



GOVERNANCE MAPPING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE GREAT GREEN WALL FOR THE SAHARA AND THE SAHEL INITIATIVE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corruption poses a major threat to global efforts to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The diversion of funds, bribery and unethical practices can impede progress towards the achievement of climate goals, and even exacerbate the negative impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities.

Good governance is essential to ensure that resources are used efficiently, transparently and accountably, and that policies and projects are designed to benefit society and the environment.

Despite facing significant implementation challenges, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWI) has demonstrated the potential for transformational change through collaboration, innovation and a commitment to good governance.

The African Union (AU) established the GGWI in 2007 to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land, create 10 million jobs and sequester 250 million tonnes of carbon by 2030. The Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW) was created three years later to supervise and coordinate implementation across 11 Member States. By 2020, however, only 4 million hectares of land had been restored, and the initiative faced challenges owing to weak organisational structures and insufficient coordination.

To address the challenges, the GGWI has expanded geographically and conceptually, and now includes greater participation from civil society organisations. In 2021, world leaders at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) launched the GGW Accelerator, which aims to adopt a more structured approach to implementation, scale up successful initiatives, harmonise impact measurement, and better integrate the private sector, civil society, research and innovation into GGWI efforts.

The purpose of the present report is to support more effective implementation of the GGWI through governance analysis and related recommendations for reform. The report adapts Transparency International's Global Climate Finance Anti-Corruption and Governance Mapping and Assessment methodology for the purpose of governance mapping and assessment of the GGWI in three areas that are critical to ensure good governance: transparency, participation, and accountability and integrity. The report focuses on the PAAGGW and its 11 Member States, with a particular focus on Niger and Senegal.



KEY FINDINGS



TRANSPARENCY

Transparency in the governance of the GGWI is severely limited. While policies are in place to ensure transparency, most are unpublished and the ones that are published lack detail. Also, there is no disclosure of either the procedures and mechanisms to access information or the types of information and documents that can be accessed. Nor is any information available on the procedures to appeal the non-disclosure of information. The information available on the UNCCD's GGWI website, as well as the websites of the PAAGGW and national agencies, is very limited. Public access to information is further hindered by the decentralised nature of the GGWI's project financing process. Core documents such as the *Manual of administrative, accounting and*

financial procedures for the PAAGGW are not publicly available (the link was not functional at the time of the assessment), and there is minimal public reporting on the GGWI's operations, administration and finances either regionally or at the country level.

Nevertheless, there has been some recent progress in terms of information production and sharing with the support of the GGW Accelerator, which is soon to be handed over to the PAAGGW. In particular, the development of an online multi-purpose platform presenting GGWI actors, projects, funding and results holds promise, although it is not clear to what extent the contents of the platform will be available to the public.



PARTICIPATION

Despite of the value placed on the importance of participation, the GGWI's framework and mechanisms to ensure participation are, in reality, not well defined and mostly informal. At the regional level, consultation relies largely on the support of a set of specialised consultative bodies, with a focus on awareness raising, advocacy and resource mobilisation, rather than on the broader and substantive participation of non-state actors. The engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) at the regional level is informal and non-systematic, and GGWI statutes do not require the initiative to consult with or ensure the meaningful participation of civil society.

At the national level, the degree of effective participation varies greatly among GGWI projects. The donor funding model does not encourage the strong involvement of GGWI national structures in monitoring and evaluation processes, but rather limits the development of their capacity to integrate participatory processes into project implementation. While the PAAGGW has developed the concept of Community and Integrated Sustainable Development Units as a tool for consultation with grassroots

communities, it is not clear whether such units are already operating in any of the countries. Some of the countries, such as Senegal and Niger, rely on their government's decentralised structure to involve local government and communities.

Moving forward, plans are afoot to build on informal mechanisms and consolidate participation within the GGWI.

The PAAGGW's Decennial Priority Investment Plan (DPIP) for 2021-2030 outlines several priorities to improve local ownership of the initiative and reduce social conflicts. The priorities include the establishment of support centres for resilient local development, the development of consultation frameworks, investment in education and communication, and the strengthening of relationships and exchanges between communities. The aim of the priorities is to enhance the participation of communities and local populations in the GGWI and foster more collaboration and dialogue among them. An annual GGW Youth Green Caravan and Forum is ongoing, while the establishment of a Women's Green Platform featuring

annual sessions and activities at national and regional levels is now planned.

Furthermore, Member State ministers committed in 2022 to improve the representation of CSOs in GGWI institutions and activities, and strengthen the role of

non-state actors in supporting technical and financial partners. To this end, the GGW Accelerator envisages the development of national coalitions to support the development of national GGWI strategies integrated into Member States' national development strategies.



ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTEGRITY

For the PAAGGW and most national structures, neither the foundations for good governance nor the fundamental requirements to make the PAAGGW viable and properly implement the GGWI are yet in place. Critically, the GGWI lacks enforceable accountability and integrity mechanisms. There is no universal accountability framework to govern decision-making processes within the GGWI at the regional, national and community levels and the GGWI does not publish any official accountability document, such as an annual or financial report. As a result, GGWI representatives are not formally required to explain their decisions or account for their results to external actors. Nor is there any review mechanism for GGWI decisions or any provisions for affected parties to appeal contested decisions.

While national structures are required to propose a plan of activity and a budget to the PAAGGW and then submit annual activity reports, this does not always happen and even when it does, the documents are not made public. Insufficient reporting to bilateral and multilateral donors has led to a lack of credibility and reduced funding, with finance flows instead being directed elsewhere.

The large size and fragmented nature of the initiative, compounded by its evolving objectives, has made it difficult to establish a single monitoring and evaluation system that is capable of capturing the complete picture for each country. As a result, there are currently a variety of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that involve government bodies, national GGW agencies, the PAAGGW and/or donors. Six countries have a specific national agency to implement the initiative, while the rest have either a unit within a ministry or a focal point. In most cases, the agencies or focal points are not always involved

directly in the monitoring of GGWI or related projects because of a lack of resources.

While the PAAGGW has a Governance and Ethics Charter, it is very short on detail and does not make any reference to specific or enforceable anti-corruption mechanisms, such as conflict of interest policies or codes of conduct. While the Executive Secretariat of the PAAGGW has an Internal Audit and Control Unit and a Legal Affairs Unit, the two units are not provided with staff and there is no mention of any internal ethics advisor or committee within the GGWI to advise staff on ethical issues. In addition, the insufficient provision of staff in the administrative and finance department limits the segregation of duties and increases the risk of conflicts of interest.

The GGWI also lacks an independent mechanism to register and investigate complaints about corruption or fraud and there is no publicly accessible whistleblowing policy or provisions for independent or enforceable whistleblower protection.

Despite the significant gaps that exist, the work carried out by the GGW Accelerator has shown a clear commitment across the GGWI to enhancing accountability, particularly in the areas of monitoring and impact measurement. This is evident through the development of an annual impact monitoring table and the appointment of a monitoring and evaluation expert in each of the eleven member states. The planned UN Environment Programme and African Development Bank's institutional and organisational audit of the PAAGGW, which should provide a roadmap to strengthen the GGW's internal integrity, is also to be welcomed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- + Member States should ensure stronger ownership of the GGWI by showing clear alignment with their respective national policies as well as activating multi-stakeholders' national coalitions that include civil society actors.
- + GGWI partners should expedite the planned institutional and organisational audit of the PAAGGW and act on its recommendations. A transitioning strategy should be established jointly by the GGW Accelerator and the PAAGGW, so that the competences of the GGW Accelerator currently implemented by UNCCD are progressively relocated to the PAAGGW Secretariat. The transition should be treated as an opportunity to enhance participation.
- + The AU should establish the necessary structures for the GGWI, or merge them with the PAAGGW, to avoid having multiple levels of actors. To ensure that the PAAGGW and the overall GGWI are managed effectively and consistently, the organisation's general secretariat needs to have enough staff to be responsible for accountability and fill all necessary positions.
- + Donors should enhance their mutual coordination to avoid any overlapping programming or competition for funding from different actors' governments, CSOs and national agencies. They should also learn from previous funded projects and prioritise investing in the governance and institutional arrangement of the GGWI, including supporting the governance set-up of the regional agency and national agencies.



ON TRANSPARENCY

- + The PAAGGW, with the support of the GGW Accelerator, should prioritise the launch of the online multipurpose platform, clearly identify the link to the existing information platform, and ensure that key data on project funding and results are made publicly available.
- + To increase stakeholder understanding of the GGWI's governance processes and operations, the PAAGGW should publish all related regulatory and policy documents, financial and technical reports, and implementation achievement reports on its website in both French and English.
- + National GGW agencies and the PAAGGW should publish an annual report to provide a detailed account of the project implementation status and related financial allocations.



ON PARTICIPATION

- + The PAAGGW should consider giving CSOs a formal consultative role in the GGWI's decision-making processes through, for example, participation in technical committees, board meetings or other initiative-related meetings.
- + The PAAGGW should implement the key recommendations of the UNCCD Secretariat study on the mobilisation of non-state stakeholders, in particular defining practical modalities of dialogue for planning and consultation at local and national levels, and establishing clear criteria and procedures for engagement.
- + The national agencies should develop a participation framework to ensure that local communities can benefit from, and have a role in, the planning and implementation of the interventions themselves. Member States should increase their engagement to establish national coalitions of state and non-state actors, leveraging the support of the GGW Accelerator and the creation of Integrated Sustainable Development Units to support good land governance, and help to guide GGWI strategy and bolster its implementation at the national and local levels.



ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTEGRITY

- + The PAAGGW and its partners, informed by the work of the GGW Accelerator, should strengthen and institutionalise the monitoring and evaluation system at the regional and national levels and make it inclusive and transparent, including by publishing annual impact monitoring reports.
- + The PAAGGW should develop and publish a code of conduct and a conflict of interest policy for its staff, including penalties for non-compliance, based on good international practice (see, for example, Transparency International's Codes of Conduct Topic Guide¹).
- + The AU and the PAAGGW should clarify their working relationship and fill in the gaps in their institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities.
- + The AU and the PAAGGW should adopt or develop an accessible complaints mechanism and whistleblower protection policy and procedures based on good international practice (see, for example, Transparency International's Complaint Mechanisms Reference Guide² and Best Practice Principles for Internal Whistleblowing systems³).

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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWI) was created in 2007 by the African Union (AU) to combat desertification, food insecurity and poverty. It has accrued the additional aims of combating climate change, fostering political collaboration and stability, enhancing biodiversity, and mitigating large-scale out-migration.

The GGW was initially conceived as a vegetation barrier, 15 km wide, running between the 100-400 mm rainfall isohyets, and covering a length of over 7000 km, from Senegal to Djibouti. In recent years this vision has expanded into an integrated ecosystem management approach, striving for a mosaic of sustainable land use and production systems, including the regeneration of natural vegetation as well as water retention and conservation measures. It aims to restore 100 million hectares of currently degraded land, sequestering 250 million tonnes of carbon and creating 10 million green jobs by 2030. The initiative has spread to every geographical region of the African continent and more than 30 countries are engaged in various stages of implementation.⁴ The GGWI is structured around nine Regional Structural Programmes (RSPs) and five major strategic axes that are to be implemented in all GGWI countries but tailored to each country's specific needs.⁵

The Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW) was created in 2010 to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the GGWI and mobilise the necessary resources together with the AU and Member States. At the national level, Member States created national GGW agencies or focal points to supervise and coordinate the implementation of national GGWI priority actions.

In 2012, the GGWI adopted the Harmonised Regional Strategy, which consolidated the national strategies and action plans of the GGW Member States and arrived at a coordinated strategy for implementation, structured into five-year planning cycles.⁶ Member States have produced national action plans setting out steps to take towards the achievement of GGWI national objectives based on the Harmonised Regional Strategy.

- + The first cycle (2011-2015) aimed to establish the institutional and organisational framework of GGWI structures and develop national strategies and action plans.
- + The second cycle (2014-2020) focused on operational activities and aimed to accelerate concrete actions.
- + The third cycle (2021-2025) is expected to consolidate the implemented activities and measures and scale them up.
- + The fourth and final cycle (2026-2030) will focus on upscaling the activities further to ensure the GGWI's substantial contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Rio Conventions.⁷

Progress to date

A landmark progress report issued in 2020 found that the GGWI had collectively restored 4 million hectares of degraded land to date (that is, 4 per cent of the initial target). However, considering all lands restored in the wider GGWI region, the total area restored reached nearly 17.8 million hectares (12 million of which are in Ethiopia). Also, GGWI activities were reported to have brought a range of environmental and socio-economic benefits, including carbon sequestration, savings from greenhouse gas emissions, and revenue from income-generating activities and job creation.⁸

Nevertheless, the report highlighted a number of critical implementation challenges, including a lack of consideration and mainstreaming of the GGWI into national environmental priorities and strategies, weak organisational structures and processes for implementation, and insufficient coordination, exchange and flow of information at the regional and national levels.

In light of the slow progress on GGWI implementation, the GGWI evolved, both conceptually and geographically, to better adapt the initiative to local environments and social contexts. Now the focus is on achieving integrated and sustainable ecosystem management through maintaining a mosaic of restored and productive land across the 11 countries involved, and over a much wider area than originally envisaged.⁹

GGW Accelerator

Following reappraisal of the GGWI in the wake of the 2020 progress report, nine international organisations at the One Planet Summit in 2021 committed to coordinate their efforts with the PAAGGW and provide renewed impetus to the initiative through the creation of the Great Green Wall Accelerator, hosted at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat. The aims of the GGW Accelerator are to:

- + coordinate the efforts of all actors through the harmonisation of impact measurement indicators
- + support the implementation of the GGWI through a structured multi-stakeholder approach based on five pillars¹⁰
- + enable a more comprehensive mapping of available funding and projects
- + connect actors to scale up successful initiatives and promote the Sahel as a land of opportunity
- + integrate the private sector, civil society, and research and innovation into GGWI efforts.

The GGW Accelerator also committed to publish an annual progress report and organise an annual monitoring meeting to bring together all stakeholders.¹¹

Despite the challenges surrounding its implementation, the GGW remains an attractive and important proposition. It has attracted the attention and support of many donors and international partners, including the European Union, World Bank, African Development Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UNCCD.

A total of US\$19 billion in funding for 2020-2025 was pledged at the One Planet Summit to implement the GGWI.¹¹

3. ABOUT THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to support more effective implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWI) through a governance analysis of the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW) and its stakeholders at regional and national levels. The report provides recommendations to strengthen GGWI governance, an area which has received little attention to date.

The report consists of: (i) governance mapping of the GGWI and its key stakeholders; and (ii) a governance assessment of the GGWI in three areas: transparency, participation, and accountability and integrity. The report does not assess the effectiveness of the GGWI per se, nor does it give an in-depth analysis of any resourcing issues. Rather, the report focuses on the 11 pioneer countries of the GGWI in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa that are members of the PAAGGW, with a particular focus on Niger and Senegal.¹²

Methodology

The methodology is based on Transparency International's Climate Finance Anti-Corruption and Governance Mapping and Assessment Toolkit (available on request). It adapts the toolkit's assessment questions to focus on the areas of most relevance to the GGWI: transparency, participation, and accountability and integrity. The assessment was conducted from

September 2022 to February 2023, followed by a validation phase with key stakeholders in March and April 2023. The assessment draws on a desk review, consultation with key stakeholders (the PAAGGW and its national structure representatives, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, SOS Sahel, the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), civil society organisations, etc.) and key informant interviews (see appendix). The governance mapping was compiled from background information, a desk review and interviews.

Limitations

Several factors had an impact on the assessment process, including the difficulty of finding documents and reliable information on the GGWI and the absence of any centralised coordination within the GGWI to keep track of essential information.

4. GOVERNANCE MAPPING OF THE GGWI

The Pan African Agency for the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW) was established in June 2010 with the membership of 11 Sahelian states to act as an executive technical institution to guide in the implementation of the GGWI in the region, in close collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC).

Many of the Member States have set up specialised national structures or built on existing governing bodies to bring the implementation of the initiative to scale. Senegal was the first country to establish a national agency. In Niger, the GGWI coordination unit became a national GGW agency in 2015.

The overall governance structure of the GGWI appears in the chart on the next page, along with the GGWI's key external stakeholders (see Figure 1).

The African Union and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) provide political leadership for the GGWI through the High Orientation Council. Diplomatic support at the regional level is ensured by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Member States, held every two years. This

political and diplomatic leadership has been crucial in advocating for the initiative's international positioning and in supporting the PAAGGW and Member States in resource mobilisation.

The GGWI's decision-making process is supported by: the Technical Expert Committee, which is an advisory body of support made up of the GGWI national structure representatives; ad hoc consultation structures and committees made up of the heads of the various regional bodies, which provide technical and scientific advice; the Executive Secretariat of the PAAGGW, which presents proposals and work plans to implement the GGWI strategy; the Council of Ministers, which oversees and validates the proposals; and the Conference of Heads of State, which ultimately endorses proposals and formulates recommendations.

Niger has put in place an organisational structure for GGWI implementation at the national level, including tools and instruments. Niger has also signed up to and ratified key multilateral environmental agreements as well as regional, sub-regional and national policies and strategies. The GGWI is consistent with the country's national policies and strategies (SDRP, 3N Initiative "Nigériens Nourrir les Nigériens", national environmental laws and customary natural resource management laws).

GGW Action Plan, Niger 2011

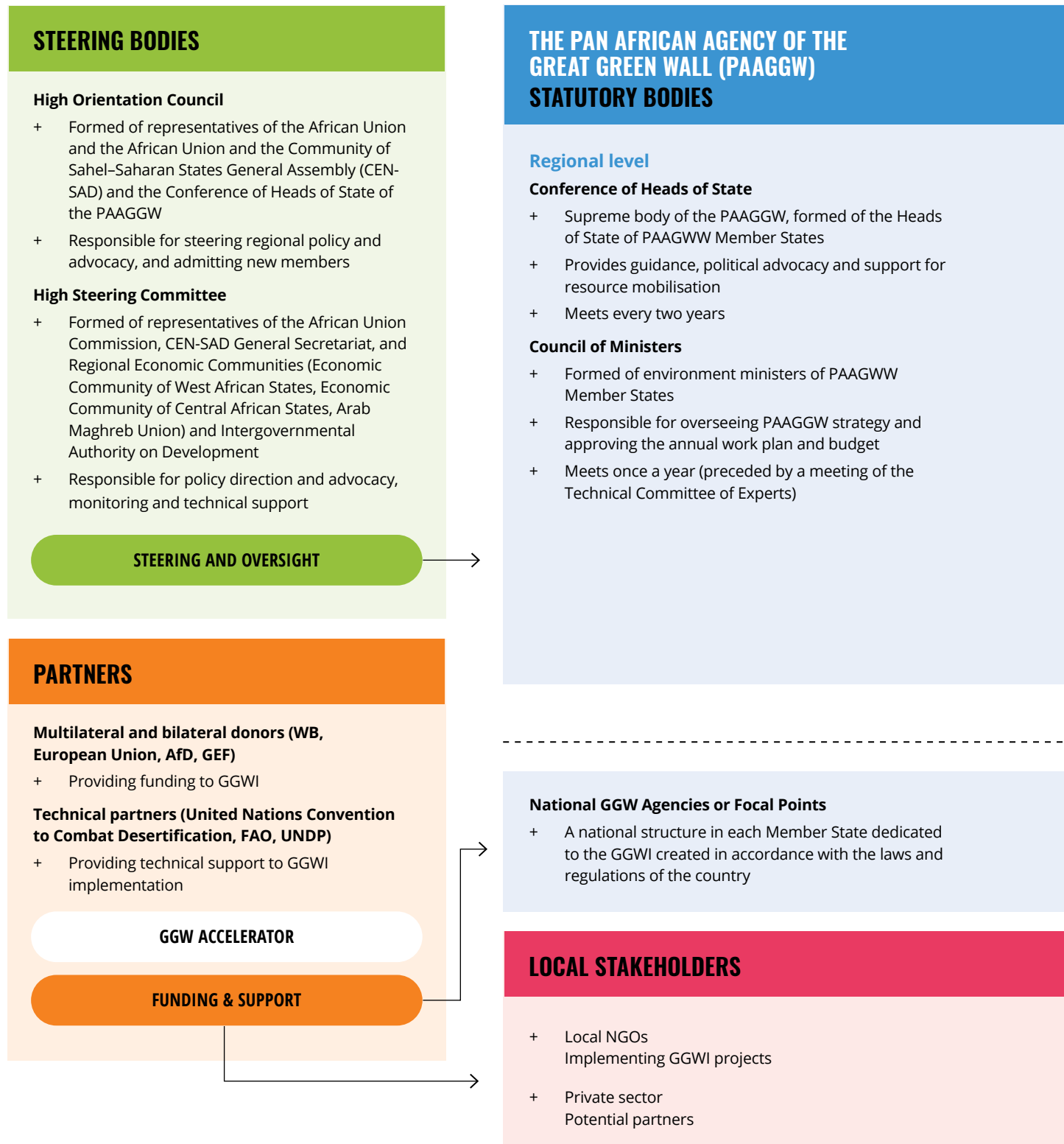
However, high-level political support for the GGWI has been deficient in several ways, including the non-payment of Niger's statutory contributions to the PAAGGW (the current amount in arrears stands at 400 million CFA francs, or roughly US\$666,000) and the drastic reduction of the state's budgetary support to the National Agency of the GGW between 2011 and 2020.

Key informant interview – national GGW agency, Niger

Photo: © Leela Channer



FIGURE 1: GOVERNANCE MAPPING OF THE GREAT GREEN WALL FOR THE SAHARA AND THE SAHEL INITIATIVE



Executive Secretariat

- + Formed of an Executive Bureau (Operations) and two Directorates (Administration & Finance and Scientific & Technical)
- + Executive Bureau includes Internal Audit and Control Unit, Legal Affairs Unit and Communications, Marketing and Advocacy Unit
- + Responsible for implementing the GGWI vision, strategy and work plan

Technical Expert Committee

- + Supports the Executive Secretariat in examining the work plan and budget, and preparing the meetings of the Council of Ministers
- + Provides technical and scientific advice
- + Composed of representatives of external bodies: Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS); Commission des forêts d'Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC); Autorité Inter Gouvernementale pour le Développement (IGAD); Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS); etc.

CONSULTATIVE BODIES**Scientific, Technical and Financial Support Platform (STFSP) and specialised consultative bodies**

- + Responsible for providing support for advocacy and mobilisation of funding
- + Includes Recruitment, Evaluation and Advancement Committee (REAC); Platform of Women and Youth; Forum of Actors and Beneficiaries (FORABE)

Platform for Partnership and Scientific, Technical and Financial Cooperation

- + Responsible for providing a framework for consultation and planning of external support from Technical and Financial Partners

Round-Table of Technical and Financial Partners

- + Responsible for evaluation and mobilisation of funding bodies

SUPPORT AND ADVICE**NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS (MEMBER STATES)**

- + Responsible for implementing the GGWI's Globally Harmonised Strategy at national level, through National Action Plans validated by national stakeholders

National Alliances in each Member State**SUPPORT AND ADVICE****COLLABORATION**

- + Research organisations
Potential partners

- + Local communities
Beneficiaries

Rural Committees for Sustainable Development (RCSDs)

Supporting consultation and M&E of GGWI activities

SUPPORT AND ADVICE

A representative of the AU interviewed for this report pointed out that the role of the Regional Economic Communities has been particularly prominent in consolidating and expanding the GGWI concept. This is particularly so in West Africa, where the Economic Community of West African States contributed to the development and implementation of the Harmonised Regional Strategy for the GGWI, and in Southern Africa, where the Southern African Development Community took the lead to develop a GGWI implementation strategy adapted to the region.

At the national level, each Member State has created operational structures for the implementation of the GGWI. Based on a decentralised governmental

structure, they have established Rural Committees for Sustainable Development (RCSDs) at the local level, which are frameworks for consultation, monitoring and evaluation of GGWI activities and impacts, with the support of an advisory and supervisory task force.¹³

Beyond these formal structures, numerous non-state stakeholders support the GGWI at regional, national and local levels. They include national governments, local authorities, local communities, multinational and bilateral donors, technical partners, implementing partners, civil society organisations, private sector organisations and research organisations.

GGWI implementation in Senegal is supported by strong political leadership. In September 2008, the government created a specific agency for the implementation of the GGWI that reports directly to the president. The agency operates under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. Called the “Agence Sénégalaise de la Reforestation et de la Grande Muraille Verte”, it employs 250 people at its headquarters and 7,500 volunteers on the ground.

Senegal also has a GGWI coordination unit, which enables decentralised technical services, and a consultation framework to operationalise consultation with national and research institutions. The initiative is supported by inter-ministerial councils to better coordinate implementation and by a supervisory board that represents partner state services, which are responsible for the technical and budgetary monitoring of the national GGW agency. This strong political commitment has led to the country's involvement in various regional initiatives. As of 2020, Senegal had participated in five large transboundary programmes, namely FAO's Action Against Desertification programme (2014-2019), the World Bank's SAWAP (2013-2019), UNCCD and FAO's FLEUVE (2014-2018), the GEF Trust Fund's Large-scale Assessment of Land Degradation (2019-2024), and the GEF/IFAD's Integrated Approach Pilot on Food (2017-2022).

Key informant interview – national GGW agency, Senegal