



#### Location

Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso,  
Maroua in Cameroon,  
Conakry in Guinea,  
Niamey in Niger,  
Doba in Chad,  
Tory-Dossoti in Benin.

#### Implementation period

December 2021 - June 2023

#### Contribution to SDGs

2·3·4·6·7·10·12·13

## Water - Energy - Food Security Nexus start-up acceleration programme in the Niger Basin region

### LOCAL CONTEXT

As one of the least developed regions in the world, the Niger Basin region is strongly affected by the negative impacts of climate change as economic activity in this region remains largely dominated by agriculture (+50% of the population). In addition, the region remains vulnerable to the threat of food insecurity caused either by climate change, increased population demand, security threats or a combination of all three. The current global economic, social, and ecological challenges have highlighted the limits of singular and sectoral approaches to development projects in the fields of water, energy, and food security, both at the level of public and private actors.

Water, energy, agribusiness and WEF Nexus companies and start-ups face the double challenge of upscaling and sustainability:

#### 1. Being sustainable but complex:

- there is a lack of operational and financial support for complex technologies in an ecosystem that is not yet fully adapted,
- there is a lack of adapted economic models in the face of the relatively low purchasing power of the population without access to energy/water and food.

#### 2. Reconciling financial and environmental performance:

Most entrepreneurs in the region cannot afford technologies, techniques or even know-how allowing innovation and optimisation of production processes and costs leading to more competitive production yields and therefore prices. Although a strong development of impact investors sensitive to environmental and/or social issues is noticeable, the investment tickets as well as the conditions proposed are for the most part beyond the capacities of young companies developing their own business model.

### OBJECTIVE

To contribute to the acceleration of five high-impact start-ups in the WEF Nexus domain from member states of the Niger Basin Authority (NBA).





## LONG TERM IMPACT

The project will contribute to the long-term sustainable performance of 5 high impact start-ups and in parallel increase public and private investor-interest in WEF Nexus projects in the region.

The individual start-ups contribute to

- 1. AgroEco Service (Benin):** Producing and selling organic fertilizers and biochar, by processing organic waste via black soldier fly larvae.
- 2. Clean Energy Services (Cameroon):** Manufacturing of solar-powered freezers by recycling carcass freezers and recovering noxious gases.
- 3. MoonsoftBio (Guinea):** Designing and selling intelligent biodigesters, producing liquid fertilisers from organic waste, and designing aquaponics.
- 4. Green Business (Niger):** Producing biochar and organic fertilisers from water hyacinth, which reduces deforestation and improves the soil's water storage.
- 5. SAVIP (Chad):** Recycling of household and vegetable waste to produce natural fertilisers, ecological charcoal and bricks via carbonisation process.

## BENEFICIARIES:

Direct beneficiaries are the five start-ups, whereas indirect beneficiaries are farmers, private households, fishermen and municipalities within the Niger Basin.



## MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Recruitment of WEF Nexus related companies from the NBA member states (9 countries involved);
- Intensive 1-week bootcamp training of 12 start-ups on business, managerial, technical and WEF Nexus aspects;
- Support via a tailor-made acceleration programme of 5 selected WEF Nexus companies (from the previous 12);
- Identification of impact investors interested in WEF Nexus companies and organisation of dating between start-ups and investors;
- Support and preparation of start-ups for fundraising to support their scaling up;
- Identification of good practices and lessons learned along the way.



## MAIN RESULTS

- Acceleration of 5 selected WEF Nexus companies in NBA member states including tailored training and support on their business models;
- Identification of public and private investors likely to finance WEF Nexus enterprises;
- Companies are coached and then presented to public and private investors and selected for investments;
- WEF Nexus companies are prepared to set up fundraising.



## LESSONS LEARNED (AT THIS STAGE)

- There are many innovators in the region trying to develop their business ideas, but most of them are not passing an incubation stage and are not yet interesting for investors.
- Remote acceleration has limitations. Immersion courses of a few days (within the incubator) would allow to reinforce the support, especially on technical aspects.
- The regulatory and legislative framework in the region is not favourable for young companies (cost of acquiring raw materials, customs formalities, taxes, etc.). On top of that seasonal availability of raw material requires a substantial seed funding during the acceleration period.
- There is a large gender-imbalance with respect to start-up applications. Hurdles for women to create an own start-up are higher than for men. To attract more female participants, an incubator programme would be more appealing than an accelerator program.