1302, 1602, 1603).

Monitoring activities: Steering Committee Meetings (3301) and Audits (5581) costs are now charged on PMC. The previous activities #1302 and 1603 have been deleted. An explanation has been added to the budget regarding #1602.

- We take note that the budget for vehicles has dramatically decreased from \$650,218 to \$60,000. Please explain the role of cofinancing for vehicles.

The cost of other vehicles is now charged on co-financing from Government and Regional Council as after discussion with these 2 partners, there is an indication that efforts will be made to provide vehicles to the project at the municipal level through a joint Government and municipalities agreement to use mining returns to provide logistic support to the project. See amended cofinancing budget

- \$60,000 are budgeted for international travels in the component 1 "Enhanced enabling environment for oasis and arid valley forests ecosystem conservation in Niger". It is difficult to understand the need for international travels for this component. Please, clarify and amend.

The formulation of the activity is now revised as "Exchange visits and Participation of Project experts and stakeholders to events related to Oasis ecosystems management": The oasis ecosystem management is one of the important thematic issues which are being handled at the regional and global level through forums and other international events. It will be rewarding to ensure Niger participation in these events as it will help to build the sustainability and scaling up of the project results.

- The budgets for mid-term and final evaluations (5501, 5502) should not be covered by technical components, but by a M&E plan (please, refer to the GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01, if needed).

As far as our understanding, only routine project progress reports by the EA to the GEF Agency should be charged to Project Management Costs. Please see footnote 32 on page 15 of the GEF/C.52/Inf.06/Rev.01. Further, on page 43, Table C states that these activities should not be covered by PMC (see screenshot below). We, therefore, have created an M&E component to make this clear.

Table C - Project Activities not covered by GEF Funding under PMCs

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Government staff salaries;2. Salaries and fees for GEF Agency staff or consultants ;¹³⁵3. Purchase of vehicles;¹³⁶4. Monitoring of project indicators and periodic monitoring report (this should be budgeted under the M&E Budget and is a separate component of the project cost);5. Independent terminal evaluation for the project (this should be a part of the M&E budget); and6. Mid-term review/evaluation (this should be a part of the M&E budget).

- There are still discrepancies of \$100 between tables A and D for BD and SFM. Please, correct.

This is now corrected in the CEO Endorsement Request. UNEP thank the reviewers for highlighting these oversights which have helped to improve the quality of the CEO package.

Review Dates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement

Response to Secretariat comments

First Review		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief Reasoning for CEO Recommendations

Context

Situated at the edge of Sahara Desert in the mountains of Kawar and Air, the oasis ecosystems of Agadez region in northern Niger form an atypical geographical unit with shallow groundwater, sometimes flowing in some areas. They are closely linked to human activities and are at the heart of this region’s population background, located on the caravan roads connecting the Mediterranean Sea and Sudan. They are important centers for cultural, agricultural and pastoral activities.

The Air Mountains or Air Massif is a triangular massif in northern Niger, in the Sahara Desert. Included in the eco-region of xeric forests of Western Sahara, these mountains can reach more than 1,800 m -500-900m in average- and stretch over 89,000 km2. Because of its altitude and despite the low rainfall (50 to 160 mm / year on the low plateau), the Air Massif is a green region, with a Sahelian type of climate, with forest lands and gallery forests, compared to the surrounding deserts. The high plateau of Bazzane of the central Aïr for instance provides enough rainfalls for significant agriculture, contrasting with the surrounding arid volcanic landscape.

The oases and arid valley forests provide ecosystem services for people and nature in general – maintaining freshwater habitats, retaining sediments, ensuring a barrier against desertification, soil erosion, and drought, providing food, fodder, wood, fibers, and pharmacopoeia.

However, these fragile ecosystems are facing incredible challenges and pressures under climate change – deforestation, illegal logging, water mismanagement, land degradation, drought, pollutions (gold mining), in a context of endemic poverty, migration, and insecurity. Traditional knowledge and management of these ecosystems are facing difficulties with the growing sedentary people and recent migrants (for gold mining).

The proposed project proposes to institutionalize knowledge and monitoring for these ecosystems to create an interface mechanism between policy and science. Such framework needs to be multi-sectoral. Decisions need to be reinforced by laws, mapped through appropriate land-use planning instruments, and local authorities and decentralized public administrations need to be empowered and sustainably financed for implementation. Specific measures will also be considered for indigenous people (Bororo Fulani cattle breeders and nomadic traders).

Project

The project aims to promote sustainable management of oases and valleys for generating global environmental benefits for improving the socio-economic well-being of communities who heavily depend on the oases and valley ecosystems for their livelihoods.

The project is based on three technical components to 1) develop an enhanced enabling environment for oasis and arid valley forests ecosystem conservation in Niger, 2) design an Integrated Landscape Planning for Oasis and Arid Valley Forests in Air Massif supporting the communes, including multi-stakeholder planning platforms to bring together the different institutions, local communities and CSO, and 3) Oasis and Arid Valley Forests Ecosystem Conservation Measures, inspired from the Bonn Challenge and the Forest Landscape Restoration principles to restore ecological connectivity between forest complexes, and improve SLM in agricultural lands.

While targeting conservation of the oases ecosystems and focusing on water management for agricultural production to improve biodiversity through a community based participatory approach, this project will be an opportunity for providing numerous ecosystem services in this challenging environment. These services will include, among others, restoration and conservation of biodiversity, improved water resource management and sustainable agricultural practices.

Global Environment Benefits

- 60,000 ha of land restored;
- 40,000 ha under SLM;
- GHG emissions mitigated: 3.3 million tCO₂ avoided and 1.7 million tCO₂ sequestered;
- Beneficiaries: 125,000 people, including 50,000 women.

GEF strategies

This project proposes a SFM approach based on integration of the following objectives: BD-4 Program 9, CCM-2 Program 4, LD-1 Program 1, 3, and 4, and SFM-2 and 3.

Country priorities

Niger prioritized this project idea in GEF6.

Innovation, Sustainability & Scaling up

The project will bring innovation with the set of mechanisms and tools to manage oasis ecosystems (strategy, financing mechanism, platform of dialogue, observatory). Sustainability will be searched with the improvement of resilience of communities and systems. The approach will create the conditions for sustainability, potential replication, and scaling up.