

REPUBLIQUE DU NIGER
MINISTERE DE L'ENERGIE ET DU PETROLE
DIRECTION GENERALE DE L'ENERGIE
DIRECTION DES ENERGIES RENOUVELABLES ET DES ENERGIES DOMESTIQUES

Outline of Expression of Interest to Participate in SREP

I. COUNTRY AND GOVERNMENT AGENCY SUBMITTING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Republic of Niger-Ministry of Planning, Territory Management and community Development

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY AND ENERGY SECTOR CONTEXT

Please provide a summary of the country and energy sector context, including resource potential for deploying renewable energy, status of energy access (population with access to electricity), renewable energy policies, targets, and implementation measures.

Country Context

Niger is a large, landlocked country in the arid Sahel-Saharan region with a population of about 17 million people, the majority of whom are engaged in semi-subsistence agriculture. The country's total land area is 1.27 million square kilometers, out of which 2/3 is desert. More than 84 percent of the population is concentrated in rural areas in the areas around River Niger in the southwestern corner of the country and along its long southern border with Nigeria. The central and northeastern regions are arid and sparsely populated, with the exception of a few smaller cities along the northern route to Algeria. Though droughts are frequent, about 80 percent of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture and livestock. Uranium mining and, more recently, oil production play an increasingly important role in the Niger economy.

Poverty incidence is declining, but Niger remains among the poorest countries in Africa with \$650 GNI (PPP) in 2012, well below the average GNI in constant prices of \$1,387 for low income countries.¹ In 2010 the poverty headcount rate (\$ 2.5 a day (PPP)) stood at 85.0% of the population, down from 94.8% in 1990. Growth hit 11.1 percent in 2012 and is expected to average 7% for the 2012-2015 period, with natural resources playing a key role in GDP growth. International Aide finances about 40% of Niger's budget while much of the Government's revenues comes from trade (especially uranium and oil), investment (especially in the mining and hydrocarbon sectors), and remittances.

Niger currently has an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate economic development, reduce poverty and boost shared prosperity. Since 2000 only modest progress has been observed in social and economic indicators, due in large part to recurrent droughts, regional conflict and political instability. The successful political stabilization in April 2011, however, provided the basis for a stronger policy focus on broad-based growth and poverty reduction as well as for the strengthening of political institutions. The start of oil production in November 2011 and large-scale investments in the uranium sector promise to boost growth over the medium term while providing critical resources for the Government's development agenda. Taking advantage of these opportunities will require to mobilize greater private-sector participation in the provision of infrastructure as well as continued engagement by Niger's development partners in order to ensure adequate financing and technical support to reinforce good governance and build institutional capacity.

¹ World Development Report 2014, Table 1, p.296: "Key Indicators of Development". World Bank, Washington, DC.2014

Niger's macroeconomic policy framework is considered to provide an adequate basis for the purpose of the proposed pilot activities under SREP. Average GDP growth is projected to remain above 6 percent over the medium term, with much higher rates anticipated during years in which extractive-industry projects come on-stream. External debt is projected to remain sustainable as electricity and other infrastructure bottlenecks are removed, boosting growth and exports. The main risks to the framework are commodity-price shocks, a deterioration in the security situation and institutional/governance challenges. As for the security situation, the Government has increased security expenditures by 1.25 percentage points of GDP in 2013 and continued to strengthen its cooperation with regional and international partners in an effort to address these complex challenges. Niger has thus demonstrated its ability to respond to the circumstances as needed in order to meet its economic targets, while at the same time pursuing an ambitious reform agenda.

Energy Sector

The energy situation in Niger is typical for the least advanced countries. The national energy needs are mainly covered by traditional energy resources (firewood, agricultural biomass, etc.). According to the Energy Balance of 2010, biomass represents 80% of the final energy consumption which is by far the main energy source for households and artisanal industries. As for electricity (thermal, coal), it only accounts for 3% of total energy consumed, even though Niger is well-endowed with domestic energy sources. Hydrocarbons (17%) and renewable energy (0.01%) complement the energy balance. In 2010, Niger's diesel generation plants and the coal generation plant of Tchirozérine (SONICHAR) accounted for 13.5% of the total electricity supplied in Niger, while the electricity imported from Nigeria represented 86.5% of the total electricity supplied in the country. These imports of cheap electricity from Nigeria have constituted Niger's main source of electricity supply since the early 70s. The share of these imports in the total electricity supplied has however declined recently, as changes in the Nigeria electricity market has undergone a significant market reforms. This decline in the relative share of electricity supply is expected to continue as the demand for electricity increases in Niger, and tariffs of imported electricity is expected to increase when tariffs are renegotiated in about one year time. Faced with this crisis, the Government contracted additional generation capacities in 2012 (30 MW of leased diesel generation plant Aggreko), and is currently building a new diesel plant of 80MW). An additional solar generation plant of 20 MW has been planned to complement the new diesel plant.

At the same time, Niger encounters high energy poverty. There is a strong electricity consumption growth during the last decade, and by 2013, the "*Société Nigérienne d'Électricité*" (NIGELEC), the state-owned vertical integrated utility, had 250,980 customers in 401 communities. However, the energy consumption in the country is still very low. With an energy consumption of 0.14 tep per capita in 2006, Niger is far below the African average of 0.5 tep per capita. In addition, only 10% of Niger's population has access to electricity services, with large disparities between urban (40%) and rural (< 1%) areas which indicates that access to modern energy services is very limited, especially in rural areas

Responding to these challenges is a major undertaking. Therefore, with more than 40 years' renewable energy experience, Niger is increasingly looking at solar and wind energy, as a potential resource. The country is very well endowed with solar energy (5-7 kWh/d/m²) throughout the year (about 3,200 hours/year). However, very little of this potential has been tapped. The overall installed capacity amounts to 4,042kWp (2% of the total installed capacity in the country) in 2013 – compared to 1,077 kWp in 2006 with 31.51% for the telecoms and 52.50% for water pumping. Preliminary discussions were held on a possible 20 MW PV power plant to be sited close to Niamey. Countrywide wind data indicate an average wind speed of between 2.5m/s-6m/s. Indications from IRENA's Study on Assessing Renewable Energy activities (Évaluation de l'Etat de Préparation aux énergies renouvelables) are that Niger's wind potential shows good prospects in the northern part of the country (regions of Agadez and Tahoua). Currently, about 30 small-scale installations are used for water pumping purposes. Wind installations have been the

first renewable energy systems installed in Niger – mainly by missionaries since 1956. Besides solar and wind energy, the potential for energy from biomass is substantial in Niger. Current statistics indicate that approximately 5 million hectares of covered surface with forests are being exploited, with unfortunately only some parts of forests being renewable. Niger’s hydroelectric potential can be found at the river Niger and its influent streams with three potential sites. These are the Kandadji with an estimated capacity of 130MW (a multipurpose World Bank project under implementation), the Gambou (112.5 MW) and the Dyodyonga (25 MW). According to a Lavalin International survey in the early 80’s, there are also several small hydro sites with a good potential - at the rivers Sirba (4.4 GWh/year), Gouroubi (2.2 GWh/year) and Dargol (1.2 GWh/year).

In order to gradually exploit renewable energy, RE programs have been considered in the major reference documents for the development of the country in general and of the Energy Sector in particular . This commitment confirms the Government’s vision towards a high level of sustained economic growth with a low carbon economy and a greater access to electricity services of the population by developing and implementing the necessary policies. The statement for energy policy adopted in 2004 has been followed by many strategies and action plans for the promotion of RE and the expansion of access to electricity services. This is notably the case of Niger’s current *Plan for Economic and Social Development (PDES)* which was approved in 2012 and aims to bring about sustainable, broad-based income and welfare improvements. Sustainable expansion of basic services to the general population, including access to energy services, plays a key role in that national development strategy. In particular, in rural areas where problems of food insecurity and nutrition deficiency are faced by large segments of the population, providing energy services and sustained agricultural development are crucial for a lasting solution (government’s “3N” initiative, “*Nigériens Nourish Nigériens*”). The *Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy (SDDCI)* succeeds PDES and provides a long term vision until 2035 in order to ensure that the general public can truly share the benefits of growth.² The preoccupation for extending access to a larger share of the population is also put into evidence through the creation in 2013 of a National Agency for the Promotion of Rural Electrification (ANPER), although this entity is not yet operational. More specifically, in the National strategy and actions plan on Renewable Energies, the Government aims at the increased contribution of RE to the national energy balance from less than 0.1% in 2003 to 10% by 2020. The Government is also committed to translate its vision of the important role that Renewable Energy are called to play in Niger also in the legal and regulatory framework that is currently under revision to improve and update the Law for the Electricity Sector,

Niger’s commitment to Solar Energy has gone beyond the realm of policies. During the 1965-1980 period, Niger was a pioneer in the field of renewable energy much of the accumulated expertise under the direction of Professor Abdou Moumouni Dioffo, heading from 1965-1983 the National Office of Solar Energy (ONERSOL) which is an Institute focused on solar energy research to promote the use of this indigenous energy resource in Niger. Unfortunately, a great deal of this expertise has been lost, but in 1998, the Government of Niger adopted by decree the consecration of the National Day of renewable energies (i.e. 7 April) to pay tribute to the work and the memory of Professor Dioffo, and also to educate and inform the development partners and the private/ public on the important role of renewable energy in terms of access to energy services.

² Other Government Strategic documents that emphasize the role of renewable energy in the expansion of energy services to Nigerien population include the following: The *Strategy of Rural Development (Stratégie du Développement Rural, SDR)*; the national Reference Program of Access to Energy Services .; The *National Strategy for Access to Modern Energy Services (SNASEM)*; and the *National Strategy for Domestic Energies (Stratégie Nationale des Energies Domestiques, SNED)*.

III. RATIONALE FOR SELECTED SECTORS FOR SREP FINANCING

Please identify barriers for the deployment of renewable energy, potential sector, sub-subsectors, and technologies for possible SREP financing as well as the rationale for prioritizing them for SREP interventions.

Despite this strong commitment from the Government to RE, the deployment of renewable energy in Niger at a large scale faces yet economic and financing difficulties, knowledge and capacity constraints, and also institutional, regulatory, and legal challenges. The Government views the private sector as an important partner for developing the energy sector and in particular renewable energy. However, project developers encounter multiple risks in developing renewable energy projects in Niger. These risks are due to a large extent to the absence of a legislative and regulatory text of RE, weak capacity and inefficiency of institutional structures, a lack of information and uncertainty about grid extension plans, currency risks (if PPA in FCFA), high investment costs of RE, resource and revenue uncertainty, lack of local expertise (needs assessment, installation, maintenance equipment), and resistance of consumers to change.

In order to address the wide areas of issues in parallel, questions about priorities, implementation capacity and expertise required need to be raised and answered. In such a challenging environment, prioritization is essential. The Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program (SREP) can contribute to that and provide a systemic, standardized and coordinated approach for a long-term promotion and implementation of RE activities in Niger. The interventions under SREP will build on the experience from previous efforts. One such effort launched by Niger's authorities covered the development of an investment program for the period 2013-2022 to expand supply options by promoting the use of domestic resources, facilitate electricity trade, and extend the grid to expand access. However, this investment program will need further assessment. Another effort was the Government's process of the *Rapid Readiness Assessment* of how to deploy RE that was launched in June 2012 with support from IRENA. Identified actions included the development of a national RE policy, establishment of a regulatory and institutional framework favorable to RE, evaluation of solar and wind potential as well as actors capacity building. SREP will hence help to transform Niger's energy sector, from one that is increasingly fossil-fuel dependent to one that uses a more balanced supply of diverse clean energy sources. Achieving this goal will help the country to move along a low-carbon development pathway, increase energy security, generate new economic opportunities, widen access to energy services and engage the private sector. Finally, as mentioned earlier in the text, the Government has undertaken a revision of the Law for the Electricity Sector that covers also aspects related to the use of renewable sources of energy, participation of the private sector and other laws and regulations needed to provide a clear and predictable legal framework for the sector.

In view of the large RE potential that exists in our country, and the priorities of the Government for rapidly expanding access for the population to basic services, as well as exploiting this RE potential, the Government sees the SREP for Niger as a tool to effecting a systemic change in the energy matrix of the country with a larger share of cleaner sources of energy, reducing the cost of electricity from using domestic resources, and expanding access to rural and disperse population. To this end the Government has identified solar energy, and to a lesser extent wind resources, as the types of renewable energies where it wants to focus the action of the SREP Program.

The large potential in solar resources allows to envisage a SREP Program that will support scaling up the use of this resources both for grid and off grid situations, and in rural as well as urban areas of the country.

Based on the RE resource potential and the development energy needs of the country, SREP will focus on deploying solar and wind energy in grid- and off-grid areas of the country with three main components.

- (1) In the grid connected areas, SREP will support the Government strategy to exploit the huge solar energy potential by developing a 20 MW Solar Generation plant, that would be connected to the grid. The SREP supported plant would help transform the energy sector of Niger by directly reducing the country's dependency on electricity imports and equally important, by showcasing a pioneering way to a cleaner, reliable and economically sustainable energy future. This pioneering project will attract interest from private/development partners for the further scaling-up of solar resources in Niger, and the learning collected through the implementation of this first, major transaction could help in the formulation of such a scale up strategy. In addition to fostering a cleaner mix of energy (as it will displace mostly diesel), such project will make a significant contribution to lower the cost of electricity (if supported with SREP). SREP's support will complement AFD technical assistance, which aims to finance the feasibility study for the project, in a coordinated effort to bring solar in to the energy matrix of Niger.
- (2) In the off-grid areas, SREP will support a program of electrification of village based on an integral approach to the social and economic development of the benefitted communities.
 - a. *The Program will aim to maximize the contribution of solar solutions to expand access to electricity for households, community uses (health and education centers, water pumping and public lighting), and productive uses of electricity, which include commercial and industrial activities in the communities, but also the use of solar pumps for irrigation.*
 - b. *Specific design and choice of technical solutions will vary based on the needs of the communities and the socio-economic levels of the population.* For instance, Solar Home Systems could be used where families can afford them, while an option of Solar Battery Charging Kiosks could be adopted for areas with a greater incidence of poverty.
 - c. *The design will also include the hybridization of isolated mini-grids that are working presently on diesel but that stand often idle due to the high cost or unavailability of carburant. The objective will be to install solar PVs, or if there is the potential wind turbines that will reduce the cost of the electricity and extend the period of service with the goal of reaching 24/7 at a cheaper cost for the users. NIGELEC has presently 76 diesel gensets throughout the national territory, but of which only 6 provide continuous services. The other 70 are used between 6 and 13 hours per day. Hybridization of the supply in these mini-grids would expand the duration and reduce the cost of providing the services to the communities in these areas. If successful, this model could be replicated when building future new mini-grids in underserved areas. Innovative business models could be explored that will offer the opportunity to the private sector to participate in the scaling up of hybrid mini grids, thus leveraging scarce public funds. In addition for the case of areas with wind potential, hybridization could be done with wind mills, but it will be necessary first to undertake one year of measurement to confirm the availability and reliability of the wind.*
- (3) SREP's program would further include technical assistance to the Government, NIGELEC and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen the institutional capacity and improve the business climate for the promotion and sustainability of renewable energies, and the active participation of the private sector. This support could focus on the consolidation or upgrading of the legal and regulatory framework, and the analysis of possible risk mitigation mechanisms that would foster the adoption of renewable resources both in grid connected and off grid connected areas.

The proposed program for the SREP presents Niger with an unique opportunity to effect a systemic change in its energy mix matrix, which can contribute to the reduction of poverty, very high in rural areas, but also considerable in urban areas since Niger as a whole is among the poorest countries in Africa. By targeting the rural areas, the proposed program will have a positive effect on a large share of the population and on the economic activity in these rural areas. On the other hand, by benefiting the urban

areas, it will achieve a strong economic impact as Niger is starting to diversify its economy and developing more commercial and industrial activities, in addition to the mining and rural sectors. Finally, the proposed program will contribute to displace mostly diesel resources which today constitute the major sources of electricity in the country both for the grid connected areas as well as those isolated mini-grids, located in more remote areas.

Biomass in the form of wood and wood charcoal is also a major traditional source of energy widely used in Niger, but several donors are already providing significant support (WB, AFD) to the Government strategy to rationalize the use of scarce wood resources, through the elaboration of regional master plans and a national strategy for domestic energies. For this reason, the Government has decided to focus the scope of the SREP mostly on Niger's solar resources, and whenever appropriate on wind resources sufficiently close to areas in need of electricity, since the wind corridors with most potential have been often found to be too far away into the desert.

IV. ENABLING POLICY AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Please provide an overview of the existing policies, legal framework, market and regulatory structure for renewable energy development and the potential impacts of public and private sector interventions in addressing the barriers. Discuss the existing regulatory environment for attracting private investments in renewable energy technologies and governance within the energy sector, including commercial performance of relevant institutions, pricing and tariff practices, competitive procurement of goods and services, the transparency and accountability of these practices and the degree to which they are subject to public oversight.

Currently, renewable energy is not subject to any legislative text of Niger. A law on renewable energy, however, is currently being formulated in order to account for domestic, regional and international changes and to reflect Niger's energy commitments in the context of ECOWAS, UEMOA, technological changes (for example on renewable energies), changes in energy prices and financing constraints. The overarching objective of the *2010 Draft Energy Policy Letter* is to contribute to poverty reduction through providing sustainable access to modern energy services by the various socio-economic groups. Its main pillars focus on energy security, energy access, environment protection and capacity development. In particular, it is envisaged to ensure energy access to all at reasonable prices, allowing energy services companies to maintain and develop the provision of energy services, and contribute to the country social cohesion. The draft policy proposes *six program areas*, of which three target (1) Household Energy, including the promotion of LPG, of the domestic mineral coal, improved cook stoves, and of biodigesters; (2) Rural Electrification, including off-grid decentralized generation (diesel, solar systems, etc.), strengthening, extending and densifying the electricity distributions networks, and also pre-electrification; and (3) Energy Efficiency, including improving energy efficiency in buildings, industry and transport, promoting energy efficient equipments, and related capacity building and awareness programs. Through this law, the Government can provide support in the form of loans, subsidies, fiscal advantages etc. in order to promote the increased utilization of RE.

Many institutions presently involved in the development of renewable energies in Niger are the following:

- The *Ministry of Energy and Petroleum*, is responsible for the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the national energy policy and the related regulations, in line with the Government broad development policies. The Ministry oversees the activities of the State-own companies and of the public and semi-public entities operating in the energy sector.
- The Directorate of Renewable Energy and Domestic Energy (DERED) within the *Ministry of Energy and Petroleum*, is responsible to promote and coordinate the use of renewable energies as part of the national strategy to promote access, and to achieve an efficient management of wood and other

sources of domestic energies.

- The “*Société Nigérienne d’Électricité*” (*NIGELEC*) created in 1968, is the main public operator responsible for the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, and operates under a “concession agreement”.³The State owns 94.65% percent of Nigelec shares⁴.
- The *National Center for Solar Energy (Centre National d’Energie Solaire – CNES)* is a public entity created in 2000 replacing ONERSOL in order to assess, promote the utilization of equipment using renewable energies, increase awareness and build capacity in renewable energy. CNES current program is however much limited in part due to a lack of resources.
- The *National Multisectorial Committee on Energy (CNME)*, created in 2006, is the interface for all actions and initiatives in the field of energy in Niger. It comprises multidisciplinary teams including all sectors involved in the energy sector (environment, education, health, agriculture,) but also different actors (government, private sector institutions, civil society, researchers ...).

Presently, there are two business investment gate opportunities for any private project developer who wants to operate in the field of renewable energy: either he can present his project to the Ministry of Trade, following the rules and regulations under the Investment Code, or he can submit a feasibility study for the proposed project to the Public Private Partnership Cell (PPP Cell) under the authority of the Prime Minister. The PPP Cell will in turn forward this study to the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum. Finally, it is also important to note that for the implementation of all projects financed with public funds or with the support of international development partners, there is a national code of public procurement which governs the process.

In addition to Niger’s public sector, there are some other initiatives to foster the use of solar energy in Niger. One of the main intervention is the work of the NGO SNV, supported by the Netherlands, which currently has several projects in the country focusing on innovative approaches to supporting solar energy technology and improved cookstoves. Other interventions are mostly punctual, and have yet to be adopted in a systemic way. From the electricity code adopted in 2003, companies importing RE equipment for rural electrification can benefit from incentive measures (tax and duty charges) facilitating the acquisition. At present, imported RE equipment is rated and taxed as electronic material. The new law intends to exonerate all imported equipment used in the field of rural electrification and rural water pumping from taxes. It also aims to create a national rural electrification fund. The private sector can also register its projects at the National Designated Authority CNEDD in order to generate additional revenues. Other initiatives at regional and international level include the Small Grant Program of GEF, EU Energy Facility, Small grant Renewable Energy Facility of ECREEE/ECOWAS, the Regional Program for the Promotion of Household and Alternative Energies in the Sahel of the Permanent Inter States Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, the Regional Biomass Energy Program of UEMOA/ECOWAS and the Regional Program Energy Against Poverty of UNDP.

V. INSTITUTIONAL AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY

Please provide an analysis of the institutional and technical capacity for implementation, including the government’s ability to effectively absorb additional funds. Please also provide a preliminary assessment of potential implementation risks.

³Currently about 86% percent of the electricity used in Niger is imported from Nigeria.

⁴ Other shareholders: the staff, Agence Française de Développement, 3 state owned companies and 4 municipalities.

Niger has long ago recognized the vast endowment of renewable energies, notably solar power that the country has as a potential to diversify its energy mix and expand access to electricity services in a sustainable way. It has the institutions needed to be an effective counterpart for the design and implementation of a SREP program for Niger. This notwithstanding, it would require technical assistance and support to strengthen the capacity of these institutions to implement such a scaling up program for the use of renewable energies. Indeed, the realization of the RE potential through the implementation of national RE programs has been slower than expected. This is due in part to the limited institutional capacity within the government and NIGELEC, and also the lack of resources to foster greater knowledge and expertise on this field. In order to increase electricity access rate in rural area, the Government has adopted in 2013, the law creating the National Agency for the Promotion of Rural Electrification (ANPER), under the Ministry of Energy and Petroleum although this entity is not yet operational. When operational, the ANPER will be in charge of project implementation and capacity building of stakeholders in rural areas, while the DERED will continue to be responsible for the formulation of policies, strategies and capacity building for Rural Electrification.

Government officials and NIGELEC employees are knowledgeable in renewable energies and are well aware of the country's potential, but there will be a need to build up additional (technical, but also commercial, economic and legal) institutional capacity, sufficient to lead and implement a program of RE at a national scale, if the country wants to harness the potential of RE in Niger as a whole.

For this reason, a SREP program in Niger would include technical assistance to build institutional capacity, associated with each of the three components of a possible intervention, which were identified earlier in the text. It includes not only technical skills, but also managerial, social, project finance and legal expertise that would allow design and implement efficient implementation of the program, and the achievement of sustainable results.

There are several risks in the implementation of such an ambitious SREP Program for Niger. Three in particular are worth noting, together with the mitigation measures that the Government intends to adopt to eliminate such risks:

- The first risk will be the lack of sufficient institutional capacity to implement the program. Such risk can be mitigated through appropriate technical assistance to the key stakeholders namely the DERED, the ANPER when it will be operationalized, and NIGELEC.
- A second possible risk is an insufficient coordination among agencies within the Government. This risk is relatively minor as the DERED in the Ministry works already very actively with the Ministries of Health, Education, Hydraulic, and Agriculture, and other related agencies. It may be important to further develop working groups with NIGELEC and with the PPP Unit, given the various components envisaged under the SREP program.
- A third risk is the lack of interest of the private sector to participate in the activities of the SREP Program in Niger. This risk can be mitigated through a realistic assessment of the areas where the private sector is likely to be most interested, the strengthening of the legal and regulatory framework that will provide clarity and predictability for interested investors, and through a strong collaboration of the sector institutions with the PPP Unit, that is currently been strengthened within the Government.

VI. PROGRAMS OF MDBS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Please describe briefly the ongoing and planned programs of the relevant multilateral development banks (MDBs) and other development partners relevant to energy access and renewable energy and how the proposed interventions for SREP would link to and build upon these programs.

As already stated above, several donors are supporting the development of the energy sector in Niger, and the expansion of access to these services in the country. The main donors currently supporting Niger's overall energy sector are: the French Development Agency (AFD), the World Bank, West Africa Development Bank (BOAD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and for rural access, household energies and renewable energy: the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Union, the French Development Agency (AFD), the ECOWAS Bank of Investment and Development (EBID) for the electrification of 50 rural villages with photovoltaic solar systems, Indian EXIM Bank for the electrification of 30 rural villages with photovoltaic solar systems and construction of 5MW solar power plant; IRENA through capacity building and studies and ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency policies, action plans and capacity building.

After being absent from the energy sector for more than 10 years, the World Bank re-engaged in 2011 with the support to the multipurpose (irrigation and power) Kandadji project, by initiating a dialogue on Energy Reforms in the framework of the budget support operations, and through a program of technical assistance financed under an AFREA grant aimed to support the expansion of access to electricity in urban and peri urban areas. An Energy Sector Assessment for Niger was finalized in June 2012. In addition, the Bank is financing under the Kandadji program, the preparation of a national electricity master plan, which will provide a least cost investment plan for the development of generation and transmission in the medium and long term. The Bank is also financing the development of a master plan for domestic fuel supply in the regions of Maradi and Zinder, and the formulation of the National Domestic Energy Program, particularly relevant since wood energy represents more than 85% of the final energy consumption.

Furthermore, the Bank is strongly supportive of the Government's ambition to become part of the SREP funded beneficiary countries.

As mentioned earlier in the text, another important actor in the development of RE in Niger is the NGO SNV, which currently has several projects in the country focusing on innovative approaches to supporting solar energy technology and improved cooking stoves,

Overall, RE and access interventions from the government and the donor community have been rather non-systemic, isolated and less structured in the past. The participation from Niger in the SREP will offer the unique opportunity for a systemic, standardized and coordinated approach for a long-term promotion and cost-effective implementation of RE activities in Niger. SREP will build on the experience and results from previous efforts and become as such the overall guiding framework and umbrella for all RE and access interventions in Niger.