

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



SPECIAL FILE
EDUCATION,
VOCATIONAL
TRAINING AND
EMPLOYMENT



LUXDEV

Luxembourg
Development Agency

CONTENTS

COORDINATION AND EDITING

Jeanne RENAULD,
with the support of headquarters
and field staff.

Many thanks
to the resident representatives,
programme officers and advisers,
technical advisers and assistants,
communications coordinators,
experts,
administration, management and
finance officers,
junior technical assistants
and to all the other contributors
to this annual report.

SPECIAL FILE

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Aziz OURHALOUCH

PHOTOS

Many thanks to the authors
of the photos in this
annual report.

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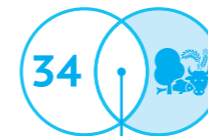
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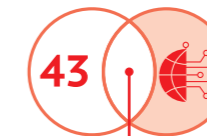
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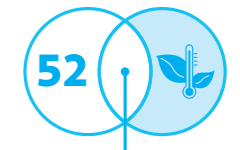
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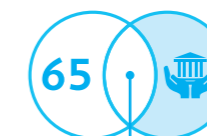
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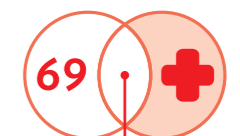
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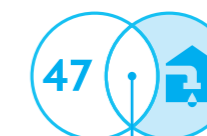
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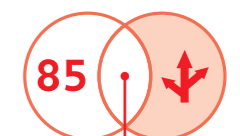
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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL



Nima AHMADZADEH
President of the Board
of Directors



Manuel TONNAR
Director General

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The major challenges to development persisted in 2023, and even worsened in a geopolitical context that became even more sombre. The number of conflicts at global level was the highest since the Second World War. Among the most important are Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan, to name a few. The coup d'état in Niger in July had a major impact on the situation in our partner countries in the Sahel and on our cooperation with them.

LuxDev, which is used to working in fragile environments and dealing with the unexpected, faced a particularly difficult year in 2023. The suspension of bilateral cooperation with Niger led to the halting of projects and programmes in the country, as well as the evacuation of our expatriate staff and their families. In Latin America, pending ratification of the general cooperation agreement in Costa Rica, the installation of our regional office in San José and the implementation of our activities have been postponed.

At the same time, we have had to deal with the great sorrow caused by the tragic deaths of two of our staff members, Hugues LEGROS and Igor WAJNSZTOK, resident representatives in Burkina Faso and Senegal respectively. With this annual report, we would like to pay tribute to them once again. Through their commitment, their professionalism and their great humanism, these two men have left their mark on the history of LuxDev and Luxembourg Cooperation.

Despite these very complicated circumstances, and thanks to good coordination between our teams and those of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade (MFA) and the embassies in the field, the programmes in Burkina Faso and Senegal were able to get up to speed, as were those in Mali and Cabo Verde. The year also saw the launch of several projects and programmes, notably in Benin, Costa Rica, Kosovo, Laos and Rwanda. Numerous formulations were also carried out, mainly as part of the new Indicative Cooperation Programme (ICP) with Senegal and future support for Vietnam and Latin America. Complementary actions have also been identified in Rwanda, and initial cooperation launched in Ukraine.

In terms of positive developments, the volume of activities in the field of energy transition and the fight against climate change has continued to grow. Funding from the Climate Energy Fund, which comes from the Ministry for the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity, has doubled compared to 2022.

In addition to its Luxembourg mandates, LuxDev implemented projects for other donors, namely the European Commission, Swiss Cooperation and Dutch Cooperation, or in partnership with other development agencies, such as Enabel and *Agence française de développement* (AFD), in Team Europe mode.

Throughout the year, our Agency was once again able to demonstrate its flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability. We succeeded in implementing high-quality projects and programmes with a total budget of EUR 135.7 million, slightly exceeding last year's record level. In addition, the budgets for the Agency's operating costs were respected.

It should also be noted that, internally, the Agency's governance was strengthened and modernised through the reorganisation of the management and certain departments, in order to be ready for the challenges of tomorrow. A number of strategic recruitments were also made to strengthen our expertise in the fields of impact finance, environment and climate change, cooperation with the private sector, and academic and scientific institutions. Finally, on the subject of human rights, it is worth noting that we signed up to the National Pact on Business and Human Rights in September 2023.

We invite you to discover the fruits of our labour in the pages of this annual report.



A YEAR OF FORMULATION

2023 was an unprecedented year for LuxDev, with 17 projects and programmes in the formulation phase as of 31.12.2023.

In Senegal, the identification process for ICP V, which began at the end of 2022, was finalised and the ICP was signed in July. The projects and programmes of the new ICP - in the sectors of water and sanitation, education, vocational training and employment, governance and health - were therefore being formulated in 2023. The one concerning the FIT! Senegal initiative, linked to the 2026 Youth Olympic Games and run in Team Europe mode, was finalised and the project was officially launched in November.

Also in Kosovo, following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Minister for Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs Franz FAYOT for the period 2023-2025 in July 2022, LuxDev led the process of formulating the mandates entrusted to it in the fields of vocational training and employment, health, sustainable and inclusive growth, energy transition and governance. The projects began at the end of the year.

An office was opened in Benin, a new country for Luxembourg Cooperation, and the first bilateral cooperation projects and programmes were formulated. The actions undertaken will focus on digitalisation, inclusive and innovative finance, agricultural training and training in the hotel, restaurant and tourism sectors. The implementation of certain projects and programmes began before the end of the year.

In Rwanda, where Luxembourg Cooperation has been present again since 2022, the year was also punctuated by formulations in the sectors of socio-economic development, vocational training and employment, the environment and climate change, inclusive and innovative finance, and food security.

In Asia, the four ICP V programmes, covering the sectors of socio-economic development, vocational training and employment, governance and health, were launched between July and September, at the same time as the previous ICP was coming to an end. In Vietnam, two projects were being formulated: one on the environment and climate change, the other on inclusive and innovative finance.

Similarly, in El Salvador, two projects were being formulated on youth employment and digitalisation, as well as South-South and triangular cooperation.

We should also mention the formulation of a project in Burkina Faso in Team Europe mode on youth employment, the SnT4Dev project in West Africa, the project to support the African Union in setting up and deploying a continental team to respond to IT security incidents and the project to support the production, analysis and dissemination of quality statistics in Cabo Verde. ■

LUXDEV IS COMMITTED TO RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

On 20 September 2023, LuxDev signed the National Business and Human Rights Pact at a meeting at the MFA, a voluntary commitment aimed at companies wishing to implement the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The signing of this pact demonstrates LuxDev's concrete commitment, as a company, to identifying risks and preventing human rights violations. Through it, the Agency joins the national community of companies for the respect of human rights.

By subscribing to the pact, the Agency undertakes to:

- raise awareness among its staff and stakeholders of the need to protect human rights in the workplace;
- appoint a person responsible for human rights within the organisation;
- train employees in business and human rights;
- developing governance tools to identify risks and prevent human rights violations;
- implement one or more remedies to deal with reported cases of human rights violations;
- publish a standardised annual report on the measures implemented. ■



Jean OLINGER, Secretary General of the MFA and Manuel TONNAR, Director General of LuxDev ▲

PROGRAMMES SUSPENDED IN NIGER

The year 2023 was undoubtedly marked by the coup d'état of 26 July 2023 in Niger. This caused political and institutional instability in the country. Luxembourg Cooperation, like the majority of donors, suspended its bilateral cooperation in the country, which led to the interruption of all new contractual/financial commitments or partnerships within the framework of the programmes and of all payments in the framework of the programmes.

In addition, LuxDev suspended its technical support and external expertise, and withdrew its technical assistants from national partners.

While Niger represents LuxDev's largest portfolio in terms of budget, this situation led to a reduction in financial programming for the country of around 50%, from EUR 21.6 million to EUR 10.9 million for 2023. ■



UKRAINE

INITIAL SUPPORT

In 2023, the MFA has mandated LuxDev to identify the first reconstruction actions to be carried out in Ukraine. This support will concern training and professional integration, as well as the co-financing of a Business Development Fund.

The lives of millions of women, men and children were turned upside down when Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022. In 2023, the fighting continued to ravage certain regions and caused massive damage to civilian infrastructure across the country. Schools, hospitals, water, gas and electricity networks are regularly destroyed. Millions of people were forced to flee. Nearly four million people, including almost a million children, are still displaced within Ukraine, while more than six million are refugees abroad. The hostilities and prolonged displacement have seriously destabilised the economy and depleted the resources and incomes of many families.

In this context, since February 2022, Luxembourg Cooperation has been supporting its humanitarian partners in Ukraine (UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, humanitarian NGOs) and has provided support in kind: connectivity services, medical equipment, generators, armoured ambulances, fire-fighting equipment, etc.

In the summer of 2023, the MFA asked LuxDev to design a medium-term action (2024-2029) to support the recovery of the Kryvyi Rih raion (district). This is a historic industrial zone whose economy, in the process

of diversification, is essential to the country's success. At the end of 2023, the district was home to some 80,000 internally displaced persons.

More specifically, for companies in this region, financing is a major problem due to the proximity of the front line (which was less than 100 kilometres away at the end of 2023). Bank loans are expensive, collateral requirements are high and the term of financing is often short.

At the end of 2023, an agreement was signed between LuxDev and the Business Development Fund - a public financial institution owned by the Ukrainian government - for the implementation of an action to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in 2024.

The aim is to strengthen their viability and enable them to maintain their jobs through the implementation of two financial instruments: a system of small grants (maximum EUR 10,000) for 50 micro-enterprises and a mechanism of larger grants (maximum EUR 100,000) to support bank loans for 70 small and medium-sized enterprises according to a scheme already well established within the Business Development Fund. ■



COSTA RICA

A NEW REGIONAL OFFICE

In Latin America, a page was turned with the closure on 31 July 2023 of LuxDev's regional office in Managua, Nicaragua. It will now be located in San José, Costa Rica, a country which, thanks to its institutional stability, is the regional centre for Luxembourg Cooperation. On 17 July 2023, a framework cooperation agreement was signed between Luxembourg and Costa Rica to strengthen bilateral relations for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Pending the ratification of the general cooperation agreement with Costa Rica, which will enable LuxDev to fully launch its activities in the country and the region, projects were able to move forward with, in particular, two formulations in El Salvador and the start-up of a first project in Costa Rica to support sustainable forest management. Significant progress was also made in setting up the Female Entrepreneurship Fund as part of the regional programme to promote women's entrepreneurship. Finally, in Nicaragua, LuxDev has implemented a European project to manage and mitigate the risks of climatic and natural disasters. ■

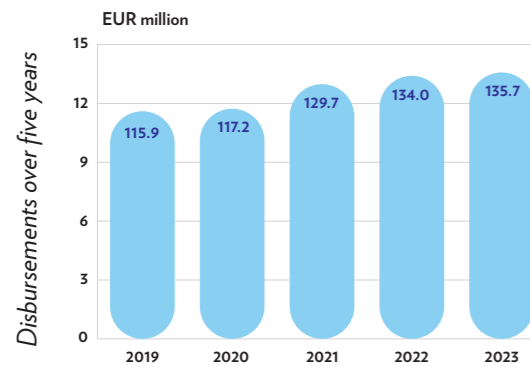


Project to support sustainable forest management in Costa Rica ▲

FIGURES AS OF 31.12.2023



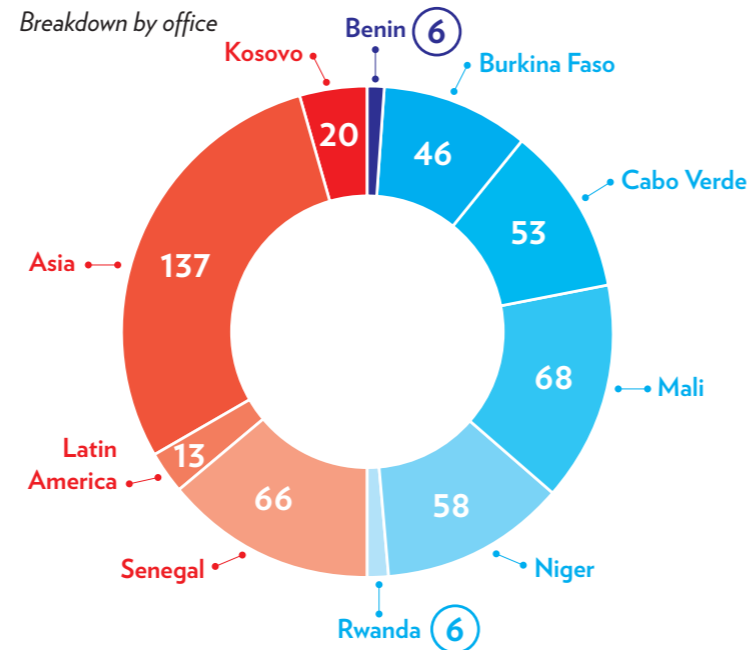
84 PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED



547 EMPLOYEES

74 AT HEADQUARTERS

473 IN THE FIELD

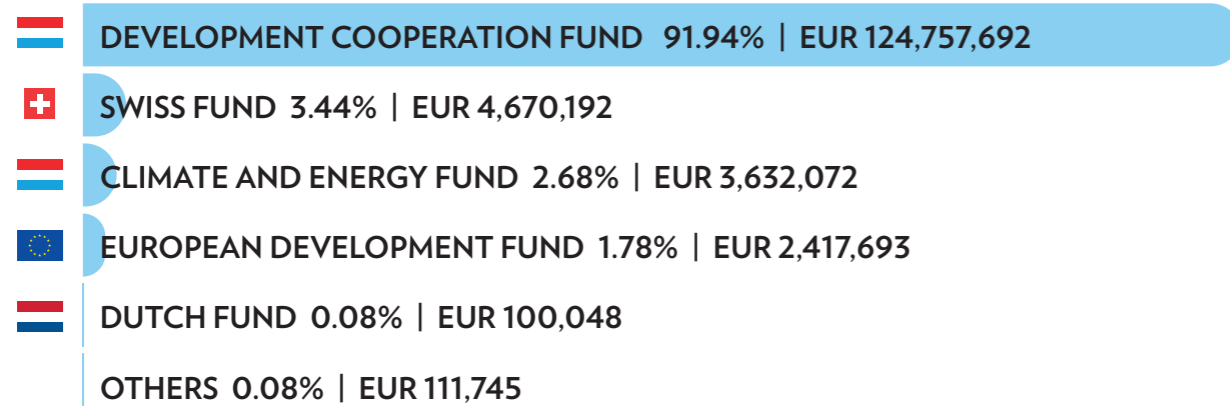


6 STUDIES CARRIED OUT

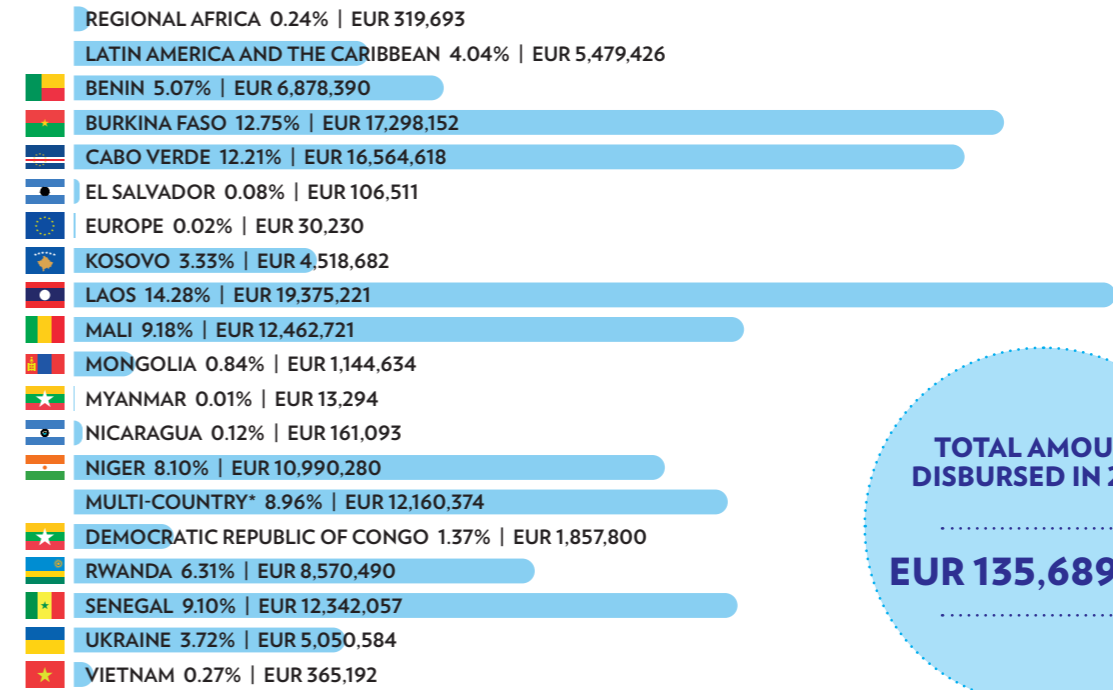
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2023 disbursements per country

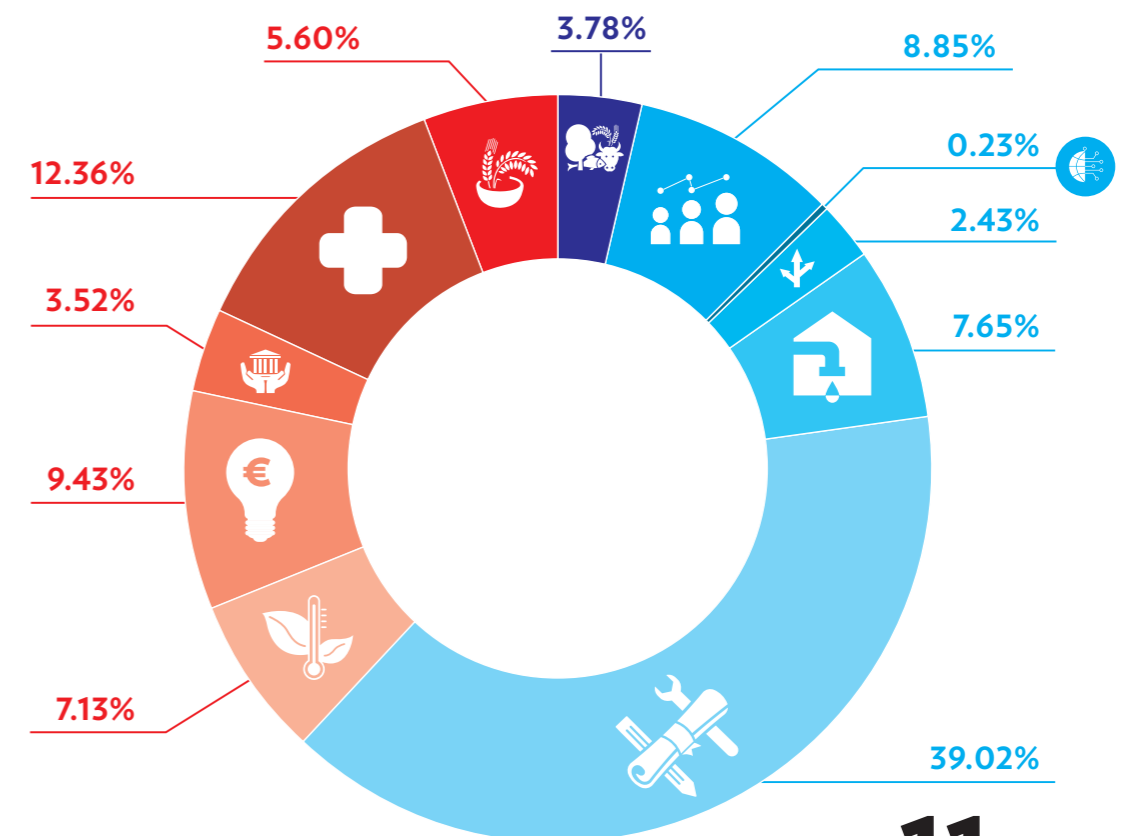


TOTAL AMOUNT DISBURSED IN 2023

EUR 135,689,442

* See details on page 94

2023 disbursements per sector



11 SECTORS



SECTORS

EDUCATION,
VOCATIONAL TRAINING
AND EMPLOYMENT



AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY
AND FISHERY



DIGITALISATION
AND ICT



ENVIRONMENT AND
CLIMATE CHANGE



FOOD SECURITY



GOVERNANCE



HEALTH



INCLUSIVE AND
INNOVATIVE FINANCE



SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



WATER AND SANITATION

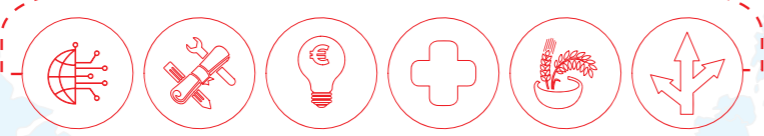


OTHERS

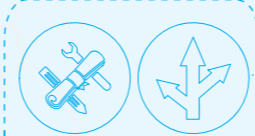


SECTORS

GLOBAL PROGRAMMES MANAGED FROM HEADQUARTERS



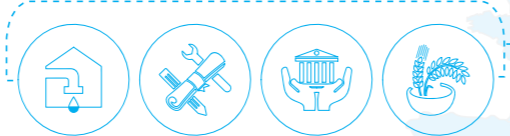
UKRAINE



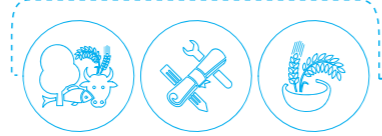
MONGOLIA



NIGER

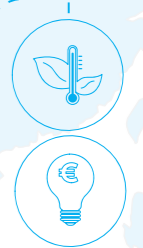


MALI

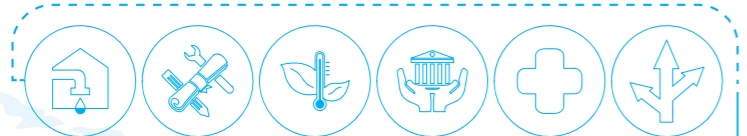


KOSOVO

VIETNAM

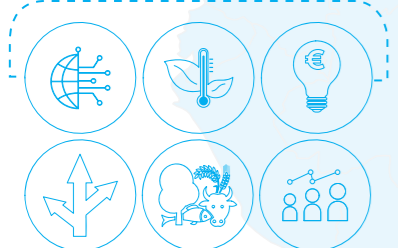


CABO VERDE



EL SALVADOR

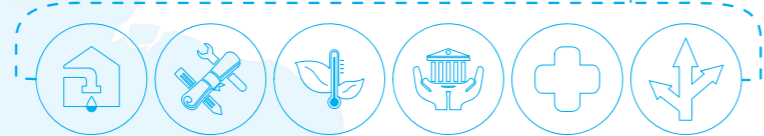
NICARAGUA COSTA RICA



RWANDA



SENEGAL



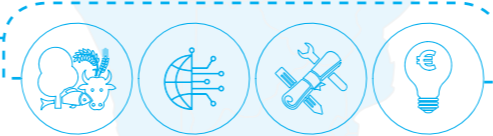
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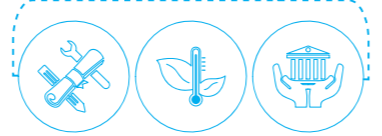
LAOS



BENIN



BURKINA FASO



SPECIAL FILE



EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

A KEY SECTOR FOR LUXDEV

Education, vocational training and employment have been one of the priority sectors for Luxembourg Cooperation since its inception. Over the years, LuxDev has acquired solid expertise in this field. In 2023, this sector accounted for almost 40% of the Agency's disbursements, helping to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, "ensure equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all", and 8, "promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work for all".

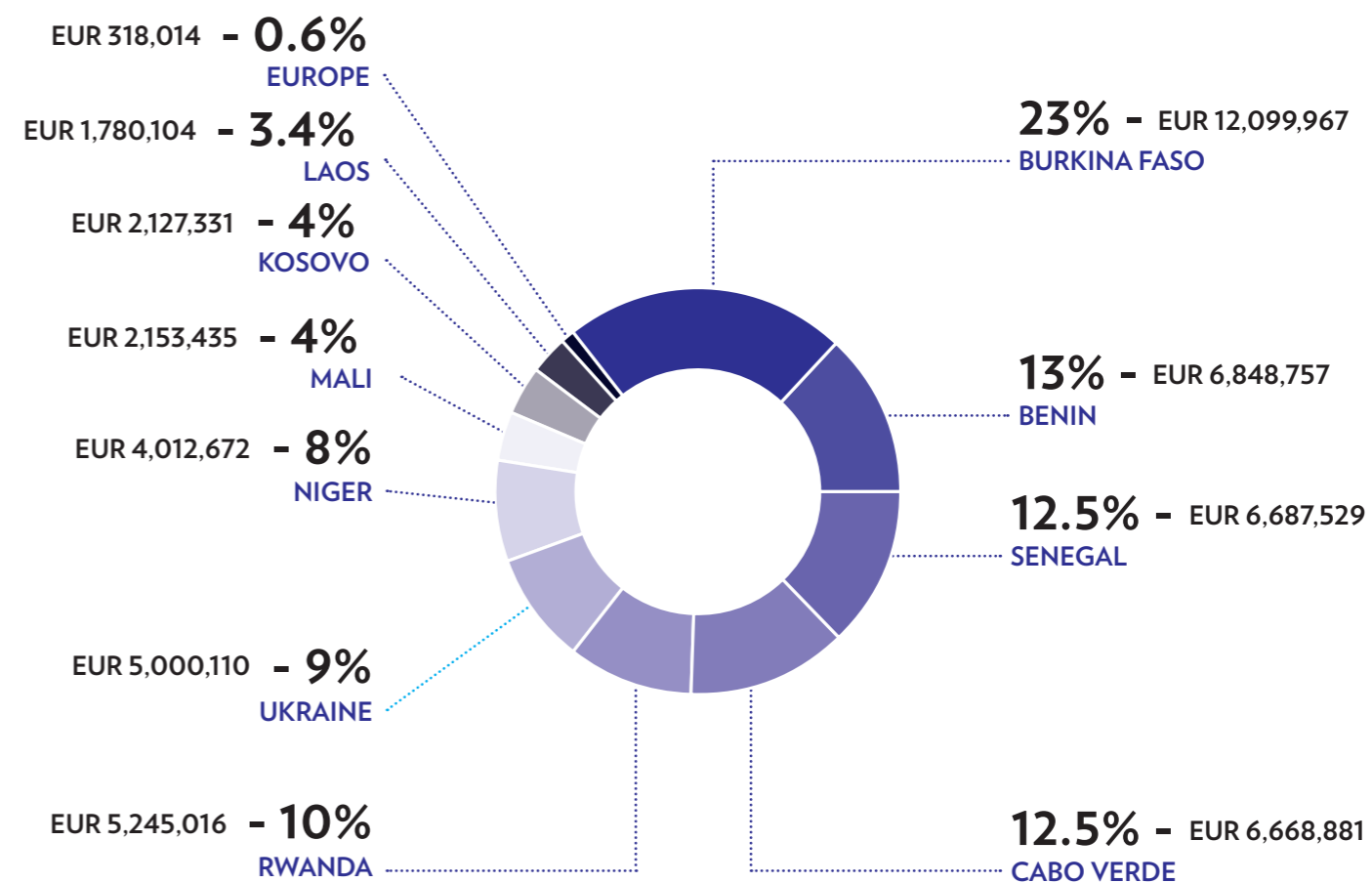
21

projects/programmes implemented

3

projets/programmes in formulation

EUR 47,940,131 disbursed in this sector

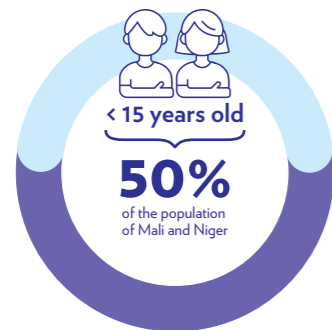




A SECTOR FACING MULTIPLE CHALLENGES

All the countries in which the Agency operates face major challenges in the education, training and employment sector. The main aim is to increase access to education and training for a greater number of young people, to improve the quality of the education and training provided, and to encourage the integration of young people into the labour market.

The majority of the population in the countries where LuxDev operates is made up of young people. In Mali and Niger, for example, half the population is under 15.



This youthful population puts considerable demographic pressure on the capacity of education systems and training infrastructures. In addition, several factors that contribute to the quality of education and training are lacking in these countries: the poor skills of human resources, particularly teachers and trainers, the lack of funding and management, and the shortage of infrastructure, equipment, materials and teaching resources. In addition to these issues, there are security challenges, particularly in the Sahel countries, which are leading to the closure of schools and vocational training establishments and the internal displacement of students.

Training programmes are also limited or poorly adapted. They are insufficiently aligned with the needs of the labour market. The poor quality of this training provision and its limited access, particularly in rural areas, hinders the development of skills and has a direct impact on the employability of young people and, consequently, on their integration into the world of work. This situation is due in particular to the lack of synergy between schools and businesses, the inadequacy of practical work placements and the poor integration of entrepreneurial soft skills into training programmes. The poor quality of the support systems in place to help young people integrate into the world of work exacerbates this phenomenon.

The mismatch between skills acquired and market requirements fuels structural unemployment and underemployment.

Many people work in the informal sector, often on low wages and with limited security. Meanwhile, the economy is struggling to create enough formal jobs to absorb the growing workforce. As a result, unemployment and underemployment rates are high.

For example:

In Niger, almost seven out of 10 young people aged 15 to 24 are neither in employment, education nor training.

In Senegal, the unemployment rate is estimated at 19.5%, while 36.2% of young people are not in employment, education or training.

In Kosovo too, youth unemployment is high, at around 50%, and particularly affects girls.

Societal norms and inequality between men and women represent an additional difficulty, limiting opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised people. There is a strong gender imbalance. It is more difficult for girls to gain access to innovative and promising training courses, and subsequently to employment.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS...

From one country to another, progress has been made in the education and training sector over the last few decades.

In **Senegal**, for example, according to data from the Ministry of Vocational Training, the number of learners in vocational and technical training increased fivefold between 2002 and 2021, from 20,355 to 87,724. The range of vocational training on offer has diversified considerably, with the number of programmes rising from 51 to more than 300.

In **Mali**, despite the fall in the gross enrolment rate in all sub-sectors, school survival remains relatively high, whatever the level of education: more than 8 out of 10 pupils enrolled go on to the next grade. Vocational training provision has also diversified, with an increase in the number of programmes.

In **Burkina Faso** too, education and training for young people is a priority for the authorities, who devote almost a third of government spending to it, and who have succeeded over the last 20 years in improving school coverage at all levels of education.

These improvements have been supported by the projects and programmes implemented by LuxDev over the years. Until the early 2010s, guided by the pursuit of the millennium goal of universal enrolment, donor efforts focused mainly on basic education. Similarly, countries have focused their policies and resources on basic education, encouraged by the development of the first poverty reduction strategy papers. Significant results have been achieved in this area.

Until now, however, few resources have been allocated to technical education and vocational training. To support the economic development of the countries concerned, action in this area, and more particularly in the growth sectors, has been stepped up, in line with national strategies and policies.

At the time, **Cabo Verde** and **Laos**, for example, drew up strategic plans for vocational training in tourism and the hotel industry, strategic sectors for the economic and social development of these countries. The strengthening of skills in this sector was supported - and continues to be supported in Laos - by projects and programmes implemented by LuxDev.

Similarly, in **Benin**, a new programme was launched in 2023 to build a school for tourism, hotel and catering professions. This intervention is part of a programme launched by the Beninese government to build eight benchmark trade schools throughout the country in order to bridge the gap between training and the job market. The aim of the programme to build the *École des métiers du tourisme, de l'hôtellerie et de la restauration* is to ensure that the training on offer and the support system are accessible, attractive, effective and tailored to the needs of the tourism industry, and thus to improve the employability and socio-professional integration of young people in the country. Ultimately, the school should accommodate 1,200 students.

Over time, interventions have evolved towards a "programme approach" and a national execution modality to align with national programmatic frameworks, systems and procedures, as well as the needs and demands of local partners. This approach has led to an evolution in contributions in this sector and made them more sustainable.

... BUT THERE'S STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Despite these achievements, many challenges remain. In **Burkina Faso**, the education system remains unequal and learning outcomes unsatisfactory. This has led central and decentralised government bodies, civil society, technical and financial partners, etc. to envisage a democratised, efficient and inclusive education system capable of developing the skills and expertise needed for Burkina Faso's socio-economic development. The education and training sector plan therefore aims to increase access to education and training, ensure the quality of education and training, and improve the quality of education.

In **Niger** too, although the education sector is a priority for the authorities (prior to the coup d'état on 26 July 2023), funding requirements are constantly increasing and recourse to external funding is proving vital.

Despite the efforts made in basic education in **Mali**, low cultural capital is an obstacle to productivity and the ability to access decent, well-paid employment. This situation is much more pronounced among women and young people under the age of 25. These two segments of the Malian population face additional economic, social and cultural constraints, which are all obstacles to obtaining a first professional experience. Furthermore, in a context characterised by the weakness of the economic fabric of the secondary and tertiary sectors, young people, who are poorly educated, not very autonomous and very rural, practice agriculture by default or avoid it by moving to other activities and other places. Vocational training is one of the key ways of acquiring the necessary skills to facilitate the transition to the labour market.

In **Senegal**, vocational and technical training, social and professional integration and youth employment are seen as major economic and social policy issues. Nevertheless, the development of human capital is fraught with challenges, such as the dominance of the informal economy and the intensive use of informal vocational learning to prepare individuals for the labour market. The result is low visibility of skills and knowledge and a shortage of jobs. What's more, the training on offer is poorly distributed overall - it is concentrated in Dakar - with an imbalance depending on the field and not always corresponding to demand. The economic integration of trained young people and youth employment is a major challenge, given the high number of new entrants to the labour market - some 300,000 young people a year.

6.8%

In Mali, technical and vocational training accounts for only 6.8% of the total budget allocated to the education sector.

20%

In Senegal, education and vocational training accounted for 2.5% and 20% of the State budget respectively.



In **Cabo Verde**, diversification of the economy, which is currently dependent on tourism, is an important development issue in terms of employment and employability. The high unemployment rate among young people calls for the promotion of entrepreneurship and support for small and medium-sized enterprises to stimulate job creation. The development of infrastructure, both physical and digital, is also essential to support the economy and access to employment. In addition, it is important to tackle inequalities and ensuring that the benefits of economic development are fairly distributed, with a focus on social inclusion and reducing regional disparities.

Improving education and training is crucial to ensuring a better match between the skills of the workforce and the needs of the market.

In **Laos**, despite significant investment in education and training by the government and its development partners, skills levels remain below those of neighbouring countries, reducing competitiveness and prospects for economic growth. Limited access to quality vocational education, particularly in rural areas, hinders skills development. Enrolment is down, drop-out rates are high and labour migration to neighbouring countries is on the rise as a result of the socio-economic crisis facing the country. Insufficient resources limit investment in education and training infrastructure, teacher training and curriculum development. Insufficient links between vocational training providers and private companies further limit the quality and relevance of training.

In **Benin** and **Rwanda**, too, the technical and vocational education and training system faces a number of similar challenges: limited responsiveness to economic developments, insufficient intake capacity and disparities in its distribution, lack of adequate training and support for teaching staff, insufficient quality and quantity of technical and teaching equipment, mismatch between training provision and labour market needs.

Finally, in **Kosovo**, the skills acquired in formal education are often obsolete and do not correspond to the needs of the private sector, creating a skills gap, particularly in sectors such as renewable energies, energy efficiency and information and communication technologies. Public vocational education and training schools also suffer from an image problem. They are perceived as a secondary option to university entrance, leading students to enrol out of necessity rather than choice. Added to this are the difficulties associated with geographical accessibility, with training centres concentrated in urban areas. In addition, the current legal framework is not fully aligned with the strategy of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Kosovo government, particularly in terms of increasing the autonomy of vocational education and training schools, empowering staff at all levels, and allowing for formal revenue generation or public-private partnerships.

MORE COMPLEX INTERVENTIONS IN A CONTEXT OF CRISIS

The implementation of projects and programmes in the education, training and employment sector is facing a number of difficulties. The multiple crises - security, food, health, environment - make the context of intervention difficult. Overall, they are leading to a decline in school enrolment indicators, unfavourable budgetary decisions for the sector and greater vulnerability among populations. These crises mean that development partners have to make greater efforts and demonstrate a greater capacity to adapt if they are to continue to intervene effectively. Security crises also lead to difficulties in terms of mobility, which have an impact on the ability of partners to intervene, as they have to innovate in order to intervene effectively in a context of insecurity.■

MAINTAINING EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

In Burkina Faso, faced with the security crisis that is having a very negative impact on the education system as a whole, the support programme to implementation of the Education and Training Sector Plan is currently prioritising support for the development of education in emergency situations, in order to ensure continuity of learning despite the particularly difficult context.

According to recent publications by the Technical Secretariat for Education in Emergency Situations, the security crisis in Burkina Faso has led to the closure of 5,330 schools due to attacks on educational establishments, violence against teachers, disruption of learning activities and teachers being forced to abandon classes.

The security crisis has affected 820,865 pupils and 23,955 teachers.

As a result, there has been an increase in the school drop-out rate at national level, a mass drop-out of pupils and a displacement of populations, particularly in rural areas. This situation has also led to a decline in the quality of education, a worsening of pre-existing inequalities and reduced access to education for certain social groups. Against this backdrop, the resilience of the education system is being severely tested.

To help overcome the negative consequences of this situation, the support programme for the education and training sector plan, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages, aims to ensure the continuity of inclusive and equitable quality education.

To this end, the programme provides for the construction of classrooms of various types, both to respond to the emergency and to anticipate the consequences of the crisis in the longer term. By 2023, 190 temporary classrooms were built and 80 schools equipped with 7,000 desks. The school infrastructure built by the programme has enabled beneficiary schools to relieve overcrowding in their classrooms caused by the massive influx of internally displaced pupils, creating more than 5,700 extra places. School kits were also distributed to 84,200 pupils, as well as dignity kits for girls, thus reducing absences linked to their menstrual cycle.

The programme also provides support for school feeding (supplying food to school canteens, to parents of internally displaced pupils and to vulnerable families in host localities). In a context marked by insecurity and subsequent internal displacement, the majority of school drop-outs are in fact linked to the inability of families to cover the costs of their children's schooling and food.

A large proportion of pupils drop out of school or are unable to attend classes because of inadequate or inappropriate nutrition.

Many parents are also forced to stop sending their children to school in order to employ them in income-generating work to meet their family's food needs. In 2023, 144,711 pupils received school feeding support and 6,177 internally displaced people and vulnerable host families received food assistance. By meeting these essential needs, the intervention has ensured that internally displaced pupils and, more broadly, children in vulnerable situations remain in school.

Finally, the capacities of 86 teachers were strengthened to enable them to fully carry out their duties in the context of the security crisis and to provide the best possible support for internally displaced pupils (psychosocial support for displaced pupils, Safe School approach, distance learning methodology, etc.). As the risks of marginalisation, stigmatisation and exclusion of internally displaced pupils are high in the host establishments, the contribution of knowledge received by the teachers and the development of appropriate attitudes facilitated the learning of these pupils, as well as their integration into their new school and social environment.■



TESTIMONIALS

"WE'RE REALLY PLEASED WITH THE NEW CLASSROOMS"

Beneficiaries of the support programme for the education and training sector plan testify to the importance of the support received in preserving education in a context of crisis in Burkina Faso.

"The school opened in 2020. Since then, we have gone from 5 classes to 10, with an average of 100 pupils per class, totalling more than 600 internally displaced pupils. The response provided by the programme supported by Luxembourg Cooperation has been very beneficial. The schools built have made it possible to absorb the surplus of pupils. The canteen plays a crucial role in keeping children in school and ensuring that they attend. Now, the lack of a functional water point within the school is a challenge. Finally, it is crucial to protect the children and teachers from the sun in the classrooms, as not all of them are covered", explains the headmaster of the primary school in sector 4 of Kaya.

"My name is Assane SAWADOGO, and I'm in the CM2 class at communal primary school B. I'm 12 years old and I've been an internally displaced pupil for two years, having come from Dablo, a commune more than 80 kilometres away, to live here in Kaya. Before, there were a lot of us in class. Some of us used to sit on the floor; there was no classroom or bench. Now, no one sits on the floor and there aren't too many of us thanks to the classrooms that have been built. Now we'd like to cover the sides of the classrooms with tarpaulins to protect us from the sun, and have a school bag, reading books, notebooks and a pen. As our house is a long way from the school, a bicycle would also be useful for me."

"My name is Blandine OUEDRAOGO, I'm 14 years old and I'm in class 6e A at Kougrin Louda. We used to live in Namisgma, a town a few kilometres from here. Because of the insecurity, my parents and I came to Kaya. We're really pleased with the construction of the new classrooms. Before, when we came to ask for a place at the school, the administration would tell us that there weren't any. But this time, they agreed to enrol me because new classrooms were available."

**FROM TRAINING TO EMPLOYMENT**

LuxDev's support for the education, training and employment systems of its partner countries covers many aspects. The main challenge is to bring about a paradigm shift by making the integration of young people the main objective and indicator to be achieved, and vocational training a means of achieving this.

So as to strengthen basic education, LuxDev supports in particular the reinforcement of school infrastructure. In this respect, in **Niger**, the State and its various partners, including Luxembourg Cooperation, set up the *Fonds commun sectoriel de l'éducation* (FCSE) in July 2017. Despite the coup d'état that led to the suspension of bilateral cooperation between Niger and Luxembourg and blocked more than 84% of the FCSE's resources for the year, the partners matched the fund to the tune of EUR 23,234,500. Most of the funding was directed towards school infrastructure, support for school operations and, more generally, towards the decentralised and devolved levels, as close as possible to pupils and learners. By 2023, 126 classrooms had been delivered to primary and secondary schools, boosting capacity and improving access to basic education. More than 5,000 decentralised management committees in primary and secondary schools received grants to carry out activities to improve the quality of learning for pupils.

SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING

To support training, the Agency contributes to the redesign, introduction or diversification of programmes and curricula, targeting the qualifications and occupations sought by businesses. To this end, the emphasis is on on-the-job learning and the skills-based approach as a teaching method. In the same vein, vocational training centres are being built and/or their capacity strengthened, through the financing of initial or qualifying training, the equipping of workshops, the technical training of trainers and the development of manuals and learning materials. Emphasis is placed on building the capacity of supervisory bodies (administrative, financial and pedagogical) and the management of training centres.

These activities are carried out in many partner countries. In **Senegal**, for example, in support of the national sectoral policy, the activities of the vocational and technical training programme are aimed at making young people employable, through four major areas: developing access to training, improving the quality of training on offer, support for the integration of trained

young people and sectoral governance. Renewable energy, for example, is a promising sector for securing the country's energy supply. In this field, various activities requiring technical skills, such as solar pumping and electrification, are in demand. The programme has therefore identified job opportunities and the training courses that need to be set up in the short term, such as renewable energy technician qualifications and options in solar photovoltaic, solar thermal and wind power. To ensure high-quality training, 44 trainers and teachers benefited from capacity development at the *Centro de Energias Renováveis e Manutenção Industrial* in Cabo Verde, whose mission is to promote and disseminate knowledge and develop skills in the fields of renewable energies and industrial maintenance in the sub-region.

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young people in Laos, most of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, benefited from a grant and/or training leading to qualifications, thereby improving their employability.

The skills for the tourism, agriculture and forestry programme in Laos, which began in the fourth quarter of 2023, supported the introduction of vocational training courses in four secondary schools.

One of the institutions supported, the Vientiane Professional Development College, provided three-month courses in cookery and catering. The courses include practical and theoretical training as well as English language and life skills, all of which are essential for a career in the tourism and hospitality sector. In addition, short refresher courses were organised for front-line staff already working in the tourism sector, mainly in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. These courses enabled newcomers to acquire valuable skills for their first job, and those already employed to improve their skills.



SUCCESS STORY

TRAINING AS A SPRINGBOARD TO EMPLOYMENT

Aiden's by Manee Café recently welcomed six new members to its team, all graduates of the Vientiane Professional Development College's Certificate in Cookery and Catering. These students had received grants under the skills for tourism, agriculture and forestry programme. Two young employees and the café's manager talk about their experiences.

MALEE HER

Malee is a dynamic and ambitious young woman from Luang Prabang who has decided to leave her family and her home town to follow a vocational training course in the capital.

Malee's expectations of her course have been exceeded. Although she knew that she would acquire the essential knowledge and skills to start a career in the hospitality industry, she had not anticipated the help available to students in finding employment in this sector, in particular the job fair organised by the school, which helped her to land a position that matched her skills immediately after graduation.

Malee initially applied as a barista, but the manager quickly recognised her potential and offered her a cashier position to give her the opportunity to learn more.

The support Malee has received from the programme has not only provided her with essential skills for finding a job in Laos' booming tourism sector, it has also opened the door to new opportunities and allowed her to dream big. "One day, it will be my turn to open my own café."

VATHSANA CHANTHAPHONE

Originally from the province of Oudomxay, Vathsana had to drop out of school before completing upper secondary education to help her mother sell produce at the village market. Little did she know that her passion for cooking would be the catalyst for her professional career.

It was a neighbour in her village, who knew of her passion for cooking, who told her about the certificate offered by the Vientiane Professional Development College and the existence of a scholarship for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Intrigued and determined, Vathsana first had to overcome a major challenge: convincing her parents to allow her to travel to Vientiane to take the course. "The grant covering tuition fees, a living allowance, uniforms, transport and much more played a key role in making this opportunity a reality," she explains.

Recalling her time at college, Vathsana proudly declares: "I learnt a lot of new things, even how to prepare Western desserts such as crème brûlée". She points out the slight pressure that school sometimes put on her, but also

acknowledges that this is what pushed and motivated her to become not only a good cook, but also a professional one. Grateful for the support that enabled her to complete her training, she adds:

"Now I'll do my best in my job, I'll have a good income and I'll support my family".

PHONTHEP KHANTHALY

These very positive testimonials go hand in hand with the impressions of Aiden's manager, Mr Phonthep KHANTHALY, about his new employees. The range of professional skills and the confidence shown by these students at the job fair caught his attention. Although Malee, Vathsana and Bounthanh only joined the team a few weeks ago, Mr KHANTHALY is very pleased with his new employees and says that he can "really see the difference between those who have received proper training and those who haven't". Malee and Vathsana are currently on a three-month probationary period, to ensure that they are both satisfied before signing a one-year contract.

Mr KHANTHALY is confident that they will not only meet expectations, but exceed them. ■

Initial vocational training for young people has also been one of the active policies implemented by the Cabo Verde government, with the support of the employment and employability programme, to improve access to employment for young people aged between 15 and 35, with particular emphasis on integrating women. The programme has supported the launch of a training offer through the Employment and Training Promotion Fund, co-financing the training of more than 2,300 young people by public institutions and private companies. In addition to this co-financing, the programme has played a crucial role in ensuring the fund's sustainability, in particular by supporting the development of three sources of funding and revising its operating manual. The Employment and Training Promotion Fund is a mechanism for promoting fairer and more balanced access to training, in particular through measures guaranteeing free access for the most disadvantaged beneficiaries and those from remote municipalities. In addition, this mechanism requires professional integration rates in excess of 65%, thus encouraging competition between vocational training establishments and favouring those offering the best integration prospects, while developing the training offer in close collaboration with companies.

In Rwanda, to support the Ministry of Education's priorities of increasing the proportion of young people in vocational training, while addressing challenges such as the cost of setting up and managing training centres and ensuring that the programmes offered match market needs, the support project to technical training and employability has selected four schools in the Karongi and Nyamagabe districts that will be supported in improving the quality of training, integration into the labour market and entrepreneurship. The project, launched in 2023, includes developing the first-ever national strategy in this field and updating or developing 11 training programmes.

Also in Mali, as part of the technical and vocational training programme, the technical skills of 43 trainers in three trades in the agro-sylvo-pastoral sector (market gardening, poultry farming and agri-food transformation) were enhanced with a view to improving their teaching practices. An entrepreneurship training module for public training centres was also developed, validated and tested through the training of 2,500 young people.

As part of the support to the National Education and Technical and Vocational Training Policy in Burkina Faso, training projects for 5,471 young people, including 2,697 internally displaced persons, financed under a partnership with the *Fonds d'appui à la formation professionnelle et à l'apprentissage* (vocational training and apprenticeship support fund). These short-term training courses leading to qualifications cover a range of areas that are key to professional integration: hybrid energy, refrigeration and air-conditioning technology, electrical engineering, sanitary plumbing, agro-sylvo-pastoral and craft trades, etc. At the same time, the management and governance capacities of private vocational training centres are being strengthened, as are those of their instructors. This capacity development focuses in particular on the skills-based approach, dual apprenticeships and the management of different types of vocational training, to improve the quality of training and harmonise teaching tools and practices in the centres. A call for investment projects was launched in May 2023 to help the centres raise the level of their technical facilities, thereby diversifying the range of training courses and improving their accessibility and quality. As a result, 21 projects were selected to receive funding, for a projected target of more than 24,000 learners over the period 2024-2028.

TESTIMONIAL

TRAINING CENTRES SUPPORTED IN BURKINA FASO

"I am Fulbert Sam, director of the Louis-Querbes vocational training centre in Banfora, which was set up in 2009 thanks to support from the Luxembourg Cooperation.

We were invited to take part in the project to support investment in private vocational training centres, launched as part of the project to support the sectoral policy for technical and vocational education and training. We thought about broadening our offer by creating a new training course in solar energy. We set up the project and the centre was selected to benefit from technical and financial support.

Over and above the funding, the most important aspect of this collaboration is the expert support we receive throughout the process. In the past, we've had training in management and business plans, and now we're here again to develop critical management indicators. This initiative is to be applauded! Even though we didn't go to university, we've become experts in management". ■





Finally, the vocational education and training sector is one of the main pillars of development cooperation between Kosovo and Luxembourg. Three projects and programmes were implemented in this area in 2023. The support to technical and vocational education and training reform project focuses on improving provision by developing qualifications and enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of certain establishments. The European Union (EU) support to vocational education and training, professional requalification and occupation project, which ended in December 2023, also significantly improved the structure and performance of the vocational education and training system, supporting its relevance, quality and sustainability. More particularly, professional standards, qualifications programmes and materials were developed. Merit-based scholarships were awarded to students in the supported institutions. In addition, the capacity of teaching staff was strengthened and training centres were equipped, laying a solid foundation for quality teaching in line with the requirements of the labour market. In addition, the European project set up a system for monitoring graduates in 85% of public vocational education and training schools and vocational training centres. For both public and private training systems, the challenge is to move from a means-based approach to results-based management. Putting the monitoring study information system into operation involved training 401 specialists and registering 12,000 graduates by the end of the project, providing valuable information on the employability of graduates.

The project in Kosovo has led to the development of an official career guidance platform, busulla.com. More than 500,000 users have been registered since its creation.

The projects' activities have therefore helped to meet immediate needs in terms of educational infrastructure and to define a strategic framework for the sustainable development of vocational education and training, aligned with the needs of industry and conducive to long-term economic growth. The skills for sustainable jobs project in Kosovo builds on the results of these two projects. It will continue to support the Kosovar government in its efforts to provide inclusive, quality education, to develop people's skills and potential, and to encourage lifelong learning.

BETTER INTEGRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE JOB MARKET

As far as socio-economic integration is concerned, LuxDev supports the implementation of strategies to assist young people in their orientation and integration process, the development of integration platforms and spaces, and support for business plans put forward by young people.

As part of the training and professional integration programme in Mali, for example, LuxDev is working with the *Agence pour la promotion de l'emploi des jeunes* and the *Agence nationale pour l'emploi* to support young people in their professional integration process, from guidance to the implementation of their project. This support takes the form of communication campaigns to inform young people of the possibilities and opportunities for professional integration in the sectors of opportunity open to them, skills assessments to help them make the right choices of training sector and/or business project, training leading to qualifications and/or entrepreneurship leading to a business plan, as well as support in finding financing and setting up a business. In Mali, 4,243 young people were helped to complete their professional skills assessment.



The commitment and quality of the skills assessments carried out by the teams at the two agencies continues to improve and is one of the main ways in which the process of supporting young people in their transition to the labour market is being carried out effectively. A process of professionalisation of the role of guidance counsellor and support for vocational integration is underway. Ultimately, this should help to improve the structure and performance of vocational guidance services for young people in Mali.

In Senegal, support from civil society and internal capacity development at vocational training centres, departmental councils and local authorities are being used to improve integration support systems. More specifically, the activities carried out in 2023 as part of the vocational and technical training and employability programme have made it possible to move from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach, based on the identification of local needs in terms of nec-

essary skills, with the implementation of training and integration actions. In the North, particular emphasis was placed on agri-livestock farming, encompassing numerous short-term investment and training projects in public centres, with practical work in the private sector and itinerant training using mobile units. In the Centre zone, in addition to agri-farming, which is also considered a priority sector, emphasis was placed on tourism. Support was also given to the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, in particular through the ICT buses, which worked effectively with the Job Centres to reach communities with no access to vocational training. The mobile training units enabled more than 5,000 new beneficiaries to be reached in 2023, for a cumulative total of 8,146 beneficiaries since their deployment.

The employment and employability programme in Cabo Verde has supported *Pró Empresa*, a key player in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, in setting up activities focused on youth entrepreneurship: facilitating access to bank credit for micro and young businesses, organising the Start-up event, etc.

Challenge, a business ideas competition rewarding the best proposals, and support for Cabo Verde Digital aimed at accelerating the technological innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem through competitions, the promotion of digital start-ups and training and networking activities, etc.

To promote job creation and employability among young people and women, the support programme for the development of employment and the employability of young people and women in the regions of Dosso, Niamey and Zinder in Niger launched the identification and subsequent training of young people and women in agro-sylvo-pastoral value chains. The aim of the training is to equip learners with the knowledge they need to set up and effectively manage production units that generate jobs and income. In 2023, 595 young people, including 325 men and 270 women, received agricultural training. These learners were given the knowledge they need to manage their farms once they are up and running in 2024.





INTERVIEW

DAGANA, A LAND OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG SENEGALESE PEOPLE

In partnership with the Dagana vocational training centre, the Dagana livestock department and the Kossam SDE school farm, a livestock development company, a subsidiary jointly created by *Laiterie du Berger* and the livestock farmers' cooperative, two training and integration projects in the milk sector have been set up and financed by the Luxembourg Cooperation via the 3FPT, the vocational training financing fund.

The first training and integration project involves incubating the daughters of livestock farmers and young girls from the vocational training centre at the *Laiterie du Berger* farm school. They are trained in animal husbandry techniques, market gardening and soap making.

To date, 108 girls have been trained, 24 of whom have received loans from the *Délégation à l'entrepreneuriat rapide des femmes et des jeunes* to set up mini-farms. Four other girls are waiting to be financed, and the remaining 80 have herds within their families. All have become producers and supply milk to the *Laiterie du Berger*, in addition to income from market gardening and soap making. Fatimata DIA is one of these beneficiaries.

Can you introduce yourself in a few words?



My name is Fatimata DIA, I'm 36 and I live in the village of Bounama, in the department of Dagana, in the north of Senegal. I'm married and the mother of a son. In my family, we're farmers from father to son, and from father to daughter too!

What has been your career path?

I went to school until CE2, then I stopped to help my family with the breeding activities and support my parents in managing the herd.

In 2021, my father, who is a member of the Dagana dairy farmers' cooperative, advised me to take a training course. The cooperative is in partnership with the Dagana vocational training centre. The centre has developed six-month training-integration projects with the 3FPT, two months of which are incubated on the *Laiterie du Berger* training farm in Richard-Toll. At the end of my training, I was accompanied by the farm managers and I obtained a canister number that enabled me to supply milk to the dairy.

But I also wanted to increase my milk production. So I submitted a project to the *Délégation à l'entrepreneuriat rapide des femmes et des jeunes* to apply for funding. I was granted FCFA 2,800,000 (around EUR 4,268) to build a cowshed, buy three dairy cows and a mixed-breed bull. I also bought a cart and a 1,000-litre barrel. So now I have my own mini-farm.

What are the main activities on your farm? Is it profitable?

For the moment, the farm's activities are limited to milk production. But we have also been trained in market gardening and soap making. Unfortunately, we've had a serious water problem in our village for almost six months, which makes it difficult to diversify our activities. As soon as the water is back in the village, we will start market gardening.

For the time being, with our livestock, we regularly supply the dairy with milk, around 30 litres a day. This equates to a monthly income of FCFA 350,000 (around EUR 533), which enables us to cover the costs of feeding ourselves and educating our children in Richard-Toll. Our living conditions have also improved because we have built new rooms in the house.■



THE DAKAR YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

In 2026, Senegal will host the Dakar Youth Olympic Games (YOG), the first Olympic event ever held in Africa. The International Olympic Committee supports the vision that "the Dakar 2026 YOG will be a catalyst for sporting, social, cultural, educational and economic transformation that will create new hopes, new opportunities and confidence for young people". In this way, the Dakar 2026 YOG will offer real opportunities for the economic integration of young people, before, during and after the event.

To contribute to the legacy of the Dakar 2026 YOG and take advantage of this favourable context to improve youth employment in Senegal, European development players have responded to the appeal launched by the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee and Senegal's Ministry of Vocational Training, Apprenticeship and Integration. Together, they decided to set up the FIT! Senegal initiative, which began in October 2023.

Taking a Team Europe approach, the FIT! Senegal initiative is co-financed by the European Union and six European countries (Germany, France, Italy, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland) and is being implemented jointly by the French, Italian, German and Luxembourg development agencies.

The stakeholders of the FIT! Senegal Initiative have made a commitment to involve young people, not only in the initiative, but also in its implementation,

not only as direct beneficiaries of the activities, but also as stakeholders in the thinking, steering and implementation. This commitment is reflected in the experimental application of Youth Friendly Standards, a label developed by the *Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal* to help organisations assess their practices in terms of involving young people in their programmes. For example, all the stakeholders were involved in deciding on the name of the project and its communication elements, including its visual identity. A competition was organised and Makhtar WADE, a young graphic designer studying at Gaston Berger University, was selected to come up with the name and develop the logo for FIT! Senegal logo. On the one hand, fit means "bravery" in Wolof, the most widely spoken language in Senegal, and thus underlines the courage needed to build a professional life. On the other hand, fit refers to being in good physical condition in English, German, Luxembourgish and Dutch, and is therefore a reference to the field of sport and the Dakar 2026 YOG.

The project will provide 84 training establishments with sports facilities and infrastructure, benefiting 50,000 users. Two training centres will also be built and 2,800 young people will be supported in their training and integration.■

STRENGTHENING FUNDING MECHANISMS

When young people want to become entrepreneurs, they need finance not only to get their project off the ground, but also for their day-to-day activities and possibly to grow their small business. While access to finance is relatively easy in urban areas and for experienced entrepreneurs, this is far from being the case for young people with vocational training who are starting out with little or no experience. For the formal financial sector, they are often perceived as too risky to grant credit, especially if they are active in the agricultural sector.

To remedy this situation, the projects and programmes implemented by LuxDev in the education, training and employment sector include credit-linked subsidy mechanisms, guarantees, ad hoc credit lines or support programmes for young people, post-training and financial institutions in order to better serve this market.

This is particularly true of the support programme to agro-pastoral value chains in Mali and the vocational and technical training programme in Senegal. In Niger too, to help young people and women realise or consolidate their career plans, the support programme for the development of employment and the employability of young people and women in the regions of Dosso, Niamey and Zinder, in partnership with the Investment Fund for Food and Nutritional Security and microfinance institutions, has facilitated access to finance for young people and women. As a result, 14 women and 15 men working in the agricultural sector in the Dosso region were financed through a grant (40% of the project cost) backed by credit (50% of the project cost). This funding enabled them to consolidate their self-employment by strengthening their income-generating activities.■

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

To better match training with the needs of the labour market and thus enhance employability, the projects and programmes implemented by LuxDev pay particular attention to developing partnership opportunities with the private sector.

Public-private partnerships make it possible to identify and prioritise the needs of the labour market and then support training establishments in developing appropriate programmes. In the long run, graduates increase their chances of finding work, whether through formal or informal employment, self-employment or entrepreneurship.

This observation gave rise to the philosophy of the VET Toolbox project. The project seeks to promote opportunities for integration by encouraging public-private dialogue and developing a range of training courses that meet the needs of training centres and businesses. The content of training courses is developed in consultation with companies to ensure that it is geared to their needs. Some companies decide to support the centres by providing them with equipment, so as to enhance the quality of the training and better prepare young apprentices for the

realities of the trade. Vocational training to improve employment prospects exchanges between centres and companies also serve to identify opportunities for integration and work placements. In Senegal, for example, Volvo equipment distributor SMT donated mechanical equipment to two vocational training centres. A second company, NEEMBA Sénégal, a Caterpillar equipment distributor, has joined the project and will also be donating mechanical equipment to the centres. Moreover, it will be involved in developing the content of the training courses, gearing them to the needs of its customers. Elementerre, which specialises in the manufacture of compressed earth bricks, is working with two vocational training centres to train the workforce needed to build an eco-neighbourhood. Finally, Lucas Nülle equipped the vocational training centre in Louga with digital teaching equipment and trained the centre's instructors to improve the quality of training in this sector.



Young girls at the vocational training centre for mechanics and motorised machinery in Diambiadio, Senegal ▲

The vocational and technical training programme in Senegal also supports training initiatives in partnership with private initiatives, such as the *Centre agricole pour l'initiative rurale* in Sokone. Launched in 2018 and accredited by the Ministry of Vocational Training, this centre trains young rural entrepreneurs in agricultural practices and agri-food processing, supporting them as they incubate and finalise their business project. Collaborations with the public vocational training centre in Sokone promote job-creating training for young people in the municipality and surrounding area, strengthening public-private collaboration in the field of vocational training.

In Kosovo too, projects and programmes take account of the need to strengthen cooperation between vocational education and training schools and the private sector. The EU support to the vocational education and training, professional requalification and occupation project has established 168 formal cooperation agreements between vocational schools and relevant private sector companies for practical training and employment opportunities. In addition, the skills for a sustainable jobs project will focus on strengthening the innovation, university and research ecosystems through instruments that encourage partnerships between Luxembourg companies and universities on the one hand, and public or private stakeholders in Kosovo on the other. The aim is for vocational education and training to become a catalyst in the fields of information and communication technologies, the cultural and creative industry, energy and the environment, and telemedicine.

In Laos, the mismatch between the demand for and supply of appropriately qualified workers is due to inadequate planning and vocational skills development services, affecting the competitiveness of the economy. The skills for tourism, agriculture and forestry programme supports public-private partnerships in the development of vocational skills at macro, meso and micro levels. At the macro level, the programme strengthens the capacity of national

and provincial development committees to human resources, national and provincial training councils and working groups on tourism and agriculture, in view of improving public-private dialogue and developing policies related to market-oriented vocational training. In addition, the programme facilitates the development of the Lao labour market information system and the provision of services for young jobseekers by public and private providers. At the meso level, the programme supports private sector participation in curriculum development and accreditation, as well as the integration of employability skills and work-based learning into vocational training programmes. Finally, at the micro level, public-private partnerships are encouraged through programme support to build the capacity of school/college staff to engage with local businesses and to provide small grants to facilitate specific collaborative initiatives. By helping vocational training providers to engage with the private sector, the programme helps to strengthen the link between training providers and businesses, reducing skills mismatches and ensuring that training is relevant and aligned with real market needs. The potential long-term effects can be increased employment, improved wages, economic growth and better employability for future generations. Trained people will find decent jobs, contributing to poverty reduction and long-term economic development. In addition, a more skilled workforce promotes business growth and competitiveness, demonstrating the value of vocational training and encouraging more young people to participate in vocational training.

These examples illustrate the typical activities carried out by LuxDev on the supply side of the labour market, in numerous projects. A new frontier is to engage more with the private sector on the demand side as well. LuxDev is considering the market systems development approach to identify decent income opportunities for vulnerable populations. A pilot project has been launched in Senegal and Rwanda. ■



DIGITALISATION AS A SUPPORT

The education, training and employment sector occupies a prominent place in LuxDev's Digital for Development approach. Digital transformation can accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs in this area, by helping to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of learning systems and creating employment and professional integration opportunities for young people.

The countries in which LuxDev operates are, to varying degrees, experiencing sustained development of their digital economy, which can be used to support the education, training and employment sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic further strengthened this digitisation, which in turn is driving the need for accelerated modernisation, forcing an increase in partnerships with private operators and structures.

In terms of learning systems, digital technologies are being used to increase access for all learners to high-quality, context-sensitive content. They are also a means of empowering teachers by providing them with professional development opportunities and facilitating effective teaching practices. The digital transformation of education is aimed at a wider systemic upgrade of education models and delivery modes. There are also opportunities to modernise the management of educational establishments.

As for employment and professional integration, the digital sector represents a breeding ground for jobs for young people. The development of basic, intermediate and advanced digital skills enables learners in education and training systems not only to access labour market opportunities but also to engage in promising self-employment initiatives.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIONS

The integration of digitalisation into the projects and programmes implemented by LuxDev in the education, training and employment sector aims to take advantage of digital technologies and innovations to ensure more inclusive, efficient and pertinent learning, while promoting professional integration in the digital age. By way of example, structuring actions are already underway in Senegal (reference centre for digital professions), Kosovo (information and communication technology centre), Cabo Verde (digital entrepreneurship), Benin (digital learning systems) and Rwanda (development of digital skills).

Rwanda has undertaken initiatives to digitalise vocational training, while recognising the challenges associated with a lack of technological culture and resources. In this context, the digital skills project aims to lay the foundations for a modern future with more blended learning (an approach combining online training with traditional classroom methods) in training. E-learning frees up valuable classroom time for more interactive and engaging activities, improving the learning experience and outcomes for students. The overall objective of the project is to extend the use of emerging technologies in the vocational and technical training system by demonstrating that the integration of a blended learning method can improve access to quality learning for students in Rwanda. To achieve this, the project focuses on training teachers in digital skills and equipping vocational training centres. The systemic approach adopted as part of this project is based on the market systems development methodology. This approach seeks to understand the underlying causes of the challenges faced by stakeholders, to identify system-level changes, to address them and to guide interventions that can bring about sustainable change for disadvantaged populations.

As part of the vocational and technical training programme in Senegal, a partnership with Orange digital Center, the training school run by Sonatel, a member of the Orange group, enabled 200 young people to be offered high-level training in the coding professional: web developer, mobile developer and digital referent. The course provides each student with a laptop computer and includes courses in a fablab for project development, as well as group work based on real-life business needs. The course also prepares young people to enter the job market by providing support in setting up their own business. The integration rate for previous cohorts is 87%, with some students who have become entrepreneurs now employing their former cohort mates. ■

GENDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS AS A CROSS-CUTTING THEME

The gender dimension, social inclusion issues and human rights are priority topics for LuxDev, and constitute important areas of intervention in the education, training and professional integration sector.

During the project and programme formulation phase, the Agency systematically uses gender analyses. Taking into account the needs and concerns of men, women, girls and boys helps to reduce barriers to discrimination and increase their access to opportunities. In doing so, LuxDev seeks to make the principle of "leaving no one behind" as concrete as possible. Specific measures are taken to promote better access for the poorest and most excluded, women in particular, people who are not studying, working or training, and people with disabilities. To promote a more inclusive approach, we ensure that training programmes and materials are examined from a gender mainstreaming perspective to eliminate any prejudice or stereotyping. We promote the development of incentives and support activities to enable women to enrol in training institutions, for example through positive action policies, review of entry qualifications or selection procedures. Scholarships can also be used to target certain disadvantaged groups.

Gender equality, for example, will be a cross-cutting issue throughout the implementation of the skills for a sustainable jobs project in Kosovo. Promoting gender diversity and equal opportunities in vocational education and training programmes will be a priority. The project will also support a gender analysis of the labour market in order to identify the obstacles, challenges and opportunities specific to the inclusion of women in the priority profiles identified. Similarly, the vocational and technical training, professional integration and employment of young people and women programme, currently being formulated in Senegal, makes the gender dimension and the empowerment of women a key objective. It also includes social inclusion issues in line with respect

for human rights and the principle of "leaving no one behind". Access to training, integration and employment opportunities is essential to breaking the reproductive cycle of poverty and social exclusion. The intervention is therefore designed to help increase access to vocational and technical training in an equitable manner and thus contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth, through capacity development and the socio-economic integration of young people and women.

Training trainers in gender issues also has a positive impact on reducing the drop-out rate among female learners. Moreover, it strengthens the transition from training to decent work for young graduates by reducing gender stereotypes in the placement of women, men, boys and girls. Where possible, the Agency includes life skills such as critical thinking, creativity, organisational skills, social and communication skills and problem solving in the programmes. Other themes such as gender-based violence and women's rights may be mentioned depending on the situation.

In addition to gender equality, the projects and programmes indirectly address the fundamental elements of the human rights-based approach. Taking into account the opinions of the most vulnerable members of society and integrating their voice into all decision-making processes is an integral part of the success of our interventions. We have seen an increase in the number of inclusive vocational and technical training projects, with efforts focused on the needs of the most vulnerable, particularly in Senegal, Mali, Cabo Verde, Laos and Niger. ■



MALI - POTATO AND MILK SECTORS STRENGTHENED

Mali's economy is essentially based on the rural sector, which is adversely affected by the vagaries of the weather. Through the support to agro-pastoral value chains programme -phase II, LuxDev is supporting the development and strengthening of the potato and milk sectors in the Sikasso region.

The support to agro-pastoral value chains programme-phase II aims to boost the incomes of family farms, businesses and the most vulnerable people, through a sustainable increase in productivity and employability in the potato and milk sectors. To create a favourable environment for economic diversification, to promote a sustainable, modern and competitive agricultural sector and to develop an industry that is integrated into the economy and creates jobs, it is essential to move away from a low-productivity, short-term subsistence strategy towards a sustainable system of intensified and diversified agricultural production that is planned over time and based on the market. However, due to a lack of scope for experimentation, small-scale farmers are generally risk-averse. By relying on young people working on family farms, the agro-pastoral support programme - phase II is positioning itself as a facilitator of this transition process.

ADVISING POTATO AND MILK PRODUCERS

To enable local potato and milk producers to increase their profitability, the programme has set up a local support and advice system. This system is made up of 30 advisers from the regional potato interprofessional committee, 21 from the regional federation of milk producers' cooperative unions in Sikasso, 6 from the regional rural consultation committee and 9 from the rural management centre. On a daily basis, all these players work with producers in the two sectors to experiment with innovative, environmentally-friendly techniques and practices, with a view to making production systems sustainable and resilient. For example, 2,192 dairy farmers have received training in artificial insemination, livestock feed, animal health, fodder crops and hygiene in milk production and preservation. In addition, 19,362 potato growers were coached on composting, production techniques and irrigation.

TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE

Training is provided to help young people enter the agricultural sector: 205 young people began their initial training leading to a qualification in November 2023 and 168 young people began their apprenticeship training in December 2023. In addition, 215 young people in the local milk and potato sectors have been trained in entrepreneurship and helped to draw up their business plans.

IMPROVE PRODUCT PROCESSING

In addition, 10 potato processing units have received support to facilitate diversification and improve product quality, through study trips, demonstration kits and ongoing advisory support. At the same time, 12 service centres and 3 mini-dairies have received support in processing techniques, quality control, hygiene and packaging, helping to improve the quality of processed milk.

SUSTAINABLE AND GROWING REVENUES

Thanks to these various activities, the income of the entities supported is increasing. In 2023, the gross margin generated by potato and milk producers respectively was FCFA 4,291,276,997 (EUR 6,542,385) and FCFA 175,733,599 (EUR 267,919). Of the 495 potato growers and 20 milk producers surveyed, 40% saw their income increase by at least 5% between 2022 and 2023. In addition, almost 99% of the milk collected and 97% of the potatoes produced in 2023 were marketed.■

589

dairy cows were inseminated with seeds from improved breeds (Holstein, Montbéliard and Normande) to increase their productivity from 2 to 7 litres per day per cow.

30.8 tonnes

of potato seeds were produced locally.



BENIN - PRESERVING THE MONO BIOSPHERE RESERVE



In Benin, the Mono biosphere reserve and the adjoining Avlékété-Bouche du Roy marine protected area are experiencing significant population growth and are faced with intense exploitation of their natural resources, with agriculture remaining the main economic activity for most of the population. In addition, this coastal area is particularly exposed to climate change, which could ultimately weaken all coastal ecosystems.

To meet these challenges, the support for the agro-ecological transition and the implementation of sustainable food systems in the Mono biosphere reserve project is contributing to inclusive, sustainable and climate change-resilient territorial development, in line with the guidelines of the Beninese government's 2021-2026 action programme. The project is part of an integrated approach to natural resource management, in line with current environmental, demographic and economic challenges.

The project - which is being implemented by Enabel, with LuxDev forming part of the monitoring committee - began in December 2022. On the basis of the Luxembourg contributions made at the end of 2022, the actions carried out during this first year of implementation have enabled local players to

become progressively aware of the importance, on the one hand, of questioning farming practices and their impact on the environment and health and, on the other, of taking action to preserve the reserve and make the most of its resources, by investing in the agro-ecological transition process.

As part of this, a mapping exercise was carried out to identify the agro-ecological and training/employment dynamics at work. Subsequently, training courses on biofertilisers were organised and a pool of 32 young agroecological producers, including 8 women, emerged. This pool is intended to act as a relay for the dissemination of agroecological practices, in particular the use of biofertilisers. The mapping also enabled income-generating activities to be identified, income diversification to be promoted, a pool of agro-ecological entrepreneurs to be created, access to finance for these entrepreneurs to be analysed, and local finance management structures to be supported. In addition, communal development plans have been drawn up, incorporating actions linked to the agro-ecological transition.■

SUCCESS STORY

LOCALLY PRODUCED SEED POTATOES

Access to potato seed is crucial to the sustainability of harvests and the value chain. The *Comité régional de l'interprofession pomme de terre (CRIPT)*, a partner in the support to agro-pastoral value chains programme-phase II, is increasingly providing secure access to seeds through local production initiatives in collaboration with research centres.

This strategic collaboration has resulted in the production of 16,000 mini tubers, marking an important step in the consolidation of local seed autonomy. In addition, CRIPT has extended its production to an area of 10 hectares, with the ambitious aim of producing 150 tonnes of Malian potato seed.

CRIPT's involvement in local seed potato production in Sikasso has had a significant impact in terms of both agricultural and economic. Indeed, this initiative

has significantly increased the availability of quality seeds in the region, helping to improve agricultural productivity and reduce dependence on seed imports. By producing certified seeds, CRIPT is strengthening the region's self-sufficiency in essential seeds, which is crucial for food security and economic stability. The initiative also promotes local employment, particularly for women, and stimulates the regional economy.

CRIPT's overall impact goes beyond seed production; it embodies a model of sustainable agricultural development and social entrepreneurship, inspiring other regions and contributing to the positive evolution of the agricultural sector in the region.■



LATIN AMERICA - TOWARDS MORE SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

Launched in 2023 for a five-year period, the support to sustainable management of forests aims to improve the management of secondary forests¹ in Latin America so that they can contribute to inclusive rural development, the empowerment of local communities and the resilience of ecosystems.

Central America is home to 8% of the world's biological biodiversity and is covered by 5.5 million hectares of secondary forest. More specifically, Costa Rica, which occupies 0.03% of the earth's surface, is a biodiversity hotspot, home to 5% of the world's biodiversity. The forestry sector contributes around 5.5% of gross domestic product.

While this sector is essential to achieving the objectives of the region's climate change mitigation and mitigation strategies, it remains economically unprofitable, due to unfair commercial competition from illegal timber, the heterogeneity of secondary forests, which makes their exploitation more costly and technically complex, the lack of knowledge about the uses and applications of many tree species and characteristics of secondary forests, as well as about sustainable silvicultural practices, and the limited capacity, knowledge and funding of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

THREE WAYS TO IMPROVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

The project supports and undertakes actions in three areas to achieve its objective of improving secondary forests in the region.

The first is to support investees of the Forestry and Climate Change Fund (FCCF) to increase the reach and profitability of the fund and investee operations. The FCCF is a Luxembourg-based impact fund that aims to demonstrate that the sustainable management of secondary and degraded forests in tropical regions generates economic, ecological and social value. It

invests in forestry activities of beneficiaries in the Mesoamerican region. The second axis intends to enable the development of timber and non-timber product value chains with a high economic, social and environmental impact, while the third seeks to improve and facilitate social inclusion and collaboration within timber and non-timber product value chains.

SET THE FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES

During the last quarter of 2023, initial contacts were made with key players in the forestry sector and with FCCF beneficiaries in an effort to gain a better understanding of the local context of the forestry and timber sector and to identify potential partners for the implementation of axes 2 and 3 of the project.

The FCCF currently has five investment beneficiaries: two in Costa Rica (*Woodpecker* and *Operaciones Forestales Sostenibles*), two in Guatemala (*Naj-Ché* and *Izabal*) and one in Mexico (*Ejido Conjunto Predial*). Working meetings with the FCCF and its beneficiaries in Costa Rica were organised to present the project and set the framework for jointly defining, structuring and prioritising the beneficiaries' technical assistance needs for 2024.

Bearing in mind that the regional office did not start operating in Costa Rica until September 2023, these initial stages of identification and exchange were essential to gain a better understanding of the needs and target the interventions to be carried out in this sector over the coming years.■

¹ The secondary forest, as opposed to the primary forest which is an intact ecosystem, has undergone major changes, most often caused by humans (destruction, exploitation). As a result, biodiversity has been severely affected.



DIGITALISATION AND ICT



DIGITISATION IN AFRICA: FACILITATING DIALOGUE

In recent years, Africa and Europe have committed to shaping a shared digital future. The Digital for Development African Union-European Union Hub (D4D Hub AU-EU) project is designed as a catalyst for this shared vision. The year 2023 saw the effective start of the activities supported by LuxDev.

The AU-EU D4D Hub project has become a dynamic facilitator of collaboration between European and African players, providing a gateway to technical expertise on people-centred digital transformation. The project aims to support an inclusive digital transformation on the African continent by providing technical assistance, sharing knowledge and facilitating partnerships in the digital sector. Co-funded by the European Union, the project is being implemented by AFD, Expertise France, Enabel, GIZ, the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and LuxDev, as part of a Team Europe approach.

In 2023, LuxDev was particularly involved in organising a seminar on technological innovation for climate action, in conjunction with the African Microfinance Week held in October 2023 in Lomé, Togo. Using a multi-stakeholder approach and bringing together experts and practitioners, the seminar produced pragmatic recommendations on the use of technological innovation to combat climate change in the context of inclusive finance.

Over 70 people took part in the seminar organised during African Microfinance Week.

In November 2023, the Agency also organised technical training in cybersecurity for public and private stakeholders in Cabo Verde, in partnership with the Cabo Verde Ministry of the Digital Economy and the Luxembourg House of Cybersecurity. Forty technicians, including eight women, took part. The training will be followed by a study visit focusing on cybersecurity management in Luxembourg. Similarly, the partnership with the *Délégation générale pour l'Entrepreneuriat des femmes et des jeunes* (General Delegation for Entrepreneurship of Women and Young People) has made it possible to launch an activity on agricultural digital entrepreneurship. ■



Watch the video summary of the seminar on technological innovation for climate action ▲

▼ Seminar on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDwUK71isHM>



BENIN - SUPPORTING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In 2023, LuxDev participated in the formulation of Benin's digital development programme. The goal is to strengthen the country's sustainable and inclusive digital transformation, within a secure cyberspace, by ensuring that services are accessible and adapted to as many people as possible and that the digital transformation converges with environmental requirements.

Driven by growing connectivity, Benin's digital economy is undergoing a significant transformation. Notable advances include the growth of mobile networks and the boom in mobile financial services, demonstrating a promising dynamic. The digitalisation of public services, the rise of digital literacy and the creation of digital educational institutions also underline the modernisation underway.

However, challenges remain, requiring significant investment in infrastructure, bridging the digital divide and building resilience to cyber threats. Despite progress, only 7.8% of the population have basic digital skills. The digital development programme targets these challenges by prioritising digital confidence, cybersecurity, digital financial services, professional training and the development of skills in this sector. The programme is also acting as a pilot to guide Luxembourg's intervention which is operating in this sector for the first time.

In collaboration with national implementing agencies, including the Information Systems and Digital Agency, the programme seeks to strengthen digital security, promote the adoption of ICTs, increase financial inclusion and improve the level of skills in the field, boosting employability and productivity. Emphasis will be placed on developing girls' cybersecurity skills, strengthening women's digital skills and promoting female entrepreneurship, enabling women's economic emancipation and greater diversity among digital players.

The programme is national in scope and will be deployed in Benin's 12 departments over a period of 3 years, starting in May 2024. It will also cover the digital needs of the other components of the Luxembourg Cooperation's intervention in Benin. ■

INTERVIEW



"WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE PROGRAMME WILL STIMULATE INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE JOBS"

Marc-André LOKO, Director General of the Agence des systèmes d'information et du numérique (ASIN), on the formulation of the digital development programme.

What is Benin's digital development strategy? What role does ASIN play in it? And how does the digital development programme fit in?

Benin's digital development strategy aims to modernise and boost the sector. Over the five-year period 2016-2021, the government has put in place a series of flagship projects, including the roll-out of broadband and ultra-broadband, the restructuring of the telecommunications sector and the launch of a national data centre. Particular attention was paid to the regulatory and legal aspects of digital technology. Benin drew up a Digital Code to govern electronic communications, cybersecurity and the protection of personal data, providing a solid legal framework for businesses and investors, while strengthening public confidence in digital services. The government's action programme for 2021-2026 intends to continue these projects, while focusing on the widespread adoption of digital services. The aim is to position Benin as a major player in the digital economy in West Africa.

ASIN is responsible for ensuring the operational implementation of projects and programmes within the framework of strategies for the development of secure information systems and services in Benin. Cooperation with Luxembourg is part of this dynamic, offering not only funding and investment opportunities, but also invaluable expertise. By working with Luxembourg, Benin can draw on its experience and resources to strengthen its digital capabilities, promote innovation and stimulate economic growth in this sector.

What were the key factors in the rapid formulation of the digital development programme?

Firstly, there has been a great deal of political will to develop digital security as an essential foundation for the digital economy, under the leadership of the Ministry for the Digital Economy and Digitalisation. This political impetus has been supported by a strong involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the national strategy, with, in particular, a structured support framework for the digitisation process offered by the ASIN. A number of measures were taken to ensure the success of the programme, including its alignment with the government's action programme.

What prospects do you see following the implementation of this programme?

The outlook includes consolidating achievements and good practice, as well as identifying areas for improvement and new challenges.

The programme will help to strengthen international partnerships and attract new investment. This could result in increased collaboration with other countries, institutions and private sector players, as well as the mobilisation of additional resources to support the country's digital development initiatives.

We are confident that the programme will stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship, while encouraging the emergence of new players and the creation of sustainable jobs. Of course, this will be done while ensuring continued ownership of the initiatives by local players and integrating the principles of sustainable development, so as to continue our march towards an inclusive digital economy. ■



ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES IN BURKINA FASO AND RWANDA

LuxDev has been working in the forestry sector in Burkina Faso for 20 years, with the aim of managing natural and forestry resources sustainably. In Rwanda, a project in the same field is currently being formulated.

Burkina Faso's economy is still heavily dependent on natural resources, whether for agriculture, livestock farming, timber exploitation or the expanding mining sector. The use of wood resources by households and the informal sector remains traditional, with firewood and charcoal the main fuels for 80% of the population.

The security crisis in the country is having a negative impact on the economy of the forestry sector. Insecurity has increased the value of timber, as many areas have become unusable and the volumes available have fallen considerably. At the same time, agricultural land clearing continues to grow, albeit at a slower rate because of the insecurity.

The challenge is therefore to act to reverse the trend in the degradation of the environment and natural resources, by promoting climate resilience and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

NEW PHASE OF THE PROGRAMME IN BURKINA FASO

Initially, the support to the sustainable management of the forest resources programme focused on activities aimed at the sustainable management and security of forest areas. While continuing these efforts, the 2023-2025 phase of the programme marks a shift towards private sector initiatives to boost the green economy and job creation.

With regard to the management of natural and forestry resources, a major programme to reclaim degraded land has been launched with the *Terre Verte* association and the Reach-Italia NGO, with the aim of recovering 4,560 hectares by 2025 and restoring their fertility. This activity will help to slow the spread of forest clearance for agricultural purposes and stabilise rural populations in their production areas.

In terms of support for climate governance at the relevant ministry, the programme has helped Burkina Faso to update its reports on the implementation of certain international conventions (Minamata and Stockholm), as well as its national reports on sustainable development and air quality. This activity strengthens the legal framework for action to combat climate change.

Finally, in the area of the green economy, discussions with 2iE, Burkina Faso's leading training and research institute, have led to the launch of an R&D support activity for private sector companies. Companies that are unable to invest in research to identify and implement technical solutions to problems affecting their business will be able to receive support. The main condition for 2iE's involvement with companies is that the technical solution should create jobs.

THREE PILLARS FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT IN RWANDA

In Rwanda too, the management of forest resources and access to sustainable energy are major challenges. To improve the economic and climatic resilience of farmers, it is essential to develop alternative sources of income, encourage sustainable forest management and preserve native biodiversity. The sustainable forestry and efficient renewable energy project aims to address these issues in three ways.

The first concerns the restoration and sustainable management of forests by encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices by small private operators. The objective is to restore 1,300 hectares of forest plots, preserve ecosystem services, increase carbon sequestration, protect soils and maintain biodiversity.

The second involves promoting clean, efficient cooking solutions to reduce demand for wood and coal in 14,000 urban and peri-urban households. Particular emphasis will be placed on the production and distribution of wood pellets made from logging residues. It should be noted that in this respect, a link has been established with the private sector partnership instruments project (see page 86), which aims to engage the private sector in development objectives, in particular by supporting players in the pellet value chain in Rwanda.

Lastly, the third priority aims to create economic opportunities for 4,000 rural households by generating alternative income (from non-timber forest products, beekeeping and agroforestry) in order to improve the economic resilience of communities and reduce dependence on timber harvesting. ■



WEST AFRICA - IMPROVED AGRO-PASTORAL SYSTEMS

The research and innovation project for productive, resilient and healthy agro-pastoral systems in West Africa (PRISMA) intends to contribute to an agro-ecological transformation adapted to climate change in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Limited access to pasture due to the expansion of crops and infrastructure, insecure land tenure and poor land governance, coupled with the challenges of climate change and insecurity in the Sahel, make it difficult for the agro-pastoral system to function properly in West Africa.

Implemented by LuxDev's office in Burkina Faso, alongside Enabel and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, PRISMA aims to improve the availability of and access to quality livestock feed and pastoral resources through sustainable management practices, and to limit the human health risks associated with the consumption of local milk through better control of zoonoses in the pastoral livestock sector.

In this context, LuxDev is more specifically involved in analysing compensation for ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration and mechanisms for issuing 'carbon credits' in agro-pastoral ecosystems.

SEVERAL ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT DESPITE THE SECURITY SITUATION

In view of the political and security situation in 2023, the project has been temporarily suspended by the European Union in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (the suspension was finally lifted in Burkina Faso and Mali,

but maintained in Niger). However, LuxDev was able to carry out several activities.

A study has been launched to draw up an inventory of existing "carbon credit" initiatives in agro-pastoral ecosystems in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, analyse the most significant ones and capitalise on them in order to draw lessons, formulate recommendations or identify issues that merit further specific study. The objective of such capitalisation is to produce a methodological guide to implementing carbon offset projects in Sahelian agro-pastoral ecosystems.

An implementation agreement has also been signed with the *Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique* (Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research) concerning applied research into carbon sequestration in pastoral environments. Research activities have been launched and will continue until 2025. An implementation agreement with the University of Luxembourg, on the formulation of artificial intelligence tools to estimate the evolution of biomass and the quantity of sequestered carbon, has also been prepared for 2023 and is in the process of being signed. ■

CABO VERDE RAISES AWARENESS OF CLIMATE ACTION

Cabo Verde has adopted a comprehensive climate policy with the support of the Luxembourg Cooperation. Through the climate action programme, it has undertaken to support the implementation of this policy and to strengthen the country's climate governance, a sine qua non for more effective and efficient climate action.

Cabo Verde is a small island state that is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Due to extreme events such as prolonged droughts and torrential rains, climate change, combined with informal urbanisation and over-exploitation of natural resources, constitutes a real risk. The climate action programme is part of this context.

In 2023, the programme focused on working with its main counterpart, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, to finalise the proposal for a climate governance framework. This clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the various players in this vast cross-sectoral field. The framework also promotes effective and efficient coordination and implementation of measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Through a climate communication plan, the programme has also helped to raise awareness of climate change, its causes, consequences and solutions. The plan

aims to raise awareness and mobilise civil society through instruments that accelerate behavioural change, innovative and inclusive forms of civil society participation, and simple, effective and credible means of communication. Of the 10 initiatives planned up to December 2025, three took place in 2023: the week dedicated to climate action, the children's and teenagers' parliament, and the launch of the national climate portal.

A WEEK DEDICATED TO CLIMATE ACTION

The first week of each academic year is dedicated to a civic topic. In 2023, this was climate action. More than 25% of the country's population took part. Around 8,000 teaching staff were made aware of the issue and encouraged to organise other climate-related activities during the school year. More than 2,000 students were directly involved in the production of videos or other activities on the subject.

A DEDICATED YOUTH PARLIAMENT

By offering them a space to express their concerns and learn about the democratic process, the Youth Parliament is a platform that encourages children and teenagers from all the islands of Cabo Verde to become young MPs and interact directly with the public authorities. The theme of this year's Youth Parliament was climate action. The four days of workshops and presentations led to the drafting of the manifesto "Children and teenagers of Cabo Verde for our planet". *"We came here and wrote a manifesto, explains Miccole MIRANDA, a young boy from the island of Fogo. Our ideas were incredible, mixing the world of teenagers with that of adults. We approached everything in a creative way, and I think we succeeded in representing Cabo Verde very well". "I have to say that the manifesto was written spectacularly, covering every detail. From Santo Antão to Brava, no part has been left out. The manifesto expresses all our opinions and gives priority to children's rights, continues Naima GOMEZ, a young girl from the island of São Vicente. I am very happy to have taken part in this event".* At the end of the parliamentary session, the young MPs presented the manifesto in person to the members of the government. It is now up to them to demonstrate their commitment to young people and to protecting their rights in the face of the risks posed by climate change.

A NATIONAL CLIMATE PORTAL

Finally, the programme financed and provided technical assistance for the development of the national climate portal (<https://portaldoclima.gov.cv/>), a genuine space for communicating and sharing what Cabo Verde is

CABO VERDE AT COP28

At COP28, held from 30 November to 12 December 2023, Cabo Verde organised an event on the importance of strengthening civil society in order to have a strong climate governance system. The Climate Action Programme supported the development of the National Climate Diplomacy Strategies 2022 and 2023 for use at the COP. The 2023 strategy informed participation at COP28, producing not only key negotiating guidelines in advance, but also daily and weekly briefings for delegates.■

doing to face and respond to the challenges posed by climate change. The portal offers a wide variety of content produced by members of the scientific community, both for experts and for the general public. It includes inspiring videos, enlightening podcasts, legal documentation, relevant data and scientific articles.

All these activities have helped to improve society's climate culture. The term "climate action" is now widely used in public and political discourse: a major achievement given that until recently, the vocabulary relating to climate change was mainly used and confused with that of pollution.■

Youth Parliament dedicated to climate action ▼



THE ENERGY TRANSITION INITIATED IN CABO VERDE AND KOSOVO

In Cabo Verde, the country's energy transition is underway, with support from a Luxembourg Cooperation programme. At the same time, a new energy transition and climate mitigation project began in Kosovo in November 2023.

Despite significant progress in achieving its energy access targets, Cabo Verde still faces major challenges, not least because of its insularity. Dependent on fossil fuel derivatives, the country faces volatile international prices and high import costs. In addition, the infrastructure of the electricity network and the organisation of the public institutions responsible for governance of the energy sector need to be adapted to the country's ambitions in this area. Although the challenge of energy transition is a crucial priority for the government, it still influences the perceived risk when assessing issues relating to the "bankability" of renewable energy projects implemented in the current market.

With the purpose of helping the government solve the problems facing the energy sector in 2023, the energy transition support programme provided support to its main counterpart, the National Directorate for Industry, Commerce and Energy (DNICE), in a number of areas. Technical assistance was launched to modernise the network infrastructure and adapt it to the needs of the energy transition. Technical assistance was also mobilised to carry out additional detailed studies for the Santiago pumped storage station project and the granting of subsidies for its future operating concession. In addition, the programme supported negotiations with the private sector, leading to the launch of international invitations to tender for independent power producers and battery energy storage systems. The programme also evaluated registration data in order to identify potential new beneficiaries of the social tariff.

This technical assistance provided by the programme to DNICE contributes to a better understanding of the challenges, needs, critical solutions and achievements of the sector. It enables DNICE to take strategic and institutional decisions, based on structuring documents and technical expertise. Finally, the main activities implemented in 2023 are aimed at achieving significant changes linked to increased investment in centralised production from renewable energy sources, as well as the efficiency of the energy distribution system.

TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGY

Aligned with the first pillar - which focuses on sustainable economic development - of the national development plan recently adopted by the Kosovan government, as well as with the 2020 Sofia Declaration, the objective of the energy transition and climate mitigation project is to contribute to sustainable economic growth, by supporting innovation, inclusion and social development in a greener Kosovo.

By supporting clean energy efforts in the country, the project aims to strengthen the environmental sustainability of the energy sector, while stimulating economic growth and social progress. In addition to helping Kosovo meet its energy needs in a sustainable manner, this shift to clean energy offers the opportunity to stimulate job creation, not only directly within the renewable energy industry, but also indirectly through the associated supply chains and services, thus contributing to the overall improvement of the country's well-being. ■

VIETNAM - ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE CONTINUES

In 2023, a new Green Climate Fund project - to which the Agency is accredited - was being formulated in Vietnam. It focuses on the implementation of climate change adaptation activities in the province of Thua Thien Hué, building on the experiences of LuxDev's past interventions in the country (mainly the local development and climate change adaptation project and the climate adaptation and resilience project, both in the closing phase).

The project is designed to put in place the systems needed to generalise best practice in climate information and early warning systems, and to integrate climate adaptation into the planning and monitoring of socio-economic development. It will also seek to catalyse financing for climate-resilient agriculture, through collaboration with producers and local financial institutions. ■

NICARAGUA - DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Nicaragua is highly sensitive to climate variability and extreme weather events, ranking sixth in the global index of long-term climate risks. This exposure to the risks associated with climate change is even greater for the populations living in the 23 territories on the Caribbean coast, who are already the most affected by poverty. Since 2007, the indigenous and Afro-descendant territories of the Caribbean coast have been hit by 10 tropical cyclones. All these factors underline the importance of strengthening the resilience of these communities, and of women in particular, who face numerous obstacles in exercising their rights, by preventing new risks and reducing the root causes of vulnerability.

The European Union's delegated cooperation project, entitled risk prevention and management, is part of this effort. It intends to help reduce the risk of disasters and impacts associated with climate change and other natural hazards in Nicaragua. Women, indigenous peoples and people of African descent are the target groups of this intervention, which focuses on 20 communities in the southern and northern autonomous regions of Nicaragua's Caribbean coast.

Starting in September 2023, the project was presented to the municipalities and territorial governments of the two regions concerned.

Ten workshops were organised, attended by 203 people.

Working sessions were then coordinated with the regional authorities in view of scheduling, in situ, the activities planned for the first year of implementation of the project and to be able to adapt them to the development plans of the regions and municipalities. At the same time, LuxDev signed an implementation agreement with the Italian NGO WeWorld to carry out activities aimed at preventing gender-based violence and increasing the knowledge of young people and women about adapting to and mitigating climate change.

In early December 2023, however, the Nicaraguan government informed LuxDev that it was unable to continue with the project for reasons of national sovereignty. ■



ALLEVIATING THE FOOD CRISIS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

As in 2022, the year 2023 was marked by a major food crisis in the countries covered by Luxembourg's cooperation programme, in some cases exacerbated by a deteriorating security situation and the effects of climate change. Through emergency aid actions in particular, LuxDev has helped to strengthen food security in the countries where it operates.

FOOD AID AND RESILIENCE TO SHOCKS

The two-year global response/food crisis project aims to provide emergency assistance to vulnerable populations and increase their resilience to multiple crises by strengthening their livelihoods. Rapid actions focusing on both food assistance and resilience to shocks are being implemented through trusted partners including UN agencies, international NGOs and local authorities.

In Mali, the security crisis and the consequences of climate change (floods followed by waves of drought, advancing desert, locust invasions) are leading to population displacements and episodes of famine. An action carried out in Bandiagara in collaboration with Caritas Luxembourg and Caritas Switzerland gave 11,583 people in 56 villages access to 626 tonnes of millet. This aid helped them to get through the agro-pastoral lean period, when food reserves are generally exhausted and future harvests have not yet borne fruit. Similar schemes have been set up in Kita and Yanfolila.

In Laos, the food security and livelihoods project has begun in 21 villages in the north of the country, in collaboration with the World Food Programme. Malnutrition rates are particularly high in this region, with over 40% of children under the age of five suffering from stunted growth. The aim is to improve the resilience of communities through climate-smart agriculture, for example by using water harvesting techniques, planting fodder crops, developing grain reserves or reforestation with trees that produce nutritious fruit or leaves.

In Senegal, access to finance for businesses involved in agricultural value chains has been improved in collaboration with the *Délégation à l'entrepreneuriat rapide des femmes et des jeunes*. As a result, 137 projects were validated in the agri-livestock sector. 42% of the businesses concerned are run by women, representing 32% of the volume of funding. It should also be noted that 15% of the funding granted relates to subsidies for green energy and environmentally-friendly technologies.

MORE THAN 20,000 PEOPLE SUPPORTED IN NIGER

The support for the Common Donor Fund for the national food crisis prevention and management mechanism is a continuation of the global response/food crisis project, which was implemented in Niger in 2022 and 2023. It aims to support access to basic social services for vulnerable populations, in particular access to food and nutritional security for young people and women affected by shocks.

Food and nutritional security has gradually become a major concern since the major droughts of the 1970s and 1980s. Demographic growth, the effects of climate change and the inadequate coverage of basic social services mean that every year, on average, between 1.5 and 3.5 million people (i.e. 10-15% of the population of Niger) are food and nutritionally insecure. In recent years, this structural situation has been compounded by aggravating factors such as the effects of insecurity, which are causing population movements in already fragile areas. More recently still, the consequences of the political situation, with the suspension of development aid programmes and economic and financial sanctions, have made food security even more precarious.

To meet these challenges, the Niger authorities have set up the DNP-GCA. Each year, it analyses vulnerability to food and nutritional insecurity (particularly during the lean season), draws up and implements annual response plans, and mobilises and coordinates financial and operational contributions to the sector. The objective of the programme is to support this mechanism in two ways: by contributing to the Common Donor Fund to support the implementation of support plans for vulnerable populations, and by strengthening the financial, accounting and administrative management capacities of the DNP-GCA's management bodies.

In 2023, an initial contribution of EUR 500,000 was made to the Common Donor Fund to implement the national response plan for food and nutritional insecurity. Despite the coup d'état on 26 July 2023, this contribution has already made it possible to provide food assistance to 20,150 households affected by flooding and to carry out a vulnerability analysis survey at the end of the agro-pastoral campaign in order to assess assistance needs for 2024. ■



FOOD SECURITY

TESTIMONIAL

A BENEFICIARY OF EMERGENCY FOOD AID SPEAKS OUT

“My name is Diougo KASSOGUÉ, I’m 50 years old and I come from the village of Bargomo, in the rural commune of Dourou in the Bandiagara cercle, in Mali. My household consists of nine people, five women and four men. The harvest I obtained in 2023 barely enabled me to meet my family’s food needs for four months.

The distribution of millet by the project in October 2023 has had a significant impact on our household, providing food security for three months. The quantity received is equivalent to almost 500 kg of millet, bringing joy to all the members of my family and helping to forget this year’s poor harvest due to the lack of rain. This provision has contributed to the stability of our household, dissuading some members from leaving in search of food.

At present, thanks to my own production and the quantity of millet provided by the project, my household can afford to eat three meals a day in quantity and quality.”■



GREATER FOOD SECURITY FOR RURAL HOUSEHOLDS IN MALI

In Mali, LuxDev is implementing a project and a programme that are helping to strengthen the food security of rural households, enabling young people to benefit from greater economic opportunities in agricultural sectors and improving their resilience in the face of climate change and structural deficits.

Agriculture is at the heart of Mali’s socio-economic structure: 30% of gross domestic product is generated by the agricultural sector, and 60% of the population derives its main income from this sector. Paradoxically, the vast majority of food-insecure households live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

These populations face inadequate access to inputs, equipment, infrastructure and services to produce and market their products. Lack of information on technological innovations and market supply and demand, as well as low levels of organisation and literacy, make it difficult for small-scale producers to access the market system. Furthermore, the employment prospects of young people in rural areas are limited, not least because of the generally low level of education and the weakness of the economic fabric. Despite its enormous potential, traditional agriculture is perceived as a devaluing activity practised by default or avoided thanks to the exodus to urban areas.

In addition to these challenges, Mali faces a worrying security situation, which has left 700,000 people acutely food insecure and 2.8 million people under pressure in 2023. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 1.3 million people will be acutely food insecure in 2024.

MAKING AGRICULTURAL SECTORS MORE ATTRACTIVE

The rural development and food security programme, implemented by LuxDev since 2016, aims to ensure that sources of agricultural income and the food security of rural households are diversified and strengthened in the long term. This objective is being pursued in particular by enabling young people in the Ségou and Sikasso regions to benefit from more economic opportunities in occupations linked to agricultural sectors.

To enable family farms to develop employment opportunities tailored to the aspirations of young people, a local support and advice system, consisting of 71 technical agents, has been set up and piloted by the *Association des organisations professionnelles paysannes*.

To promote the economic integration of young people, the programme is also supporting the 14 service centres run by the national NGO *AMASSA Afrique Verte* in the Ségou and Sikasso regions. The capacities of the staff responsible for youth work are being strengthened to facilitate their guidance and support. Skills assessments were carried out for 1,648 young people. Of these, 1,115 were helped to draw up their business plans. It should be noted that an advisory system is now also operational in the district of Bamako. The capacity of the staff in charge of running these centres has also been strengthened.

In addition, to help market garden producers organise themselves better, the *Union nationale des centres de gestion rurale*, a partner in the programme, has set up seven local unions of market gardeners and a regional federation of market gardeners. A total of 7,982 family farms and 66 agricultural businesses are registered with these unions in the Sikasso region, providing them with a single point of contact capable of meeting the challenges of promoting the market garden sector.

At the same time, the Ministry of Agriculture has adopted the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion approach, an approach that achieves “market-oriented agriculture” and moves from “produce and sell” to “produce to sell”.

28,193

young people on the 3,921 family farms monitored have access to economic opportunities in agricultural sectors.

SUCCESS STORY



MAHAMOUDOU COULIBALY, YOUNG AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER WITH INSPIRING SUCCESS

Thanks to support from the rural development and food security programme, Mahamoudou COULIBALY, a 28-year-old farmer, says he has transformed his farm.

He was supported by the *Association des organisations professionnelles paysannes*, which provided him with specialist advice on opportunities in the various sectors, support in drawing up and monitoring his farm business plan, and entrepreneurial coaching. These actions have enabled him to diversify his crops with sesame and fonio. He has also explored new horizons, expanding his business into cattle fattening.

At the same time, he benefited from support in preparing his production project application, submitted for funding by the Ségou regional council, and from easier access to markets. These combined efforts have led to a significant improvement in his crop yields, increased his income and revitalised more than 50 hectares of land on the family farm to which he belongs.

“The advice I received from the *Association des organisations professionnelles paysannes* revolutionised my business. My sesame harvests have jumped from 0.8 tonnes/hectare to 1.2 tonnes/hectare. I now have a clear vision of my agricultural future and my farm is managed in an optimised way”, he explains enthusiastically.

This story makes Mahamoudou COULIBALY a model of modern, sustainable agricultural entrepreneurship for young people, proving that innovation and adaptation are essential to success in the agricultural sector. His journey contributes to the strategic vision of the Ségou Regional Council, which aims to transform the region into an economic hub by 2030. Lastly, this development highlights the positive impact of personalised guidance and tailored support in getting young people into farming, so they can play a crucial role in the region’s economic and social development. ■



Mahamoudou COULIBALY's cattle ▲



Demonstration session on the manufacture of liquid fertiliser in Mali ▲

The programme supported the Ministry by building the capacity of 71 agricultural advisers in the Bani area, as well as 151 members of farmers’ organisations.

RURAL COMMUNITIES HELPED TO ADAPT

The resilience of rural communities in Kita - phase III project, implemented with Caritas, aims to contribute to food security in communities in the Kita Circle.

In 2023, in view of improving access to equipment, four threshing machines were given to three unions and one cooperative. One operator per union/cooperative received training in the use and minor maintenance of these machines.

To consolidate the infrastructure, effective irrigation systems for market garden crops have been created, through the construction of boreholes and the development of market garden areas in the six villages concerned (Bankoni, Balambougou, Faraba 2, Karo, Koléna and Tofassadaga). Market gardening began at the end of July. Short-cycle rainfed crops (vegetables, maize and groundnuts) and nurseries were then planted. The winter season ended with revenues of over one million CFA francs, most of which came from groundnuts, followed by watermelons and cucumbers.

A visit to the processing centre of the GIE NIETAA DEMESO economic interest group in Bougouni - which aims to develop economic activities in the circle of Kadiolo - enabled members of the processing cooperatives benefiting from the project to familiarise themselves with the processing equipment available at the centre, to strengthen their ability to improve the quality of their products and to practise directly with their counterparts.

Thanks to the project’s activities, the vulnerable households targeted by the project are able to adapt their food production systems to local agro-ecological conditions and the effects of climate change. As a result, 59.17% of vulnerable households (out of 40% targeted) have diversified agricultural crops and 1,407 people (out of 540 targeted) have been trained in sustainable agricultural and natural resource management practices adapted to climate variability and change. ■

RWANDA - TOWARDS PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

In Rwanda, Luxembourg Cooperation is contributing to the project "Transformation towards sustainable food systems - Kwihaza", also funded by the European Union and implemented by Enabel (LuxDev is part of the monitoring and steering committee). Although the Luxembourg contribution was paid in 2022, the project actually started in 2023.

This project is in line with the Rwandan government's strategy of promoting the development of the agricultural and livestock sectors, which are faced with low yields, inefficiencies and shortcomings that do not adequately meet demand. The objective is to reduce the nutritional deficit affecting a significant proportion of the population and to improve the balance of trade in agricultural products in a country where agriculture and livestock farming predominate.

The Kwihaza project specifically targets the horticulture, aquaculture and fish farming sectors, which offer opportunities to promote productive, resilient and environmentally-friendly agriculture, but which face major challenges, particularly in terms of financing. In horticulture, a lack of organisation and technical deficiencies are leading to major post-harvest losses. The fish farming industry, while having potential

for expansion, remains limited to a small number of commercial enterprises operating in certain areas of the main lakes, and to opportunistic and unproductive exploitation of the many existing ponds. The organisation of the players, but also and above all the cost and availability of fish feed, represent major challenges, similar to other livestock sectors.

Following the launch of the project, rapid diagnoses of the value chains were carried out in collaboration with key partners in the sector. These diagnostics, which serve as a basis for the project, will be supplemented by in-depth analyses in 2024, to provide targeted support and a detailed understanding of the value chains. Implementation agreements have also been drawn up with government institutions and other partners, specifying their role in achieving the project's objectives: supporting industry players, mobilising the financial sector to provide favourable financing conditions, developing and applying quality standards and promoting the industries. Finally, the capacity of technical and vocational training institutions to offer appropriate training in aquaculture and horticulture was assessed, with a view to aligning provision with the specific needs of the target industries. ■



GOVERNANCE

LAOS - CONTINUING TO STRENGTHEN THE RULE OF LAW

Following on from its predecessor, which ended at the end of 2022, the programme to strengthen the rule of law, access to justice and good governance has, since its launch in early 2023, demonstrated its commitment to consolidating Laos’ legal foundations and paving the way for a fairer and more just society.

The last five years have seen a significant improvement in Laos’ legislative framework, with the adoption or revision of key laws. However, the judicial system still faces various challenges (lack of capacity, limited access to legal advice, the need for stricter control by government institutions, etc.). In addition, legal education and research still need to be strengthened so that graduates have the necessary qualifications and policy-making can be based on evidence-based analysis.

The multidimensional approach of the rule of law, access to justice and good governance programme addresses the main challenges of the rule of law, access to justice and good governance sub-sectors, with a focus on higher legal education. By stimulating research and fostering informed dialogue, the programme also supports the groundwork for effective reforms to create a more stable legal environment and more ethical and responsive governance.

TRAINING THE LAWYERS OF TOMORROW

The Ministry of Education and Sports has recognised the importance of training future legal professionals with critical thinking skills and an awareness of the principles of good governance. In collaboration with the National University of Laos, the programme therefore supported the annual research conference of the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Recognising the impact of access to information on legal education and bridging the digital divide, the programme has extended Internet connectivity to the Faculty’s campus and dormitories. This improved infrastructure enables students and professors to access legal resources online and fosters a culture of research and knowledge sharing.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL

At the same time, the programme works with the Ministry of Justice to support the dissemination and application of the law. The legal aid offices established at provincial and district level play a crucial role in ensuring equal access to justice for all. By supporting the training of office staff and the Lao Women’s Union in 32 legal aid offices across the country, the programme is helping the Ministry of Justice to equip the offices with basic infrastructure and their staff with the essential skills and knowledge to effectively represent marginalised communities.

PREPARING FOR FUTURE REFORMS

The programme’s support for the Ministry of Justice’s annual conference also demonstrates its commitment to collaborative action. This meeting, which brought together legal professionals, political decision-makers and development partners, initiated a consensus on legal reforms and good governance practices.

By investing in future legal professionals, strengthening legal aid providers and encouraging reform efforts, the programme is contributing to a better future for justice in Laos. ■

BETTER MANAGEMENT OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Also in Laos, the programme to strengthen the effectiveness of official development assistance management, which has been running since 2019, has helped the Ministry of Planning and Investment to improve the effective management and coordination of Official Development Assistance (ODA) at national and provincial levels.

In particular, the programme has supported the Ministry in improving the legal framework, developing key legislation, regulations and guidelines in this area. Over the years, an action plan has been developed and implemented to mobilise ODA, ensuring that resources are channelled to priority areas. The programme has also supported the creation of a clear diagram describing the management and use of funds for ODA projects,

promoting the transparency and efficient allocation of resources. ODA reporting guidelines have been established to improve data flow and analysis. By 2023, provinces and line ministries had reported 88% of ODA. Finally, the programme has contributed to the capacity development of staff in the Ministry’s International Cooperation Department - which plays a crucial role in working with development partners to ensure the harmonised, efficient and transparent use of funds - and in the six International Cooperation sections based in the provinces. As a result, 76% of the officials involved improved their knowledge of effective ODA project management and regulations thanks to the workshops organised by the programme. ■



BURKINA FASO - SIMPLIFIED ACCESS TO THE LAND REGISTER

Improving land governance is at the heart of development issues in Burkina Faso. The project to support the cadastre in the municipalities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso is contributing to this approach by supporting the introduction of a modern, multi-purpose land register.

In recent years, the government has undertaken to review and revise land laws and policies with a view to ensuring greater equity in access to land, a fundamental resource for the population. Part of fulfilling this commitment involves digitising the land register. The land register makes it possible to strengthen the legal security of landowners and potential buyers, reduce the number of land-related disputes, improve the business climate and increase the State's tax revenues. The issues of modernising the land register, digitally safeguarding existing data and preserving archived documents are therefore of particular interest. The project to support the tax register in the municipalities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso is part of this effort.

In 2023, the project focused on digitising, indexing and archiving all the technical demarcation files in the archives of the Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso municipalities, as well as indexing the related demarcation registers.

The land titles of the estate and land registration offices in certain districts have also been digitised and indexed. Archives have been sorted, transferred and stored in more appropriate locations, ensuring better access and preservation. Finally, an electronic document management application has been developed. It will be deployed and put into operation at two pilot sites, making it possible to dematerialise the process of obtaining simple demarcations and land titles.

Through these activities, the project has helped to improve the system for producing, storing and disseminating cadastral data. Previously, cadastral information was incomplete and dispersed among several administrative entities, making it difficult, if not impossible, to consult. This situation was not conducive to security of tenure for landowners, leading to numerous land disputes. Today, end users benefit from simplified, modernised, faster, cheaper and high-quality cadastral services. ■

86,131

technical demarcation files have been digitised, indexed and archived.

54,296

lines of boundary registers have been indexed.

13,293

land titles have been digitised.

NIGER - IMPROVING PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT

Until the coup d'état of 26 July 2023, Luxembourg Cooperation's programme supported the government of Niger in improving its public finance management system.

The support for public financial management has helped the Ministry of Finance move towards an efficient and transparent system, by contributing to the development of budgetary tools for the planning, budgeting and monitoring-evaluation chain that comply with West African Economic and Monetary Union standards, as well as capacity development for all those involved in the public spending chain in the ministries and local authorities.

Despite the coup d'état that led to the suspension of bilateral cooperation between Luxembourg and Niger, a number of activities were carried out. A change-oriented approach was introduced for all of the programme's stakeholders with the purpose of improving their performance and bringing about the hoped-for changes in public finance management (deconcentration of authorisation, modernisation of the State, transfer of resources to local authorities, etc.).

In addition, more than 400 people from the Ministry of Finance, sectoral ministries (Ministry of Water and Sanitation, Ministry of National Education) and local authorities have benefited from training and coaching sessions to prepare budgetary and public procurement documents.

Finally, budget programming and execution tools were developed to operationalise the transfer of powers and financial resources to local and regional authorities. Even if this transfer could not be effective due to the political context, these tools made it possible to move from a "budget of means" approach, with little concern for the results to be achieved, to a "programme budget" approach, more efficient in the execution of public expenditure. ■





HEALTH

IMPROVING HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN LAOS

In 2023, LuxDev continued to implement activities in the health sector in Laos through the health and nutrition programme, which began in January. It follows on from the health sector support programme - phase II, which was completed in December.

In Laos, the health and nutrition sector faces persistent challenges despite some progress. While life expectancy has improved, the country still faces high rates of preventable mortality among infants, children under five and mothers. Progress in nutritional indicators at village level remains slow, influenced both by challenges in the health system and by the general economic situation. The complexity of these problems, compounded by limited infrastructure and the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, underlines the importance of cooperation programmes in the field of health in Laos.

BETTER PLANNING FOR HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Over the past eight years, the Joint Participatory Mechanism framework has been deployed to provide a stable and dynamic platform for more effective allocation of resources, including contributions from Luxembourg and the Lao Ministry of Health. Operational in the provinces of Bolikhamxay, Khammouane and Vientiane, this framework provides an organisational and financial structure for targeted planning in reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health, as well as nutrition.

To overcome the challenge of limited resource allocation at the provincial level, the health and nutrition programme has effectively implemented the 2023 funding cycle of the Joint Participatory Mechanism. This cycle includes budget planning, timely implementation of activities and comprehensive reporting.

TRAINING HEALTHCARE STAFF

To address the shortage of healthcare staff and professional skills, particularly in rural areas, the programme invests in specialist training for doctors, nurses and midwives. The provincial staff development plan, drawn up with the help of the Ministry of Health, serves as a reference for allocating and assigning newly recruited and trained staff.

During the first year of the project, 91 health professionals were trained. Investment in training programmes should provide a more qualified health workforce and help to remedy the shortage in rural areas. The provincial staff development plan should contribute to equitable access to health services in all provinces.

DIGITISING MEDICAL RECORDS

Finally, the programme is supporting the Ministry of Health in introducing electronic medical records in Bolikhamxay province. They make it easier to collect and analyse data and make informed decisions, and address the challenge of the lack of data for monitoring and improvement.

By 2023, 75% of hospital staff in Bolikhamxay province will have been trained in the use of electronic medical records for patient registration and data analysis. ■



TESTIMONIALS

STUDY GRANTS TO BOOST THE SKILLS OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Dr OUANE, Ms WAITHONG and Ms PAVINA are health professionals from Bolikhamxay Provincial Hospital. Thanks to a scholarship offered by the health programme, they have been able to pursue advanced training, thereby improving services in the province.

Dr OUANE

Originally from Paksan, the capital of Borikhamxay province, Dr OUANE has dreamed of becoming a doctor ever since he was a child. He obtained his medical degree from the University of Health Sciences in Vientiane and then developed a passion for surgery. A scholarship provided by the programme enabled him to specialise in general and abdominal surgery. Dr OUANE is now the only surgeon in Bolikhamxay with the necessary skills to operate on urological conditions such as kidney stones, biliary tract disorders and urethral strictures. He teaches other surgeons in order to improve healthcare in the province. In the future, he hopes to introduce laparoscopic procedures within the hospital, a minimally invasive technique that allows patients to recover more quickly and reduces the risk of infection.

Mrs WAITHONG

Originally from Xieng Khouang province, Mrs WAITHONG, a 38-year-old nurse, has been working at Bolikhamxay provincial hospital since 2011. In 2023, a scholarship enabled her to specialise in ophthalmology. *"During my training, I learnt how to diagnose cataracts and glaucoma. In the absence of a doctor, I can see patients suffering from these diseases. I can also take part in many ophthalmological operations,"* she explains. *Sometimes, patients say to me 'thank you for giving me new eyes', which makes me incredibly proud."* Ms WAITHONG aspires to train staff in outlying hospitals to make eye care more accessible to those who cannot travel to the provincial hospital. The programme has also provided instruments for the ophthalmology operating theatre.

Dr OUANE ▶

Mrs PAVINA

Mrs PAVINA, a 28-year-old midwife, is an example of rapid career progression. After graduating as a midwife, her potential was recognised, enabling her to obtain a scholarship to continue her master's studies at Khon Khaen University in Thailand. Although the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to return to Laos and complete her studies online, the courses enabled her to acquire valuable skills in evidence-based practice and critical thinking. Ms Pavina finds immense satisfaction in working in the maternal and child health service, where she cares for both mothers and newborns. As a senior midwife, she also shares her knowledge and skills. *"I regularly give courses to groups of midwives from district hospitals, and I often travel to different provinces to run workshops on antenatal care,"* she explains. Ms PAVINA's ambition is to broaden her scope and educate a wider public. Her dedication to continuing education and her enthusiasm for her profession have enabled her to secure a new position with a multilateral agency, where she can use her knowledge to strengthen the national health system, particularly for mothers and newborn babies. ■



HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION STRENGTHENED IN SENEGAL

In Senegal, LuxDev has been implementing projects and programmes in the health sector for 25 years. The current programme focuses on developing emergency services, improving health insurance and combating certain non-communicable diseases, while supporting sector governance. The programme currently being formulated, which is due to start in 2024, will be a continuation of the current programme and will place greater emphasis on mother and child health.

In September 2013, the State of Senegal launched the universal health coverage programme, which "is based on the vision of a Senegal where all individuals, all households and all communities benefit from universal access to quality promotional, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services without any form of exclusion". Although the rate of coverage of health risks has risen from 46% in 2014 to 53.20% in 2022, financial access to healthcare remains a major challenge and therefore requires a major effort to professionalise and expand mutual health organisations.

In addition, the life expectancy of Senegalese citizens continues to be affected by high maternal and neonatal mortality rates, a rapid increase in non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and female cancers, as well as conditions and timeframes for dealing with emergencies that still need to be improved.

The conditions necessary for the success of the changes required to achieve the results targeted by the Senegalese government include human resources adapted to needs, as well as adequate infrastructure and equipment.

EMERGENCIES, NON-TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES AND HEALTH COVER

The health and social protection programme, implemented by LuxDev since 2018, intervenes to strengthen the supply of services at the level of health districts, hospitals and emergency services, but also health insurance and other social protection measures.

In 2023, the programme continued to strengthen the capacity of emergency patient care services through the acquisition and provision of state-of-the-art equipment and staff training. These activities have made it possible to improve the quantity and quality of emergency care. In particular, intensive care units have been opened in Matam, Ourosogui and Ndioum hospitals. An emergency department was built and equipped at the Guinguineo district health centre. Emergency obstetric care operating theatres were reopened in the Ranerou and Dahra centres,

and the first caesarean sections were performed. In addition, the training capacity of the simulation-based emergency care centre - which was opened in 2021 as part of the national emergency medical service (SAMU) in Dakar, with the support of the Luxembourg Cooperation through the health and social protection programme - was extended thanks to the acquisition of a large number of high-fidelity mannequins and the creation of a dedicated management team.

Management of non-communicable diseases, which is steadily increasing in the country, has been improved thanks to ongoing training for staff at hypertension and diabetes centres, screening sessions for cervical and breast cancer, and the development of a research protocol on non-communicable diseases. The latter has enabled the STEPS survey to be launched nationally. Its aim is to obtain basic data on the established risk factors that determine the burden of non-communicable diseases.

In terms of social protection, three departmental mutual health insurance schemes (Saint-Louis, Dagana and Podor) have been set up and professionalised through the deployment of management teams and tools, as well as capacity development activities. In addition, the signing of a partnership agreement between the Foundiougne departmental health insurance unit and the national SAMU has made it possible to include pre-hospital emergency care in the range of services offered to mutualists.

CONTINUE IN THE SAME VEIN

Support for the Senegalese health sector will continue under the ICP V signed between Luxembourg and Senegal. As the health and social protection programme comes to an end in June 2024, a new programme with the same name was formulated for 2023. It aims to improve the state of health and well-being of the population, with a focus on mother and child, emergency management and the fight against the most prevalent non-communicable diseases. Primary healthcare is designed to ensure that people receive comprehensive, high-quality care as close as possible to their daily environment.

The first focus of the programme will therefore be maternal and neonatal health. Senegal still has a high maternal mortality rate, with 236 deaths per 100,000 live births. This section will focus on emergency obstetric and neonatal care, particularly in health posts and centres in the Saint-Louis, Matam, Louga and Kolda regions. The aim is not only to build the capacity of health district-level services to enable them to provide adequate care for deliveries with and without complications, but also to work on the demand for care, in particular to reduce late recourse to care. In addition to on-site services, outreach services, coupled with a community programme, will be developed in the two most remote regions.

The second part of the programme will continue to support the emergency system throughout the chain. In the pre-hospital sector, support will continue to be provided for the regulation of emergencies via the toll-free number 15 15 and for medical transport. Next, emergency services in hospitals and health centres, as well as operating theatres and anaesthesia-intensive care departments, will be consolidated.

The third theme will be the most common non-communicable diseases, with a focus on women. Some of these diseases have similar risk factors, most of which can be prevented. Strategies for promotion and prevention through behaviour change communication will be developed. The aim will also be to strengthen the capacity of curative services for early detection and clinical management.

Finally, the drive towards universal health cover will continue, with support for the professionalisation of departmental mutual insurance companies, as part of a local reinforcement approach focused on the Saint-Louis region, an action that will be delegated to Enabel.

All of the planned areas are aligned with Senegal's national health sector strategies. To achieve results, the actions will combine investment, institutional and organisational capacity development and improving the skills of human resources. ■

202

people were trained at the emergency care teaching centre in 2023 (for a total of 926 since it opened in 2021).



Dr Babacar NDIAYE ▶

INTERVIEW



Mr SARR



Dr NDIAYE

"WE CAN NOW TREAT MANY MORE PATIENTS ON THE ISLAND"

Mr SARR is Mayor of Dionewar and Dr NDIAYE is Chief Medical Officer at the Niodor health centre in Senegal. They talk to us about the health challenges facing island regions and how the health and social protection programme is helping to meet them.

Health is a responsibility that has been transferred to the local authorities. Why is health management more complicated on an island?

Mr SARR: Today, it's much easier to run a commune on dry land than on an island. This is because of the obstacle of the sea, which is at the root of enclavement, but also because of the absence of certain infrastructures adapted to the environment. What's more, the State generally transfers powers but not the means to exercise them, which poses real difficulties.

What are the health challenges associated with the insularity of Niodior and Dionewar?

Dr NDIAYE: The insularity of Niodior makes it difficult to access other referral health facilities. In the past, patients were frequently evacuated due to the lack of appropriate equipment and to enable them to receive better care in facilities on the mainland. This is why, with the Luxembourg Cooperation, we have acquired the equipment needed to equip the health centre's emergency unit, and training has been provided in the use of this equipment.

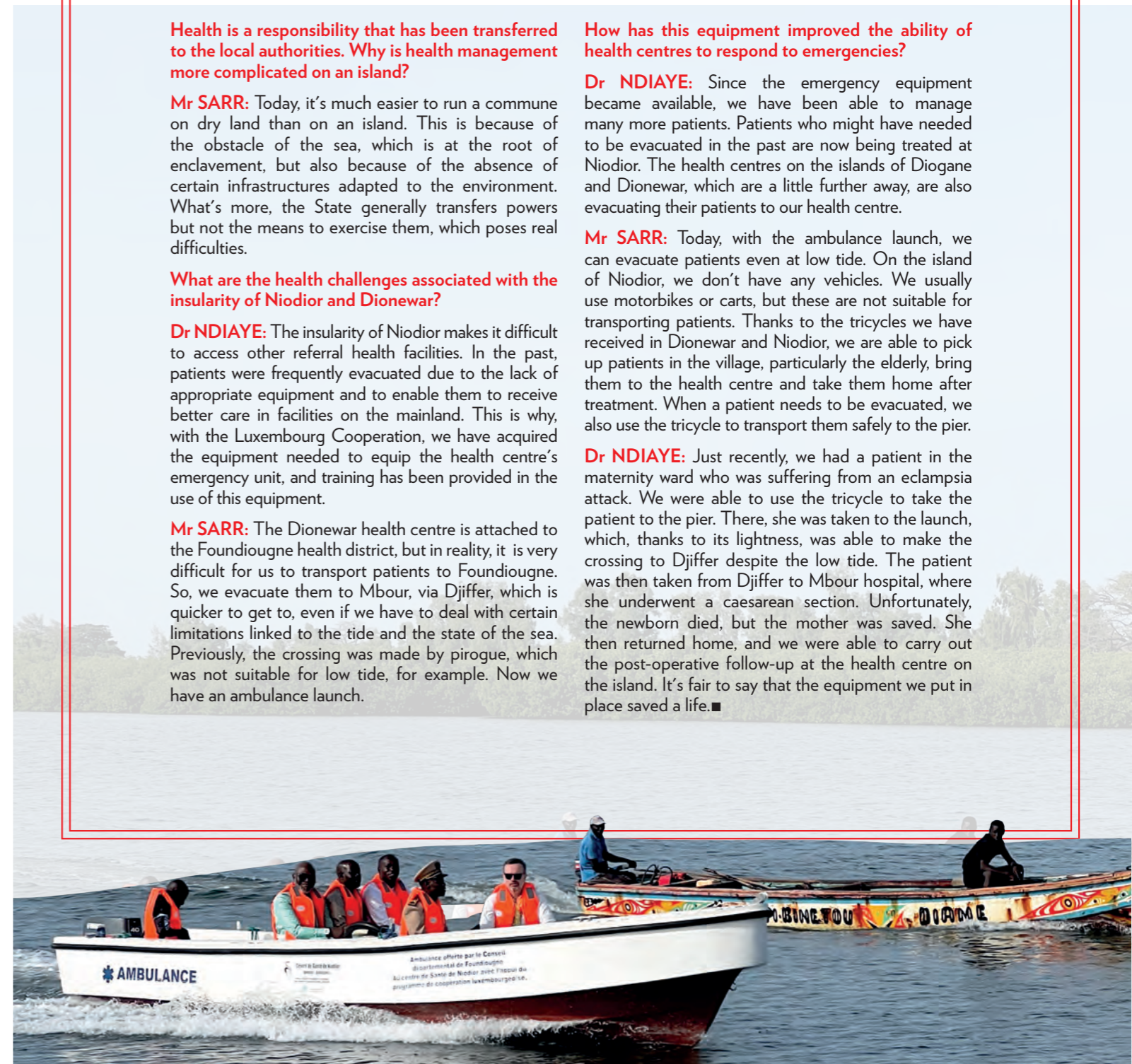
Mr SARR: The Dionewar health centre is attached to the Foundiougne health district, but in reality, it is very difficult for us to transport patients to Foundiougne. So, we evacuate them to Mbour, via Djiffer, which is quicker to get to, even if we have to deal with certain limitations linked to the tide and the state of the sea. Previously, the crossing was made by pirogue, which was not suitable for low tide, for example. Now we have an ambulance launch.

How has this equipment improved the ability of health centres to respond to emergencies?

Dr NDIAYE: Since the emergency equipment became available, we have been able to manage many more patients. Patients who might have needed to be evacuated in the past are now being treated at Niodior. The health centres on the islands of Diogane and Dionewar, which are a little further away, are also evacuating their patients to our health centre.

Mr SARR: Today, with the ambulance launch, we can evacuate patients even at low tide. On the island of Niodior, we don't have any vehicles. We usually use motorbikes or carts, but these are not suitable for transporting patients. Thanks to the tricycles we have received in Dionewar and Niodior, we are able to pick up patients in the village, particularly the elderly, bring them to the health centre and take them home after treatment. When a patient needs to be evacuated, we also use the tricycle to transport them safely to the pier.

Dr NDIAYE: Just recently, we had a patient in the maternity ward who was suffering from an eclampsia attack. We were able to use the tricycle to take the patient to the pier. There, she was taken to the launch, which, thanks to its lightness, was able to make the crossing to Djiffer despite the low tide. The patient was then taken from Djiffer to Mbour hospital, where she underwent a caesarean section. Unfortunately, the newborn died, but the mother was saved. She then returned home, and we were able to carry out the post-operative follow-up at the health centre on the island. It's fair to say that the equipment we put in place saved a life. ■



SUPPORTING THE HEALTH SECTOR IN KOSOVO

In Kosovo, the health sector faces numerous challenges: improving the population’s state of health, offering a range of basic services, ensuring the quality of care, planning, managing and developing human resources, and financing the sector. Through its actions, the health sector support programme-phase II is helping to provide solutions to these problems.

Kosovo’s health system remains underfunded (around 4.5% of gross domestic product, the lowest in Europe), resulting in a lack of equipment and healthcare services. Investment in infrastructure and modern equipment remains limited, preventing patients from accessing quality services in public establishments. Patients are therefore forced to turn to private establishments, which are very expensive, especially for the most vulnerable groups on low incomes.

The brain drain of healthcare professionals is also a problem. This persistent shortage of human resources undermines the efficiency of the system and impedes equitable access to healthcare services. The lack of standardised work procedures, guidelines and clinical protocols directly contributes to compromising the quality and safety of services.

In 2023, the health sector support-Phase II project focused on capacity development in Gjilan and Prizren hospitals, with the aim of improving service delivery. As a result of these activities, the hospitals have developed their annual operational plan for 2024, which helps management to better plan and manage their resources. In addition, peer-to-peer knowledge transfer has led to the development of 12 new standard operating procedures for the most common diagnoses and 12 new patient information sheets. This has helped to improve the quality and safety of healthcare services, reduce medical errors and increase patient satisfaction with the care they receive.

At the same time, the project has helped hospitals to modernise their infrastructure and provided equipment for new services in the hospitals of Gjilan and Prizren. As a result, access to and the quality of health services and treatment available to the populations of these two regions have been improved, and personal expenditure on healthcare reduced.

In addition, thanks to the collaboration with the Chamber of Doctors and Nurses, the project has supported the organisation of training courses for healthcare professionals in the fields of quality, safety, neonatology, radiology, emergencies, anaesthesia, interventional cardiology and laparoscopy. These courses have helped to increase clinical skills and improve patient care.

Finally, the project supported the Ministry of Health in drafting the legislation needed to address sectoral issues. This support resulted in the approval of important laws that effectively address certain sectoral challenges.

By building the capacity of institutions and individuals in the health sector, the project contributes to the overall health of the population of Kosovo. It should be noted that a new programme, Innovative and Quality Health Services, began its activities at the end of 2023. It aims to consolidate existing efforts and provide new and more innovative support to the Ministry of Health, in order to improve access to quality health services for the entire population of Kosovo. ■



Professor DEWAN performs surgery in Kosovo ▲

100

More than 100 professionals from the two hospitals were trained in 2023.

SUCCESS STORY

CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM CONGENITAL ANOMALIES BENEFIT FROM LOCAL TREATMENT

In October 2023, the health sector support programme-phase II, in collaboration with the University Clinical Centre of Kosovo, welcomed a visit from Professor Paddy DEWAN, an Australian urologist and paediatric surgeon. During his mission, the Professor, with the help of a Kosovar medical team, was able to successfully carry out 19 specialised surgical operations and 32 personalised medical consultations for children suffering from difficult congenital problems, present since the birth and causing functional abnormalities.

Not only did these children receive medical care, but they also experienced a profound improvement in their physical well-being and psychological state. This success has also brought a glimmer of hope and relief to the families who must cope with the complexities of their children’s health journey. ■

THE FIGHT AGAINST CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE CONTINUES IN MONGOLIA

In Mongolia, cardiovascular disease is a priority public health problem. The cardiology, cardio surgery and telemedicine project in Mongolia is the fifth phase of support that began in 2001 with the strengthening of cardiovascular and cardiology services to ensure patients receive appropriate treatment. Today, support for digitalisation (telemedicine) is an essential component in a country where around 30% of the population is nomadic and where access to healthcare services is very unequal between rural and urban areas.

The Mongolian Ministry of Health believes that Luxembourg is making a significant contribution to reducing mortality from cardiovascular disease in Mongolia. For the first time, in 2023, 378 open-heart operations were carried out in one year, 91.2% of them by national surgeons. ■

The project aims to strengthen integrated cardiac care, cardiovascular health services and cardiac surgery capabilities, particularly with the support of the Luxembourg National Institute of Cardiac Surgery and Interventional Cardiology (INCCI). It also seeks to prevent cardiovascular disease by targeting some of its determinants, such as diet, smoking and alcohol abuse. Strengthening Mongolia’s National Cardiology Centre was seen as the best way of ensuring the sustainability of the activities implemented by the previous projects.

In 2023, a large-scale training plan was set up with medical staff that benefited more than 1,500 doctors. A detailed inventory of the equipment in the 21 provincial hospitals and 9 district hospitals was also drawn up. On this basis, a purchasing plan was formulated, starting with the acquisition of 12 ultrasound scanners, supported by the INCCI. Finally, educational material was distributed digitally, enabling 750,000 people to benefit from cardiovascular risk prevention education.



Intervention in cardiac surgery ▲

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SOUTH KIVU

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been in a state of humanitarian emergency for decades, with some of the highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the world. In addition, successive wars and persistent political instability in the east of the country have been marked by extreme violence, including widespread rape, of which women and children are often the first victims.

Faced with the many consequences of this situation, the Panzi hospital, run by Dr MUKWEGE, winner of the 2018-2019 Nobel Peace Prize, has specialised in caring for victims of sexual violence and in safe childbirth. The Panzi Foundation complements the hospital's work to reintegrate women into society and the economy.

Luxembourg's support for the hospital and foundation helps to meet all the needs of victims of sexual violence and vulnerable populations in

South Kivu. It creates a safe and healing space that not only promotes the physical healing of women, but also supports their emotional recovery, helps them rebuild their livelihoods and facilitates access to justice for victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

More specifically, in 2023, the project to support the hospital and Panzi Foundation - which is being implemented in collaboration with the Luxembourg Red Cross - was able to finalise construction work on the emergency building and open the service. Similarly, 100 houses for particularly vulnerable people have been completed, while a legal clinic was built and equipped. Lastly, 5,174 people were made aware of the need to register children with the civil registry and 5,181 patients benefited from surgery. ■



© Croix-Rouge luxembourgeoise

Kavumu legal clinic ▲



© Croix-Rouge luxembourgeoise

House built by the project ▲



INCLUSIVE AND INNOVATIVE FINANCE

STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE OF SMALL PRODUCERS - 32 PROJECTS SUPPORTED

The Smallholder Safety Net Upscaling Programme (SSNUP) aims to strengthen the social safety nets of 10 million farming households, improving the living conditions of 50 million low-income and highly vulnerable people over 10 years. More specifically, through a systemic approach to agricultural value chain development, SSNUP seeks to increase the productivity and resilience of smallholder farmers in Africa, Latin America and Asia, through better risk management and the promotion of sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices. To achieve this, the programme draws on the knowledge and expertise of several impact investment fund technical assistance structures to reach as many smallholder farmers as possible, with as little bureaucracy as possible.

The programme is co-financed by the Luxembourg, Swiss and Liechtenstein Cooperation, and coordinated by the Luxembourg NGO ADA - *Appui au développement autonome*, in partnership with nine impact investors active in the agricultural sector. LuxDev, representing the MFA, sits as a member of the technical assistance committee, the body that evaluates and decides on the projects submitted by the programme partners for funding.

In 2023, SSNUP approved support for 32 new projects submitted by investors, aimed at supporting invested organisations from the nine programme partners. It also carried out several knowledge management activities, including two thematic workshops (on agroecology and on gender and agriculture) and an exchange workshop with all the programme's stakeholders. ■

CENTRAL AMERICA - A FUND TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP



As part of the regional programme for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship - phase II in Central America (see page 41), the Luxembourg Cooperation announced, during the European Microfinance Week 2023, its intention to invest in the impact Female Entrepreneurship Fund created through this project. The management of this contribution has been entrusted to LuxDev.

The aim of the Female Entrepreneurship Fund is to provide financial partners with tailored and innovative solutions, combining financial support with technical assistance through a specific technical assistance programme. It aims to bring about a lasting change in the way financial intermediaries assess the risks of small and medium-sized enterprises run by women, and consequently to increase the number and volume of loans, as well as the amount of credit that financial intermediaries will provide to small and medium-sized enterprises run by women. ■

RWANDA - THE FINANCIAL ECOSYSTEM AT THE SERVICE OF DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, the programme to support the development of the Kigali International Finance Centre (KIFC) was formulated. It will contribute to the development of Kigali as an international financial centre in Africa, by strengthening the skills of players in the financial sector. It will also help to reduce disparities affecting MSMEs, diversify the FinTech ecosystem, attract sustainable financing and create a green stock market.

The national challenges of developing Rwanda's inclusive and innovative finance sector are closely linked to the country's Vision 2050, which aims to become an upper middle-income country by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050. In this context, the financial sector plays a crucial role, with objectives to increase domestic savings and position itself as an international financial services centre.

Despite the importance of MSMEs in job creation in Rwanda, they face significant difficulties in attracting the finance they need to start up and grow their businesses. In addition, most business activities are conducted in the informal sector. These unregistered entities face difficulties in accessing financial services, obtaining credit and benefiting from government support initiatives. Rwanda is therefore striving to modernise its economy while improving the lives of its people, focusing on financial inclusion and innovation to achieve its long-term development goals.

STRENGTHENING THE KIFC ECOSYSTEM

The objective of KIFC's development support programme is to help Rwanda increase foreign and domestic investment in projects and activities that contribute to sustainable development, and more specifically to increasing employment in the most lucrative segments of the economy and improving the environment.

To achieve this, the programme will support the development of the KIFC ecosystem so that it can strengthen its human capital, advance sustainable finance, facilitate investment in bankable MSMEs projects and provide an environment conducive to the creation and expansion of FinTech businesses. ■

The private sector in Rwanda is characterised by a preponderance of MSMEs, accounting for over 90% of all businesses and contributing around 41% of total employment.

ACCESS TO FINANCE, A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL ISSUE

Access to financing is also a feature of other projects and programmes implemented by LuxDev in Rwanda, notably the Kwiwaza transformation towards sustainable food systems project, which helps players in the horticulture and aquaculture value chains to develop, and the technical training and employability support project, which supports four technical and vocational education and training centres to prepare young people for the labour market, including entrepreneurship.

BENIN - A NEW INCLUSIVE AND INNOVATIVE FINANCE PROGRAMME

The inclusive and innovative finance programme aims to improve access to and use of financial and non-financial products and services in Benin. Formulated at the end of 2023, it will primarily target vulnerable populations, players in agricultural value chains, rural populations, women and young people.

The Beninese government sees financial inclusion as an important lever for the country's development. By 2026, it aims to have increased to 85% the proportion of the adult population with access to and effective use of affordable and appropriate financial products and services, in a secure environment.

The inclusive and innovative finance programme is part of this context. It will work to improve the financial knowledge and skills of the people of Benin and help ensure that they have access to a diversified range of innovative, sustainable and appropriate financial and

non-financial products and services. It will also ensure that the *Agence nationale de surveillance des systèmes financiers décentralisés* provides better protection for customers and supervision of the supply of financial services.

In particular, the programme will provide training for 81,000 people from the agricultural sector on financial education and support 53 social training centres, by training their staff and beneficiaries on the themes of financial inclusion, microfinance and customer protection.■

VIETNAM - FINANCE AND RESILIENCE

In 2023, a new project, finance for resilience, was formulated in Vietnam. Its aim is to improve the climate and economic resilience of small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs, with a particular focus on empowering women.

By improving access to financial services, promoting climate-smart agricultural practices and strengthening value chain financing, the intervention intends to strengthen the capacity of individuals and businesses to withstand climate-related risks and improve their economic well-being.

To achieve its objective, the project will focus on ensuring that farmers, including women, cooperatives and small and medium-sized enterprises operating in selected value chains (lotus, rice and pomelo) in Thua Thien Hué, are better connected to markets and improve their business performance. It will also help to ensure that small farmers have better access to financial services.■

LUXDEV INVOLVED IN A NUMBER OF EVENTS IN THE SECTOR

In 2023, LuxDev took part in several events in the sustainable, inclusive and innovative finance sector.

From 20 to 23 March, the Agency took part in the 10th Central American and Caribbean Microfinance Conference in Antigua, Guatemala. Organised by REDCAMIF, the microfinance network of Central America and the Dominican Republic, a long-standing partner of the Luxembourg Cooperation, and by its member REDIMIF, the network of microfinance institutions in Guatemala, the conference brought together more than 850 participants, including several players from the inclusive finance ecosystem in Luxembourg. During the conference, Francesca RANDAZZO, LuxDev's expert in sustainable and innovative finance, spoke at the session entitled "From risk to opportunity: investing in small and medium-sized enterprises run by women is profitable". She presented the Luxembourg ecosystem and its involvement in gender lens finance. The session was moderated by Ada MENDEZ, coordinator of the regional programme for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship - phase II.

In October, LuxDev took part in the Global Landscape Forum in Nairobi, with a session recorded in Luxembourg and broadcast to Nairobi.

Finally, in November, LuxDev took part in the European Microfinance Week, and more specifically in three sessions concerning the financial inclusion of small and medium-sized enterprises run by women in Central America, blended finance to invest in countries and sectors otherwise considered too risky, and impact investment vehicles specifically targeting gender equality. For the third year running, LuxDev was also part of the selection committee for the European Microfinance Prize, whose theme this year was "inclusive finance for food security and nutrition" and which was won by the Burkinabe microfinance institution Yikri.■



Manuel TONNAR speaking at European Microfinance Week ▲



LAOS - AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Launched in January 2023, the local development programme, which follows on from its predecessor, tackles a number of sectoral problems in Laos, particularly those faced by rural communities.

Over the past decade, Laos has experienced rapid macroeconomic progress. However, this growth has not been evenly spread across all regions, resulting in income inequalities and pockets of poverty. Rural communities still lack quality investment in infrastructure and social services. The current socio-economic crisis, caused by high levels of public debt and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has left many people on the brink of collapse, particularly in remote rural areas. More isolated, rural communities, whose incomes are generally lower than in urban areas, often have no access to qualified teachers or medical facilities. This situation is exacerbated by, among other things, limited agricultural potential, unsustainable resource management, high vulnerability to climate change and governance problems.

Building on the strong relationship established with the Lao Ministry of Planning and Investment under the previous local development programme for the provinces of Bokeo, Bolikhamxay, Khammouane and Vientiane, the local development programme focuses on economic opportunities, livelihoods and social services, contributing directly to the government's poverty reduction efforts.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE VILLAGES SUPPORTED

During this first year of operation, the programme signed nine delegation agreements for the implementation of funds in targeted areas in the four provinces where it operates. The programme supports village development funds and the construction of small-scale infrastructure. At the heart of the programme are village development plans, created by the local communities themselves, which identify and prioritise their development needs. This inclusive, bottom-up approach empowers communities and ensures that projects respond to their specific challenges and aspirations. Improving infrastructure at district and village level will also lead to the empowerment of communities and, consequently, the strengthening of public services.

MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHALLENGES

By adopting climate-smart farming techniques, local communities will improve agricultural productivity and adapt to changing weather conditions, thereby enhancing food security and reducing vulnerability. By supporting sustainable practices such as forest conservation and waste management, the programme will also protect natural resources and mitigate environmental degradation. Finally, capacity development initiatives will help communities to prepare for and respond to natural disasters, in the hope of minimising their impact. ■



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

226

villages are targeted by the local development programme, benefiting 172,000 people.





CENTRAL AMERICA - SUPPORTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The regional programme for the promotion of women’s entrepreneurship - phase II concerns the socio-economic development of the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic. It aims to promote the integration of women entrepreneurs and businesswomen in the MSME segment in the beneficiary countries.

The regional programme for the promotion of women’s entrepreneurship - phase II contributes to creating a context conducive to the equitable participation of women in the economic fabric of the Central American Integration System region, in an institutional environment that fosters their economic autonomy. In 2023, three major activities were carried out to achieve the programme’s expected results.

In order to integrate the principles of equality and women’s economic rights into the instruments of the regional MSME regulations, a process was set up to collectively construct an “Agenda for Women and MSMEs”. It was drawn up jointly with CENPROMYPE, the Regional Centre for the Promotion of MSMEs, LuxDev’s partner implementing agency, and other bodies in the region, such as the Council of Women Ministers of Central America and the Dominican Republic.

The year 2023 also saw the launch of the Female Entrepreneurship Fund (see page 60). Women’s economic autonomy is not limited to grants, but also includes credit lines. This fund is to be allocated through competitions, taking into account criteria such as innovative ideas with market potential and feasibility in terms of business sustainability.

Finally, the programme continued to strengthen CENPROMYPE’s institutional and organisational capacities. Its staff attended a training programme on gender, environmental and climate change approaches in relation to MSMEs. A regional monitoring and evaluation system for the project’s indicators was also set up.■

KOSOVO - TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In November 2023, a new project was launched in Kosovo with the aim of contributing to sustainable economic growth in the country by supporting innovation, inclusion and social development. The project focuses on encouraging innovation as well as local and foreign investment in a secure and transparent environment. As a result, more jobs will be created, leading to improved public finances, which in turn will lead to better public services and the inclusion of currently disadvantaged groups.

While the use of information and communication technologies has grown rapidly in the country since 2000, the project seeks to improve cyber security capabilities in view of strengthening Kosovo’s resilience to cyber threats and accelerating the country’s digital transformation.

To this end, an appropriate training programme will be set up. A cybersecurity laboratory within the Kosovo Cybersecurity Agency will be created to develop and test cybersecurity solutions and to promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing in this area within the public sector, as well as with universities and the private sector.

The project also encourages the stimulation of the innovation ecosystem, particularly in the private sector. By supporting the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, the project aims to create new employment opportunities, increase exports and contribute to Kosovo’s sustainable economic growth and the development of its human capital.■

RWANDA - 48 LOCAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS SUPPORTED

Despite significant economic growth and recognised regulatory capacity, Rwanda also faces human development challenges and a marked rural-urban divide. The country’s mountainous geography contributes to the isolation of certain areas. Half the population of the 16 poorest districts live below the poverty line. Communities in these regions face a lack of infrastructure and essential services, as well as increased vulnerability to climatic events.

Basket Funding for Pro-Poor Development is a joint fund financed by AFD, *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It aims to support the Rwandan government’s efforts to promote local economic development and reduce poverty in the 16 most disadvantaged districts. In particular, the objective is to reduce the inequality between urban and rural areas, and to offer tangible improvements to the well-being of the most vulnerable communities.

Basket Funding for Pro-Poor Development focuses on financing local investment projects proposed by the districts that stimulate inclusive growth, particularly in the agricultural sectors, or improve access to public services such as health, education, transport, water and sanitation. The approach also includes support for environmental and social impact assessment studies, as well as strengthening the players involved in cross-cutting themes, in particular gender and climate resilience.

More specifically, Luxembourg’s contribution has made it possible to finance and support the implementation of an initial series of 48 local economic development projects selected during the preparatory phase of Basket Funding for Pro-Poor Development. The selection is based, on the one hand, on the order of priority set by each district and, on the other hand, on the distribution of the financial envelope between the 16 targeted districts, taking into account the total population, the population below the poverty level and, to a lesser extent, the surface area of the district concerned.■



GREATER ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION IN CABO VERDE AND NIGER

In 2023, the water and sanitation sector support programme continued its actions to ensure universal and equitable access to safe, affordable and sufficient drinking water, as well as adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene services for the people of Cabo Verde.

Access to water and sanitation is a major issue in Cabo Verde. The lack of coverage and access to these services, in particular the irregular supply of quality water in rural areas and the sporadic collection and treatment of wastewater, still affect a large percentage of the population. In addition, water from groundwater and natural springs is very scarce. Most drinking water comes from the desalination of seawater, which inevitably leads to very high production costs. Combined with the inefficiency of operators, these costs lead to very high water tariffs, which compromise the population's access to this essential resource.

The water and sanitation sector support programme develops actions designed to increase the sustainability of water supply and wastewater treatment services.

POOLING RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Pooling water resources and infrastructure on an island-by-island basis and professionalising management services are among the solutions to the challenges facing the sector. The programme has supported the creation of two new intermunicipal companies in Santo Antão and São Nicolau. In practical terms, multidisciplinary technical assistance has been deployed to help set up these two new operators, and major investments will be made to optimise production and distribution facilities (see box on page 49).

SECURE SUPPLY

On the island of Brava, the programme continued its project to secure the water supply through the construction of a 100% solar desalination unit. This project is part of the overall "Brava, a sustainable island" approach and draws on the long experience

of the Luxembourg Cooperation in supporting the intermunicipal operator *Águabrava*. In concrete terms, 2023 saw the completion of the access road and the start of construction work on the desalination plant. The programme also took delivery of the first works to reduce water losses on the island of Maio and launched the new "PromoSan" campaign to rehabilitate health infrastructure in schools.

OPTIMISE THIS PRECIOUS RESOURCE

In addition, a number of major projects have been prepared for completion in 2024, including energy optimisation, with two photovoltaic park projects on Boa Vista and Maio, and the extension of the Tarrafal sewage network to increase the volume of treated wastewater that can be reused in agriculture.

Ultimately, these activities will have a tangible impact on the availability of water and the quality of service, on increasing the volumes of wastewater collected, treated and reused, and on improving the regulation of the sector and the application of tariffs adapted to people's ability to pay.

51 primary schools will benefit from the rehabilitation of their health infrastructure.

70% of the volume of water is lost in the distribution network of the city of Praia. The programme aims to reduce this volume by 15% in 6 neighbourhoods identified as priorities.



WATER AND SANITATION

SUCCESS STORY

TEN YEARS OF SUPPORT FOR SECTOR REFORM



Mr Francisco DIAS
Company administrator

For 20 years, LuxDev has been implementing projects and programmes run by the Luxembourg Cooperation in support of the water sector in Cabo Verde. In particular, the first intermunicipal company to be set up on the islands of Fogo and Brava, Águabrava, has benefited from this support, becoming a management model that has inspired sector reform in Cabo Verde. Indeed, the creation of intermunicipal public companies on each of the country's islands was one of the strong points of this reform. As part of the water and sanitation support programme, LuxDev is continuing to accompany this process by actively supporting the creation of the last two intermunicipal companies on the islands of Santo Antão and São Nicolau. *Águas de Santo Antão* (AdSA) was officially created at the end of 2023. "The process of creating AdSA was a long but stimulating one. It took a lot of patience to generate the necessary agreement between all the parties, particularly the government and the municipalities.

The new intermunicipal company must take over responsibility for the municipal services of the island's three municipalities," explains Francisco Dias, the company's director.

"The Board of Directors has high expectations and we are delighted to be part of this challenge," he continues. In the medium term, the aim is to provide all the inhabitants of Santo Antão with sufficient quality water. In the long term, we plan to implement ambitious projects to reduce water losses, optimise the energy efficiency of infrastructures and extend networks to ensure the company's viability and guarantee the quality of service for the population. "

The creation of the last two intermunicipal companies marks the completion of the sectoral reform undertaken in the country more than 10 years ago. This approach makes it possible to manage water on a global scale, across a single territory. By pooling resources and infrastructure, it also generates economies of scale. The ultimate aim is to improve the quality of service, while ensuring that households can afford it. ■



Despite the deteriorating security situation in Niger, the water and sanitation programme has helped to improve access to water and sanitation in the country.

In Niger, too, the water and sanitation sector is facing a number of challenges: strong demographic growth, resources that are difficult to access and unevenly distributed across the country, or temporarily unavailable depending on the season. To meet these challenges, the government of Niger has adopted the water, hygiene and sanitation sector programme (PROSEHA).

Funding is another major challenge facing the sector. For example, by 2021, only 10.35% of PROSEHA funding had been mobilised. To ensure that the sector's objectives are achieved and to guarantee better coordination, since 2017 the Niger Ministry of Water and Sanitation has set up the Common Financing Mechanism (MCF) to channel the contributions of the various technical and financial partners.

The water and sanitation programme contributes to the implementation of PROSEHA by financing the sector, mainly through the MCF. Thanks to its contribution of EUR 4,533,195 in 2023, and despite the coup d'état on 26 July 2023 which led to the suspension of bilateral cooperation between Luxembourg and Niger, the programme has been able to carry out various actions.

Drinking water infrastructure has been built and/or rehabilitated, helping to improve access to drinking water services. Thanks to these activities, 111,500 people have been newly supplied with drinking water. 290 latrines were built in schools, health centres and public places to improve access to hygiene and sanitation and to improve people's health. Similarly, pastoral water infrastructure (8 cemented wells and 17 pumping stations) were built or rehabilitated to water 106,000 livestock units¹.

In addition, community-led total sanitation has been implemented. The aim is to get the community to analyse its living conditions and become collectively aware of the harmful effects of open defecation on health, dignity, safety, the economy and the environment, and to decide on its management through the introduction of social standards and the construction and use of hygienic latrines. Five communes were certified as being free from open defecation.

Finally, the programme helped to strengthen PROSEHA's monitoring-evaluation, public finance and programming capacities, thereby improving governance in the sector.■

¹ The results achieved are the fruit of all the contributions to the PROSEHA MCF, namely those from Niger, the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg, Switzerland and UNICEF.

SECURING ACCESS TO WATER IN SENEGAL

Cooperation between Senegal and Luxembourg in the water and sanitation sector began in 1996 and was suspended at the end of ICP III in December 2017. As regards solid waste management, Luxembourg has supported Senegal from ICP I in 2002 to ICP III. A new programme in the water and sanitation sector was formulated for 2023.

While Senegal has made considerable progress in this area, a number of major challenges remain, in particular integrated water resource management, safe access to drinking water, liquid sanitation and solid waste management services.

The programme proposes to promote an approach based on water security and environmental preservation, in order to guarantee access to sustainable water and sanitation services for all users through innovative solutions, while ensuring integrated management of resources. To this end, priority is given to financing infrastructure works and supporting pilot projects in rural areas to capitalise on the results at national level.■





STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

2023 saw the launch of a large-scale project aimed at mobilising the private sector to achieve the SDGs, in line with the priorities of Luxembourg Cooperation.

The private sector, as a partner, brings expertise and a capacity for innovation to the table and contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. Moreover, the involvement of the private sector facilitates the mobilisation of additional private investment. In view of integrating partnerships with the private sector into bilateral cooperation activities in a pragmatic and flexible manner, LuxDev has developed specific instruments. The private sector instruments project has set up three tools: the Business Partnership Facility (BPF), the LuxAid Challenge Fund and the LuxAid Demonstration Fund.

NEW PROJECTS CO-FINANCED BY THE BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP FACILITY

Launched in 2016, the BPF is a financing facility that aims to encourage the Luxembourg and European private sector to join forces with partners in developing countries to set up sustainable and innovative business projects that support the SDGs. Implemented in partnership with Luxinnovation, the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Economy, the BPF is based on project co-financing of up to 50%, up to a maximum of EUR 200,000. It encourages responsible private sector initiatives that contribute to job creation in developing countries and/or technology transfer. All sectors of activity are eligible, provided that the project contributes to achieving the SDGs.

In order to raise the profile of the BPF in the Luxembourg business community, a number of initiatives have been implemented in 2023: individual meetings with companies, presentations to structures in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, participation in networking events, development of media communication, etc.

In the two editions of 2023, 36 bids were received, 11 of which were subsequently invited to submit a full proposal. For the first edition of the year, in the end, two Luxembourg companies were selected. Co-financing agreements were signed for a total of EUR 585,965 and a total project cost of EUR 1,177,131. With the second edition still in progress, six applications have been invited to submit a full proposal and one is awaiting a decision by the committee. At the same time, the project has continued to monitor the 12 co-funded projects in progress.

LAUNCH OF LUXAID CHALLENGE FUND IN SENEGAL, BURKINA FASO AND MALI

On 27 November 2023, the first LuxAid Challenge Fund call for projects was launched in Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal, with a total budget of EUR 1 million. The co-financing aims to accelerate the growth of innovative projects led by start-ups which, for this edition, contribute to the challenges of distance learning or food security.

A launch event was organised with the Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in Senegal and a communication campaign was carried out in the three countries. Local interest was strong: LuxDev received 242 applications, including 185 in food safety and 57 in distance learning. Following an initial eligibility check, 107 applications were rejected because they did not meet the eligibility criteria. The selection process is continuing. The companies selected will receive support ranging from EUR 50,000 to EUR 140,000.

LUXAID DEMONSTRATION FUND'S FIRST SUPPORT FOR RWANDA

Finally, the initiatives supported by the third tool focus on extending innovations that have already been tested and marketed: LuxAid Demonstration Fund is looking for mature companies whose business model is based on innovative solutions. Projects can benefit from co-financing of up to 50% of costs, with a ceiling of EUR 350,000.

On 11 December 2023, three projects were selected in Rwanda for a total investment cost of EUR 2,100,000. These projects focus on food security, clean energy and carbon credits. One of the projects, for example, will enable 3,300 households to benefit from carbon credit income through clean energy options by the end of 2024. ■

SUCCESS STORY

BUSINESS PROJECTS TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT

Since its launch, the BPF has supported 37 projects in developing countries. Here's a closer look at three of them.

DROUGHT INSURANCE FOR SENEGALESE LIVESTOCK FARMERS

Luxembourg-based IBISA is offering a mutual risk-sharing insurance product designed to solve the "uninsurability" of small-scale farmers and livestock breeders around the world. IBISA uses blockchain and satellite observation data to share the risks associated with drought and climate change. Co-financing from the BPF has enabled IBISA to test a pilot version of its product. Since 2022, more than 1,000 farmers have been able to benefit from this insurance product in Senegal.

FIRST PRIVATE TELEVISION CHANNEL IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE TO CREATE 40 JOBS

The BCE Group has teamed up with the Ivorian group SGM to create the first private television channel in Côte d'Ivoire, Nouvelle chaîne ivoirienne (NCI). SGM benefited from BCE's expertise as a media integrator (infrastructure, consultancy and training). Since then, NCI has enjoyed great success and has taken on some 40 qualified employees.

ENTREPRENEURS TRAINED IN BURKINA FASO

The project by the Luxembourg incubator Technoport, in partnership with Burkina Business Incubator, aims to strengthen access to technologies, skilled jobs and business start-ups in Burkina Faso, in sectors including information and communication technologies, engineering, the environment, agriculture, health and cosmetics. The objective is to train and raise awareness among economic players in Burkina Faso through skills exchanges, training and support programmes for entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs. The project has supported 106 project leaders and generated 143 skilled jobs in priority sectors for Burkina Faso's economic development, such as agricultural production, recycling and waste recovery. ■



CLOSER LINKS WITH THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

By funding innovative research projects between Luxembourg researchers and partners in developing countries, LuxAid BRIDGES aims to further support the development of research capacities and to pool scientific results to help achieve the SDGs in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian action.

Academia can provide valuable research, innovation and training that can contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of development projects. Collaboration with the research community can also build local capacity, encourage innovation and promote evidence-based practice in development initiatives.

In 2023, the Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR), the MFA's Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs and LuxDev joined forces to launch a first pilot call in the framework of LuxAid BRIDGES, in order to support Luxembourg research actors in initiating transdisciplinary research projects relevant to development cooperation and humanitarian action. EUR 2 million (EUR 1 million from the MFA and EUR 1 million from the FNR) have been made available to support these projects.

For this pilot project, a preliminary call for Seedling proposals aimed to support projects of short duration (up to three months), with a budget of up to EUR 20,000 each. The aim of this phase was to give a limited number of applicants the opportunity to identify contacts, visit potential partners in eligible countries and test their ideas. The call attracted 41 submissions.

Ten Seedling projects were selected for funding in June. Various research institutions were selected (Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology (LIST), Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research, University of Luxembourg) for various topics (water, healthcare, disaster risk reduction, etc.) in several countries (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, etc.).

The full call was launched in September 2023: 13 eligible proposals were received. The selection process based on independent external reviews and a panel of international experts and professors took place between December 2023 and February 2024. Three research projects will be funded: LIST's HERON project in the disaster risk reduction sector, LIST's SENEWAT project in the water and sanitation sector and the University of Luxembourg's LawMode project in the rule of law sector. ■

3 research projects will be co-financed by LuxAid BRIDGES.

TESTIMONIAL

SECURING WATER QUALITY IN SENEGAL

SUPPORTED BY THE LIST AND MORE SPECIFICALLY DR SÉBASTIEN CAMBIER, THE SENEWAT PROJECT WILL BE CO-FINANCED AS PART OF LUXAID BRIDGES.

"The SENEWAT project is designed to assess the quality of aquatic ecosystems and set up monitoring tools. To this end, LIST and LSC Environment in Luxembourg, and two departments of the Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar in Senegal, will work together over the four years of the project. Sampling campaigns will be carried out to measure chemical and microbiological quality, supplemented by eco-toxicological tests. The data collected will be used to strategically place water quality monitoring sensors so as to provide the best possible information to local populations and help them take the necessary measures to protect these resources.

The setting up of this project was made possible thanks to the Seedling phase of LuxAid BRIDGES, which enabled the team to be formed by meeting the various partners in Senegal and to structure the project as it is today." ■

LATIN AMERICA - SUPPORTING DIGITALISATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

Luxembourg cooperation has been active in Latin America since the early 1990s, more specifically in Nicaragua and El Salvador, with a mandate to support these countries in their fight against poverty and to help them emerge from armed conflict. In this context, the regional technical assistance fund aims to consolidate the support provided to date.

In 2023, the regional technical assistance fund financed two specific actions.

The first action involves carrying out a study on digitisation in Costa Rica, ahead of the next formulation on this theme, focusing on three areas of intervention: cybersecurity, digital governance and digitisation of space. The study, carried out by three national experts, identified the key players in the field of digitisation in Costa Rica and therefore the potential partners for a Luxembourg Cooperation project in this area. It also highlighted concrete opportunities for intervention based on an analysis of the support needs of national players. Finally, the final report drew up a general framework for the formulation of a digitisation project in Costa Rica, which is due to start in the first half of 2024.

The second component concerns financial support to the NGO Oxfam for its technical and financial support to four associations in Costa Rica. These

associations are active in supporting the flow of Cenderos, SOS Nicaragua, *Servicio Jesuita para Migrantes* and FLACSO. With the support of Oxfam, Cenderos has developed actions to support the productive initiatives of farming families in the border communities of Upala and Los Chiles, in particular to improve their production capacity and their inclusion in the local market. *Servicio Jesuita para Migrantes* was heavily involved in awareness-raising, advocacy and support for migrants in Los Chiles, as well as regularisation advice for immigrants and asylum seekers. SOS Nicaragua has also provided legal advice on migration processes to Nicaraguan asylum seekers in their regularisation process, particularly in San José. Finally, FLASCO, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, facilitated study plans enabling young Nicaraguans expelled from Nicaraguan universities to reintegrate into training programmes in Costa Rica.■



▲ Francisca RAMIREZ



INTERVIEW

"THE PROJECT HAS HELPED US TO STRENGTHEN OUR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION"

Around 200,000 Nicaraguans fled to Costa Rica between 2018 and 2023, affected by the serious socio-political and human rights crisis in the country following the repression of protests in April 2018.

The *Iniciativas económicas del exilio en dignidad y resistencia* project, financed by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg through the regional technical assistance fund and its partnership with Oxfam and the local organisation Cenderos, supports the camp of Nicaraguan peasants in conditions of forced displacement, located on the Las Melinas farm in Upala, in the north of Costa Rica and on the border with Nicaragua. Run by women, the camp is made up of 23 families, including 23 children.

The project financed productive activities such as the purchase of seeds and fertilisers for sowing maize, beans and other cereals, with a view to food sustainability and local marketing.

Doña Francisca RAMIREZ, leader of the Nicaraguan peasant movement, testifies to the support received by the project.

How did the idea for the farmers' camp come about, and what support has it given you?

In 2018, we arrived in Costa Rica with the idea that, a few months later, we could return to Nicaragua. But there was a serious humanitarian crisis. Farmers had nowhere to sleep, nothing to eat, had lost weight, and the situation in Nicaragua continued to deteriorate.

The migration situation was also complex, given that we couldn't get work for nine months and during that time we had no resources to eat. So, we decided to rent the land, because the families we were with were farmers who knew how to produce.

What have you managed to implement or improve thanks to this site?

This project has been a great success. Firstly, because it has given us food security: we have been able to provide for ourselves. The children have also been able to receive an education, without having to face the challenge of a lack of roots.

This site is a place of solidarity between Nicaraguans who are fleeing. We welcome them, we support them, until they can regularise their papers, and then some manage to find a job, others stay.

What support have you received from the *Iniciativas económicas del exilio en dignidad y resistencia* project?

Thanks to funding received from the Luxembourg government through Oxfam, we have planted staple cereals for our own consumption and bred piglets and heifers, which are raising a lot of hope, as they can guarantee everything dairy. Thanks to the profits generated by marketing our produce, we have been able to improve our homes. We are also currently building 19 houses, which we acquired largely thanks to these profits.

With the support of Luxembourg, we now have a milking parlour and have managed to get the Costa Rican government to consider us for an entrepreneurship fund for rural women.

The project has helped us to strengthen our economic integration within the communities that have welcomed us. Our dream is that, if we manage to increase milk production in 2024, we will develop a small business that will help these 23 families to move forward and support themselves.■

SUMMARY OF FUNDS IMPLEMENTED IN 2023

IN THE COUNTRIES OF OPERATION (EUR)

	Disbursed in 2022	Disbursed in 2023
BENIN OFFICE	6,000,000	6,878,390
BURKINA FASO OFFICE	9,529,935	17,298,152
CABO VERDE OFFICE	9,604,668	16,564,618
MALI OFFICE	15,978,106	12,462,721
NIGER OFFICE	21,697,843	10,990,280
RWANDA OFFICE	8,573,768	8,570,490
SENEGAL OFFICE	12,060,908	12,342,057
KOSOVO OFFICE	6,083,906	4,518,682
ASIA OFFICE		
Laos	13,871,750	19,753,708
Myanmar	12,889,669	19,375,222
Vietnam	172,732	13,294
	809,349	365,192
LATIN AMERICA OFFICE		
Latin America and the Caribbean	2,434,005	5,747,030
El Salvador	2,337,096	5,479,426
Nicaragua	325,640	106,511
	-	161,093
GLOBAL PROGRAMMES	28,145,207	20,563,315
Regional Africa	21,277	319,693
Europe	177,972	30,230
Mongolia	1,158,129	1,144,634
Multi-countries	26,787,829	12,160,374
Democratic Republic of Congo	-	1,857,800
Ukraine	-	5,050,584
Total	133,980,096	135,689,442



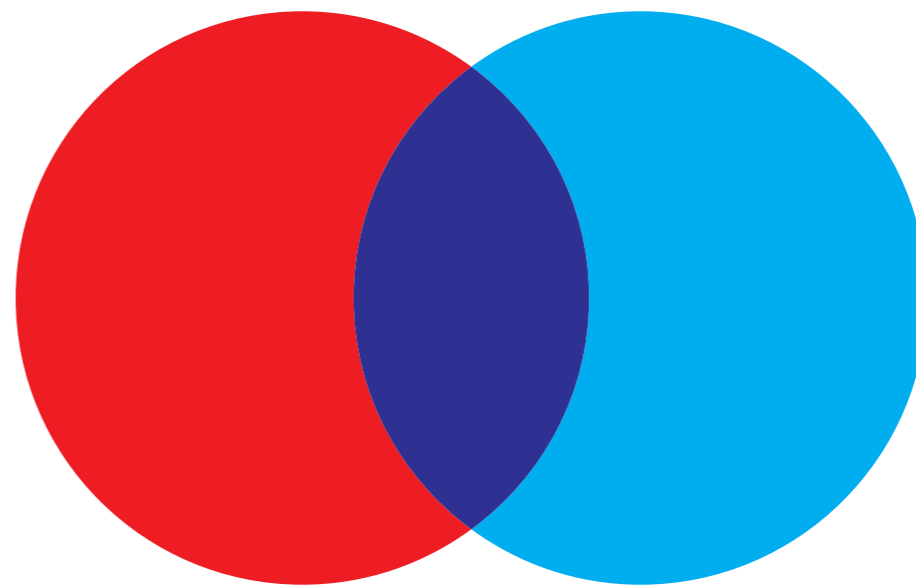
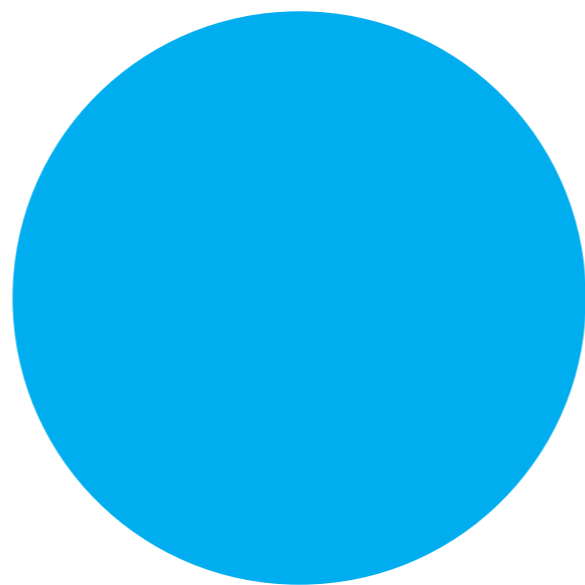
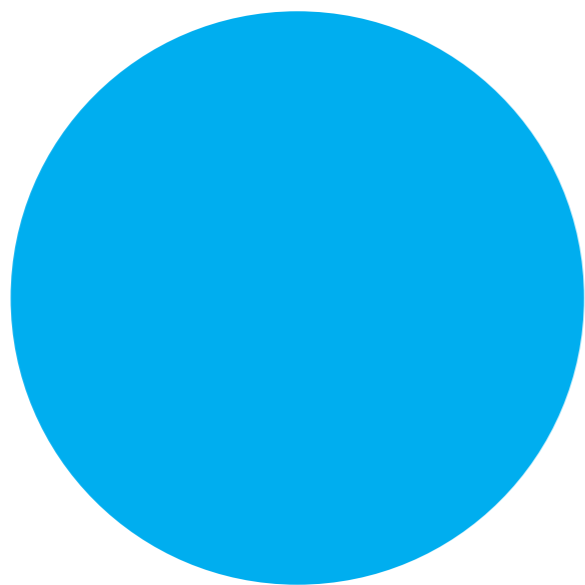
SUMMARY OF PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED BY LUXDEV IN 2023

PROJECT NAME	COUNTRY	DONORS
EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT		
Sectoral budget support for employment and employability	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to the National Education and Technical and Vocational Training Policy	Burkina Faso	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Austria, AFD, Monaco and Switzerland
Support to vocational education and training reform-phase II	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to the Education Sector Common Fund	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to the Education and Training Sector Plan	Burkina Faso	European Union, AFD, Canada, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Global Partnership for Education, Switzerland and UNICEF
Support to the National Vocational Training and professional insertion programme in Niger-phase II	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
European Union support to vocational education and training, professional requalification and occupation	Kosovo	European Union
Digital skills	Rwanda	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Skills for sustainable jobs	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Skills for tourism, agriculture and forestry	Laos	European Union, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Switzerland
Skills for tourism - Human resources development in the tourism and hospitality sector	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Switzerland
Technical and vocational training	Mali	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Vocational and technical training and employability	Senegal	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Vocational and technical training	Senegal	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Senegal and International Labour Office
FIT! Senegal initiative	Senegal	European Union, Germany, France, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Italia, Netherlands and Switzerland
Support programme for agricultural and rural training	Benin	Grand-Duché de Luxembourg and AFD
Employment and employability sector support programme	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support programme for the development of employment and the employability of young people and women in the regions of Dosso, Niamey and Zinder	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Construction programme for the <i>École des métiers du tourisme, de l'hôtellerie et de la restauration</i>	Benin	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support project for technical training and employability	Rwanda	Grand-Duché de Luxembourg and AFD
Youth employment programme	Burkina Faso	European Union, Austria and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support for the relaunch of the Kryvyi Rih raion	Ukraine	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
VET Toolbox	Multi-countries	European Union
VET Toolbox II	Multi-countries	European Union and Germany

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERY		
Support to the sustainable management of forests	Latin America and the Caribbean	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support for the agroecological transition and the implementation of sustainable food systems in the Mono Biosphere Reserve	Benin	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and European Union
Support to agro-pastoral value chains-phase II	Mali	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Switzerland
DIGITALISATION AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES		
African Union-European Union D4D Hub	Regional Africa	European Union, Germany, AFD, Estonia, Enabel and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Digital development	Benin	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Youth employment and digitalisation	Salvador	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to the African Union for the establishment and deployment of a continental Computer Security Incident Response Team	Regional Africa	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE		
Climate adaptation and resilience in Thua Thien Hue Province	Vietnam	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Climate change adaptation and resilience in Thua Thien Hue Province	Vietnam	Green Climate Fund and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to the sustainable management of the forest resources	Burkina Faso	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Preventing and managing risks	Nicaragua	European Union
Energy transition support programme	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Climate action programme	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Research and innovation project for productive, resilient and healthy agro-pastoral systems in West Africa	Burkina Faso	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Enabel and Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
Energy-efficient lighting pilot project	Vietnam	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Project for land reclamation efforts towards pastoral usage and in conservation areas	Burkina Faso	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Sustainable forestry and efficient renewable energy for improved livelihood	Rwanda	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Energy transition and climate mitigation	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
FOOD SECURITY		
Support for the Common Donor Fund for the national food crisis prevention and management mechanism	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Rural development and food security	Mali	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Strengthening the resilience of rural communities in the Kita Circle and their access to the market system-phase III	Mali	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Caritas Switzerland
Global response/food crisis	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Transformation towards sustainable food systems - Kwiwaza	Rwanda	European Union and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

GOVERNANCE		
Support for public financial management	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support project for the joint initiative - Public transformation in West Africa	Regional Africa	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and AFD
Support for the production, analysis and dissemination of quality statistics	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Supporting the cadastre of Burkina Faso in the municipalities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso	Burkina Faso	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Technical assistance in the context of European integration	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Governance and monitoring of ICP V	Senegal	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to civil society	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Rule of law, access to justice and good governance	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Strengthening the effectiveness of official development assistance management	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support programme for legal teaching and training and to the promotion of the rule of law concept in Laos	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support for capacity development of the public expenditure chain actors in Agadez, Diffa, Tahoua and Zinder regions	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
HEALTH		
Support to the hospital and the Panzi Foundation	Congo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Health sector support programme in Kosovo-phase II	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Sectoral budget support in the health sector	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Cardiology, cardio-surgery and telemedicine	Mongolia	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Lao-Luxembourg health sector support programme-phase II	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Health and nutrition programme	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Health and social protection	Senegal	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, United Nations Population Fund and Senegal
Health and social protection	Senegal	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Innovative and high-quality healthcare services	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
INCLUSIVE AND INNOVATIVE FINANCE		
Support for the development of the Kigali International Finance Centre	Rwanda	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Technical assistance to the Forestry and Climate Change Fund	Latin America and the Caribbean	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Contribution au Female Entrepreneurship Fund	Latin America and the Caribbean	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Contribution to the Bloc Smart Africa Fund	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Contribution to the Global Green Bond Initiative	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Finance for resilience	Vietnam	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Inclusive and innovative finance	Benin	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support programme for financial inclusion development in Niger	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and ADA

Smallholder Safety Net Up-Scaling programme	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Lichtenstein Development Service and Switzerland
Support to the triangular cooperation in the finance sector between Vietnam, Laos and Luxembourg	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
Sustainable and inclusive growth	Kosovo	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Contribution to the Basket Funding for Pro-Poor Development	Rwanda	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Local development programme	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Switzerland
Local development programme for Bokeo, Bolikhamxay, Khammouane and Vientiane Province	Laos	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Switzerland
Regional programme for the promotion of women's entrepreneurship-phase II	Latin America and the Caribbean	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Eastern Shan State rural development and inclusion project	Myanmar	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
WATER AND SANITATION		
Water and sanitation	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Water and sanitation	Senegal	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Water and sanitation sector support programme	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support programme for the water and sanitation sector-phase III	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Denmark
Support to the water and sanitation sector programme	Niger	Netherlands
100% solar desalination unit, Brava	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
OTHERS		
Support to the ICP IV	Niger	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support and monitoring of bilateral cooperation projects	Salvador	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support to the National Household Income and Expenditure Survey	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Support for South-South and triangular cooperation	Latin America and the Caribbean	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Cross-cutting support for the "Development - Climate - Energy" ICP	Cabo Verde	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Junior Technical Adviser 2022	Others	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Junior Technical Adviser 2023	Others	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Business Partnership Facility	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Regional technical assistance fund	Latin America and the Caribbean	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Private sector partnership instruments	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
LuxAid BRIDGES	Multi-countries	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
SnT4Dev	Regional Africa	Grand Duchy of Luxembourg





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