



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

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

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# 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 Guide<sup>1</sup>).
- + 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 Guide<sup>2</sup> and Best Practice Principles for Internal Whistleblowing systems<sup>3</sup>).

Photo: © Leela Channer









## 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

## 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

## 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 pillars<sup>10</sup>
- + 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.<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup>

# 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.<sup>12</sup>

## 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.

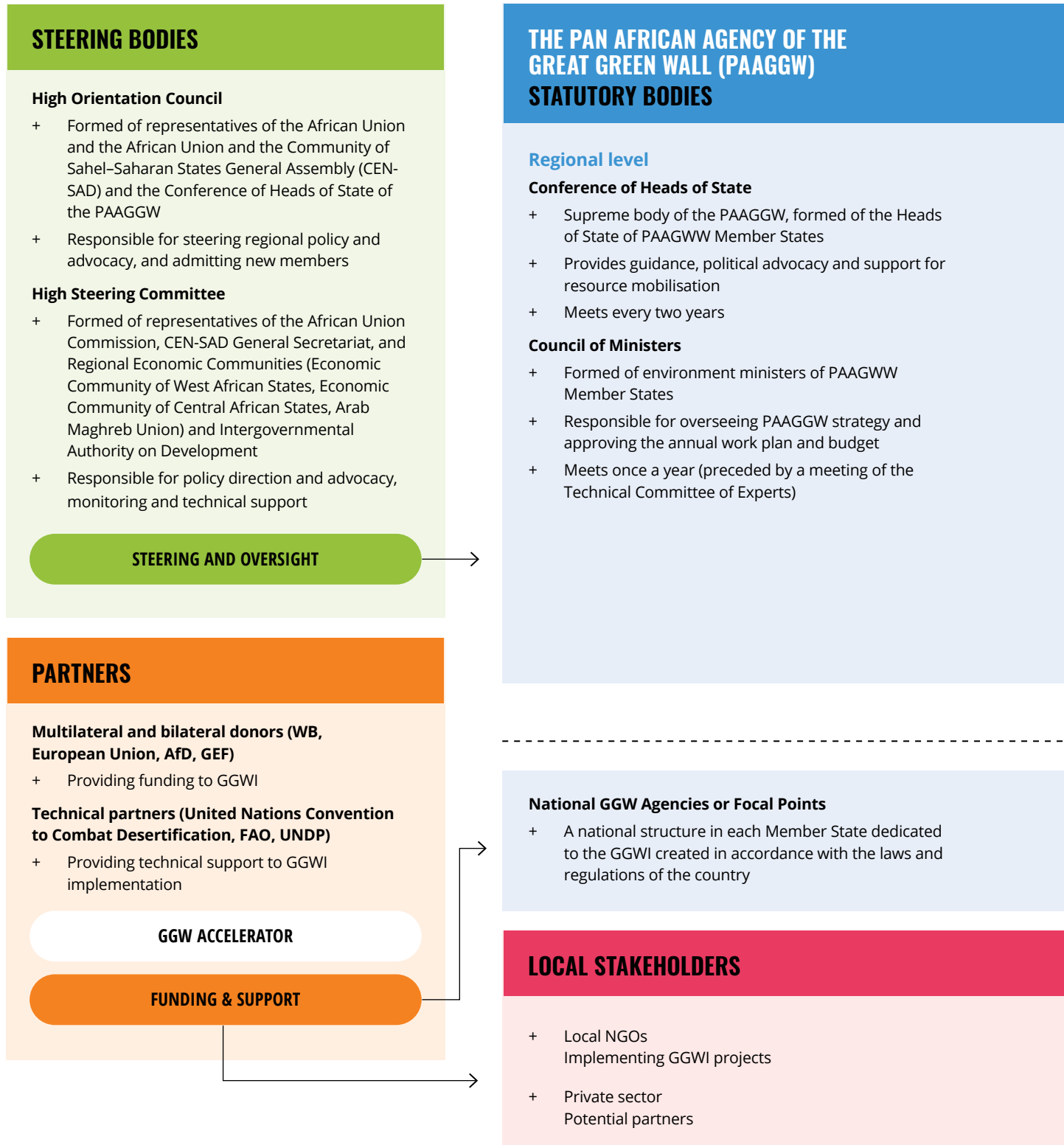
*Key informant interview – national GGW agency, Niger*

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

**Rural Committees for Sustainable Development (RCSDs)**  
Supporting consultation and M&E of GGWI activities

**SUPPORT AND ADVICE**

- + Local communities  
Beneficiaries

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.<sup>13</sup>

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*

# 5. GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT OF THE GGWI



## 5.1. TRANSPARENCY

There are very few policy provisions in place to ensure public access to information about the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWI). The Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall's (PAAGGW) Ethics and Governance Charter states that one of its key objectives is to “promote the creation of the necessary conditions to facilitate transparency, access to information and accountability for the management of the Agency”.<sup>14</sup> However, it provides no details on what a process of access to information would entail and there is no publicly available information on any procedures to appeal the non-disclosure of information.

At the regional level, statutory documents can be obtained on request, as a key informant from the GGWI Executive Secretariat noted. However, past reports and information on current activities are more difficult to access. At the country level, information on the GGWI is more accessible on demand through annual activity reports and through project reports implemented and supported by donors.

During interviews, respondents from United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) noted that it was difficult even for international agencies to obtain more detailed or recent documents from the PAAGGW despite specific requests for information. As a result, key information on the GGWI and, in particular, the use of funds by the PAAGGW and national agencies is largely inaccessible to the public.

### Transparency in practice

The information available on the websites of the PAAGGW and national agencies is limited. The English version of the PAAGGW website was not accessible during the period of the assessment. By contrast, an analysis of the French version of the PAAGGW website showed that more comprehensive information is available.<sup>15</sup> However, many key documents are now outdated, including strategies, action plans, notes from high-level missions, memorandums of understanding with organisations and government,<sup>16</sup> statutory documents, and technical and planning tools. The pages dedicated to the national GGW agencies provide links for all eleven countries' national structures, set out their national action plans, and give a brief overview of their preliminary results in the form of one-pagers, but they provide no further information on operational activities.<sup>17</sup>

With respect to administrative and operational information, a *Manual of administrative, accounting and financial procedures* exists according to the PAAGGW, but the online link is neither operational nor was it provided on request.<sup>18</sup> Interviews with the key informant of the PAAGGW Executive Secretariat suggest that the manual is outdated. Furthermore, the interviewees from CSOs, all national agencies and UN agencies were not aware of any public reporting on the GGWI's operations and administration since its inception in 2010, except for an accounting audit that was conducted once in 2021 but is not publicly available.







At the national level, some countries, e.g., Senegal, produce an annual accounting report, as mentioned by the director of the national agency, but it was not publicly accessible except for some activities described in a few annual reports (2011, 2015 and 2021)<sup>19</sup> and the accounting report produced by the government.<sup>20</sup> For other countries, such financial information is neither mentioned nor available.

The absence of a common mechanism for data collection further limits the aggregation of information at the national and regional levels, which is a particular challenge in light of the decentralised multi-actor process for funding projects (for example, directly from international donors to local non-governmental organisations). As stated in the Decennial Priority Investment Plan (DPIP) for 2021-2030, 90 per cent of mobilised resources received by GGWI structures at regional or national level in the 2011-2020 period came from Member States' budgets. However, no information about the allocation and use of the resources is available, so it is not possible to identify the domains of the GGWI to which they have contributed.

With regard to the implementation status and results of the GGWI, the 2020 progress report strongly criticised the lack of reliable information.<sup>21</sup> UNCCD's GGWI website contains some promotional material and basic information on impact in a few Member States but little else of substance. The 2020 progress report also highlighted that a lack of coordination, exchange and flow of information and knowledge at the regional and national levels, and between the respective GGWI structures has resulted in insufficient coordination and collaboration between GGWI countries and between project developers at the national level.<sup>22</sup>

All GGWI representatives interviewed at the national level acknowledged having limited knowledge of the interventions of the PAAGGW because of the lack of PAAGGW reports made available to them. As a result, many stakeholders do not have a complete understanding of how the GGWI works either at the regional or at the national level, which creates a sense of mistrust among stakeholders.

## Strengthening transparency

With the impetus provided since the 2021 One Planet Summit, the French version of the GGWI website has been updated recently to include the newly adopted strategy (DPIP 2021-2030).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, UNCCD has committed to publish an annual monitoring report on implementation of the GGW Accelerator.<sup>24</sup>

A key objective of the GGW Accelerator is to increase the dissemination of information and therefore the transparency of the initiative. An online multi-purpose platform presenting GGWI actors, projects, funding and results is now in development and expected to be launched in 2023.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the GGWI stakeholders, the GGW Accelerator intends to make the platform accessible to the wider public. Quarterly technical briefs setting out the latest high-level decisions, sources of funds and amounts disbursed, and the main results are to be published on the UNCCD's GGWI website (although only one such brief has been published to date).<sup>26</sup> The September 2021 brief includes a report on the status of the contributions of the nine major donors in relation to the various announcements made during the One Planet Summit, pillar by pillar for each country.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, the GGW Accelerator is expected to support better tracking of progress and ensure more coordinated support between and among GGW Member States.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, a number of non-state actors including SOS Sahel launched a platform in 2020, drawing on the support of the French Development Agency, African Union, Global Environment Facility, International Union for Conservation of Nature and United Nations Environment Programme to bring a range of GGWI actors together, facilitate interaction, learning and partnership, and collect data on their various contributions to the initiative.<sup>29</sup>

This revised communication approach should contribute to greater transparency regarding the allocation of funds. Indeed, the increased (if still limited) level of transparency is already having some impact on the identification of inconsistencies. For example, the UNCCD report (which is not public) on the current state of mobilisation of funding

commitments specific to all Member States mentions that US\$1.3 billion has been committed to Niger by different programmes (from the European Union, African Development Bank Group, World Bank, etc.). Yet, according to the GGWI representative in Niger, the funds included in the pledges made by donors has

already been disbursed in the country. Furthermore, according to the GGWI representative, an analysis of the report revealed that funds were allocated to projects (in progress, completed and in the start-up phase) that were not thematically related to the GGWI.



## 5.2. PARTICIPATION

It is recognised that participation and dialogue among all actors at the different levels (local, national and regional) are essential for the GGWI to achieve its goal of supporting the sustainable management of ecosystems to the benefit of local populations.<sup>30</sup> “In the spirit of collective construction, the actors should be able to place their action within an established conceptual and programmatic framework and thus have the assurance of improving the effectiveness and sustainability of their contribution” (UNCCD, 2020).<sup>31</sup>

The importance of a decentralised approach to community empowerment is seen as a key factor for successful implementation. Lessons learned from the *Sahel and West Africa Programme in Support of the Great Green Wall Initiative* (SAWAP), for example, show that the more decentralised a project, the more effective it is.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the GGWI's Harmonised Regional Strategy notes that the implementation of the initiative by CSOs “must rest on grassroot communities and therefore on the great accountability of the grassroot community organisations, NGOs, CSOs and devolved territorial communities, mainly rural communes. Government entities should give necessary support to these rural communities, including capacity development, to enable them to play their role.

Clearly, the GGWI strategy must be based on an upstream approach and enable involvement of all actors. It should also enable strengthening of project

management by local communities. It is essential that actors should master all operations resulting from the planning process, including funding methods of actions, selection procedures and support structure control, in order to guarantee sustainability of adopted interventions.”<sup>33</sup>

However, the framework and mechanisms through which the GGWI ensures participation are not clearly defined and remain largely informal. Stakeholder consultation frameworks do nominally exist at the regional, national and community levels. Despite isolated examples of successful public consultation in some projects (for example, the Front Local Environmental pour une Union Verte, or FLEUVE), however, participation on the whole remains weak.

Furthermore, the donor funding model (with few exceptions) does not encourage the strong involvement of Member States in monitoring and evaluation processes (see below), but rather limits the development of their capacity to integrate participatory processes into project implementation. The “top-down” approach to setting up consultation frameworks for participation does not give communities sufficient autonomy for natural resource management. Operational and technical issues, limited resources, and challenges with awareness raising and mobilisation further limit the effective participation and engagement of local populations.



## Regional consultation mechanisms

At the regional level, the operationalisation of the GGWI relies on the support of a set of specialised consultative bodies to provide expertise and knowledge on local needs to the PAAGGW's statutory bodies (see governance map above). The specialised consultative bodies include:

- + the Scientific, Technical and Financial Support Platform (STFSP), a specialised PAAGGW unit largely limited to conducting country surveys
- + specialised consultative bodies to engage in advocacy and mobilisation of funding at the level of the African Union Commission (AUC), and to coordinate continental implementation alongside the AUC's core mandates of resource mobilisation, partnership building and capacity development of Member States
- + the Platform for Partnership and Scientific, Technical and Financial Cooperation (PSTFC), which engages in consultation and planning of external support from Technical and Financial Partners
- + the Round-Table of Technical and Financial Partners, which engages in evaluation and the mobilisation of funding bodies.

According to respondents from the PAAGGW, the consultation instruments listed above are highly relevant for the implementation of the GGWI, but in practice have had limited impact on partnership development and resource mobilisation.

## National-level participation mechanisms

At the national and community levels, the approach to consultation aims to place communities and local populations at the heart of the identification of priorities and of planning and monitoring options.

To date, efforts to increase participation have focused largely on capacity building. As stated in the PAAGGW's DPIP 2021-2030, technical and scientific capacity-building activities were delivered from 2011 to 2020 to more than 150,000 actors from various backgrounds. Among the activities were those aimed at the establishment of local management committees, training plans targeted at students, and institutional support for educational structures and CSOs to facilitate the development of environmental citizenship awareness campaigns. For the decade ahead, PAAGGW has defined as a priority in its DPIP 2021-2030 the establishment of 15 to 20 support centres for resilient local development, especially aimed to improve ownership of the initiative among communities and the local population (priority programme 16).<sup>34</sup>

Senegal was the first country to implement a national coalition to include all stakeholders, including CSOs, in high-level discussions around the GGWI. Senegal has also set up a framework for consultation at the national and local levels in accordance with a presidential decree. Information sharing in relation to planning and implementation is both vertical and horizontal, and it is endorsed at the community level through a territorial plan contract developed by the communal council. The territorial plan contract also contributes to the implementation of the communal development plan. The Senegalese agency in charge has also developed several partnerships with financial partners, technical partners, civil society, universities and the private sector. In addition, the government is designing a GGWI integrated programme that will include consultations in 17 towns/villages to develop projects from local communities, and the programme is expected to be adopted in and present at the donor round-table planned for the first quarter of 2023.

*Key informant from the national GGW agency – Senegal*

The DPIP foresees as one of its Priority Action Programmes the development of consultation frameworks to help reduce social conflicts, invest in education and communication with local populations, strengthen relationships and exchanges between communities, and improve social cohesion. To this end, the PAAGGW has developed the concept of Community and Integrated Sustainable Development Units as a tool for consultation with grassroots communities to help support local governance and prevent conflict, particularly land and property-related conflicts.<sup>35</sup> This is particularly needed in a context of weak governance that can lead to land grabs and the displacement of community members. However, it is not clear whether such units are operating in practice in any of the countries since, to date, the national GGW agencies that have adopted a decentralised approach are using decentralised state structures to promote local ownership of the initiative.

The DPIP also foresees under its Communications, Marketing and Advocacy PIP, an annual GGW Green Youth Caravan and Youth Forum, as well as the establishment of a Women's Green Platform featuring annual sessions and activities at the national and regional levels.<sup>36</sup> The PAAGGW initiated a communication campaign for the Green Youth Caravan in Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso in 2022 to promote the participation of young people and women in the GGWI. However, as the interviews with CSOs from Mali and Burkina Faso reveal, the initiatives have received criticism at the local level for

being little more than political tools to capture the attention (and funding) of donors. According to the key CSO informants in question, the extent to which such initiatives are actually successful in strengthening participation remains to be seen, although youth mobilisation has been a success.

In practice, the degree of effective participation varies greatly among GGWI projects currently being implemented. For example, the US\$7 million regional project undertaken as part of the Local Environmental Coalition for a Green Union (*Front Local Environnemental pour une Union Verte*, or FLEUVE), financed by the European Commission and implemented by UNCCD, include the implementation of micro-investment projects in 23 communities across five Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal). A cost-benefit analysis approach was used to select the projects while encouraging discussions between stakeholders and thus promoting transparency in the decision-making process. As a result, the beneficiaries were successfully able to decide which activities to carry out. In Niger, this has been instrumental in targeting needs related to land restoration. A new mechanical technology to reduce the manual work of producers has been adopted and is ten times more efficient.<sup>37</sup> However, the training that was targeted mainly at women and young people has had very mixed results (for example, only 19 women out of 91 participants participated in the training sessions held in 2017 in Dosso, Niger). Moreover, although the project was implemented in partnership with the Permanent



Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, national governments did not actively participate in the project as funders bypassed them and invested directly in communities through NGOs.

### Civil society participation mechanisms

None of the GGWI statutes contain any indication of a requirement to consult with, or ensure the meaningful participation of, civil society, nor are there any repercussions for the failure to do so. While civil society actors participate in the GGWI in most Member States, it tends to be as implementing organisations rather than as consultees, which gives them little influence in decision-making processes.

Respondents from the PAAGGW highlighted the fact that no actors from civil society or the private sector have a formal role in expert, ministry or head of state committees. Instead, CSOs are invited on an informal and non-systematic basis to attend partner meetings, so their presence is not guaranteed. As mentioned by CSO respondents from Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, the lack of predictability and transparency in the choice of participants could have an impact on their willingness to criticise the initiative, and it limits their networking abilities. In fact, they have expressed a fear that their criticism could become a reason for exclusion from forums of exchange and consultation.

Efforts to engage CSOs have been made largely through information sharing forums, which do not involve a substantive contribution from participants and therefore do not enable them to influence decision-making or conduct effective advocacy for the mobilisation of financial resources. In practice, as stated in the interviews with RESAD in Niger, the forums are mainly designed to inform CSOs about the objectives, expected results and challenges associated with the GGWI.

Niger is among the few countries that have set up a coalition of actors around the GGWI with the support of the GGW Accelerator. Thanks to the support of the FAO and the African Union, and in partnership with civil society, local populations and the private sector, Niger has engaged in a concerted effort to develop a national strategy and action plan for the implementation of the GGWI in Niger.

*Key informant from the national GGW agency – Niger*



## Strengthening participation

At the 8th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers of the PAAGGW in June 2022, ministers committed 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.<sup>38</sup> The GGW Accelerator envisages the creation of national coalitions to support the development of national GGWI strategies integrated into the national development strategies of Member States and to produce a pipeline of projects. National coalitions are recognised as an essential instrument to involve non-state actors, such as local elected officials, NGOs, research actors and innovation entrepreneurs. As of January 2023, only Mali, Niger and Senegal have organised their national coalition meetings supported by a presidential decree.<sup>39</sup> The process is ongoing in Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania and activities are planned in 2023 by the PAAGGW through circular missions in all the countries to promote the establishment of national coalitions.

At the regional level, the GGW Accelerator has engaged in a number of initiatives to deepen engagement with non-state actors. The initiatives include participation in a webinar organised by the French Scientific Committee on Desertification to explain its work and collect proposals from non-state

stakeholders to initiate a roadmap; an effort to bring together governments, and financial and non-state stakeholders during the IUCN World Congress in 2021; and participation in a series of meetings during the New Africa France Summit in Montpellier (France) to highlight the need for greater involvement of CSOs and research actors in the implementation of the GGWI. As part of the GGW Accelerator, UNCCD has also commissioned a study on the mobilisation of non-state stakeholders in the GGWI. Among other things, the study calls for:

- + establishing multi-actor, multi-sector dialogue mechanisms around the GGWI's objectives
- + giving local authorities a central role in local project management
- + defining practical modalities both of dialogue for planning and of consultation for action at local and national levels
- + establishing practical, simple, clear criteria and procedures for engagement
- + integrating the greatest number of actors thanks to a system of recognition of different levels of commitment of actors and actions.<sup>40</sup>

Photo: © Leela Channer





### 5.3. ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTEGRITY

No universal accountability framework governs the decision-making process within the GGWI at the regional, national and community levels. As a result, GGWI representatives are not formally required to explain their decisions or account for their results to external actors. The Convention Creating the Pan African Agency for the GGW requires Member States to “grant the agency and its personnel privileges and immunities to help them in the achievement of their activities”, but it places no further responsibilities on them.<sup>41</sup> The Draft Interior Regulation of the PAAGGW requires national structures to propose a plan of activity and a budget on the basis of the Regional Plan of Action adopted by the Council of Ministers, and to transmit to the PAAGGW the annual activity reports and the executions of the budget.<sup>42</sup> However, the activity plans and budgets are not made public.

The convention also states that any disagreement between Member States is to be resolved amicably or, in the absence of such agreement, to be brought before the Court of Justice and Human Rights of the African Union.<sup>43</sup> Beyond this, there is no review mechanism for GGWI decisions and no provisions for affected parties to appeal contested decisions.

#### Regional-level accountability mechanisms

At the political level, follow-up meetings are organised at the level of the African Union (Conference of Heads of State) at least once every two years and at the PAAGGW level (Council of Ministers) once a year or in extraordinary session. These meetings involve the participation of third parties, such as technical partners (for example, UNEP, UNCCD, AfBD, etc.) but, as discussed above, they do not officially require CSO participation. During the meetings, observations are issued and objectives are defined by mutual agreement, but no official accountability document is published (such as an annual or financial report).

The PAAGGW has developed a *Manual of administrative, accounting and financial procedures* to describe its financial and accounting management practices, but the manual is not publicly available. According to a PAAGGW representative interviewed for this report, it is neither up-to-date nor adequately applied in practice. These gaps are confirmed by the 2020 progress report, which highlighted a lack

of performance and financial monitoring, as well as insufficient coordination and information sharing among local, national and regional actors (including among GGWI structures) as key weaknesses of the GGWI. Nevertheless, the PAAGGW's financial statements are audited and verified by statutory auditors in accordance with international accounting and financial management standards, although, yet again, the audited statements are not published.

In 2019, Senegal reformed the structure of its GGWI institutions. Before 2019, the country's national GGW agency sat alongside the National Agency of EcoVillages. In 2019, to boost reforestation, a third agency in charge of reforestation was to be created. Instead of creating the third agency, however, Senegal merged the three agencies into the Senegalese Agency for Reforestation and the Great Green Wall, with a single monitoring and evaluation unit and control unit.

The unified Senegalese agency has an advisory and oversight board. Its mission is to control all administrative and financial procedures and practices, approve the budget, and oversee the legality of decisions taken, the mobilisation of funds, and contracting. The president of the agency is elected by decree. All sectoral and technical ministries are represented in the agency. Once a year the council holds a budget session to discuss how government funds will be allocated. The council makes observations on the allocation and gives its opinion. All meetings of the council are minuted.

*Senegal GGWI action plan 2012-2016 and key informant from the Senegal national GGW agency*





## National-level accountability mechanisms

At the national level, accountability mechanisms vary significantly across countries. Niger, for example, established a task force in 2022 to monitor cash inflows for the GGWI, although a full accountability mechanism is still not in place (see box). By contrast, the director of the Senegalese Agency for Reforestation and the Great Green Wall has set up a control unit to monitor the implementation of the GGWI. As the agency is under the technical supervision of the Ministry of Environment and the financial supervision of the Ministry of Finance, Senegal's finance minister has assigned an accounting officer to the GGWI. The agency is required each year to draft a balance sheet that must be certified before mobilisation of the budget.

National GGW agencies are required to send a report annually to the PAAGGW to report on GGWI implementation, and performance contracts are signed between Member States and their national structures dedicated to the GGW to facilitate state or national structure accountability.<sup>44</sup> However, not all national GGW agencies send their annual reports to the PAAGGW, and even if they do, the reports are not made public. The 2020 progress report noted that insufficient reporting to bilateral and multilateral

donors and financiers had led to a lack of credibility and reduced funding, with finance flows instead being directed elsewhere. In some cases, reporting relies only on statistical data produced by the relevant ministries as evidence of the government's efforts in the implementation of the GGWI.<sup>45</sup>

In Niger, a legal framework for the establishment and operation of the national GGW agency has been adopted and an Environmental and Social Management Framework for the GGWI developed. However, while the development and adoption of the administrative and accounting procedures manual of the national GGW agency is mentioned as a key objective in the national action plan, a concrete accountability mechanism for the GGWI is still not in place.

*Niger GGW action plan 2012-2016*



## Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

The Harmonised Regional Strategy for implementation of the GGWI acknowledged that the particularity of the initiative made it difficult to establish a single monitoring and evaluation system capable of capturing the complete picture for each country, territorial community or operation. Instead, the strategy argued that individual project performance was better grasped by project monitoring and evaluation systems based on local priorities and tied to a minimum set of common strategic indicators agreed in advance. The strategy also called for a joint dialogue forum to examine progress towards the achievement of the objectives and expected outcomes, and to adopt a common scoreboard under the auspices of a steering committee for all multi-country initiatives.

The steering committee would have the following responsibilities:

- + examine and approve annual reports, work plans and budgets of different initiatives
- + evaluate progress towards implementing the GGWI, and make recommendations on actions and measures to be taken to ensure achievement of its objectives and operational outcomes
- + approve progress reports on GGWI implementation, to be submitted by the AUC at its Summit of Heads of State.<sup>46</sup>

At present, there are 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. As noted in the 2020 progress report, this state of affairs is largely a result of the weak organisational structures and processes for the implementation of the GGWI, linked to a lack of related financial and human resources allocated to the respective government institutions.<sup>47</sup>

Also, in most cases, national GGW agencies or focal points are not involved directly in the monitoring of the GGWI or related projects because of a lack of resources. Instead, direct supervision of specific funded projects is often undertaken by donors, with the inclusion of a monitoring and evaluation component as part of the project. For example, the GGW-related initiative from the World Bank/GEF Sahel and West Africa Programme (SAWAP)<sup>48</sup> includes a component called “BRICKS” (Building Resilience through Innovation, Communication and Knowledge Services) that aims to share best practices and monitoring information in the SAWAP portfolio with the support of regional technical organisations that facilitate monitoring services (key informant interview, SAWAP project).

In Niger, important challenges relating to monitoring and evaluation of the GGWI include:

- the tedious compilation of statistical data produced by other concerned ministries to produce realistic annual balance sheets showing the government’s efforts to implement the GGWI in Niger
- the mobilisation of funds to support the national GGW agency and enable it to monitor missions in the field, etc.
- long delays in the development, validation and registration of the Project Design Document (PDD) at the CDM Executive Secretariat level
- difficulties related to the general management of the National Agency of the GGW.

## Complaints and investigation mechanisms (including whistleblowing)

The GGWI does not have an independent mechanism in place to register and investigate complaints about corruption or fraud. Nor are there any procedures for external actors to lodge complaints centrally against GGWI institutions or related projects. Instead, complaints are channelled through national mechanisms, where they exist. There is no awareness raising on how stakeholders can make a complaint.

Moreover, the GGWI has neither a publicly accessible whistleblowing policy nor any provisions for independent or enforceable whistleblower protection.

According to some key informants from CSOs (for example, SPONG – Burkina Faso, RESAD – Niger, RESAD – Burkina Faso, and REFEDE – Mali), they fear the potential consequences, such as limited access to the initiative, if they were to make negative comments. Moreover, documented evidence in the case of Senegal<sup>49</sup> points to management and governance issues, such as the irregular appointment of supervisory board members, non-compliance with the frequency of meetings, irregularities in the certification of accounts, discrepancies between budgetary and accounting data, and undeveloped performance contracts. Other evidence was provided by the PAAGGW organisational chart and key informant testimony in relation to people who find themselves performing incompatible functions. The absence of personnel envisaged in the organisational chart disrupts reciprocal control in the structure, resulting in a potentially high-risk of fraud or financial data mismanagement (although unrelated to corruption). However, while the GGWI structures operate under conditions that do not guarantee sound financial management, no formal complaints or investigations were mentioned in the consulted documents or by any of the interviewed individuals.

## Anti-corruption mechanisms

The PAAGGW has developed a Governance and Ethics Charter as an annex to its Strategic Communication Plan (2018-2023). However, the charter is short on detail. Its objectives include: (i) promoting the prevention and fight against corruption in accordance with the provisions of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; and (ii) promoting values and rules of conduct in matters

of moral integrity, ethics and good governance within the PAAGGW. It also states that the PAAGGW prohibits any fraudulent practice and any act that can be considered as corruption in its relations with partners, in particular the GGWI national structures, Rural Committees for Sustainable Development, suppliers, creditors, local communities, states and donors. However, beyond these broad principles, the charter does not make any reference to specific or enforceable anti-corruption mechanisms such as conflict of interest policies or codes of conduct.<sup>50</sup>

While the Executive Secretariat of the PAAGGW has an Internal Audit and Control Unit, the unit is not operational because of a lack of personnel and there is no mention of any internal ethics advisor or committee within the GGWI to advise staff on ethical issues.

Given the lack of complaints mechanisms and the absence of comprehensive information relating to the internal performance of the PAAGGW and national agencies, it is very difficult in practice to ascertain the degree to which ethical lapses have occurred within the framework of the GGWI. Interviews conducted as part of this assessment did not identify any specific instances of ethical wrongdoing, although the PAAGGW's website shows that its Executive Secretariat had only one executive secretary from the agency's creation in 2010 until 2019-2020 and a second secretary was appointed in January 2022. In the interview with key informants from the PAAGGW, UNEP and UNCCD, the situation was raised as a concern. Also, the lack of mechanisms to track funding and assess project results was frequently raised as an issue by the respondents. Moreover, the procedures to award key positions in the PAAGGW Executive Secretariat reportedly lack conflict of interest safeguards or clear appointment criteria. Ethical standards do not require an explanation of decisions, nor do they allow for any appeals.

There have been a small number of inferences in the media of corrupt practices around the GGWI at the national level, but the allegations tend not to be substantiated or specific. For example, Senegal was accused of manipulating the GGWI process to benefit certain forestry companies.<sup>51</sup> More recently, in 2022, the former director general of the national GGW agency in Mauritania was arrested and dismissed from his post along with other officials in what was seen by observers as an attempt by the president of the country to protect the institution from mismanagement and corruption.<sup>52</sup>



## Strengthening accountability and integrity

There appears to be a common desire to promote harmonisation and coordination of efforts at all levels of the GGWI, as demonstrated by the various new partnerships being deployed, such as the PAAGGW-UNDP 2021-2030 Integrated Multi-State Regional Programme (Programme Intégrateur Multi-États, PIME).<sup>53</sup> There are also plans by UNEP in collaboration with AfDB to conduct an institutional and organisational audit of the PAAGGW to identify shortcomings and make recommendations to improve operations. The audit's terms of reference have been shared with stakeholders, but the call for proposals has yet to be sent out.

From an accountability perspective, the GGW Accelerator offers the promise of more effective, better coordinated monitoring and impact measurement of GGWI actions, including the development of an annual impact monitoring table to track achievements on the ground for each national GGW agency. The appointment of a monitoring and evaluation expert by the GGW Accelerator in 2022 is a significant capacity enhancement in this regard. Specifically, the GGW Accelerator has committed to carry out the following activities through 2025:<sup>54</sup>

- + design a GGWI online platform to monitor, track and connect financing flows with project needs (2021)
- + support GGWI countries in establishing enhanced monitoring and reporting systems (2021-2022)
- + track implementation progress in beneficiary countries against GGWI results targets (2021-2023)
- + transfer the GGW Accelerator unit to the Pan African Agency (2023-2024)
- + review and evaluate the impact of GGW Accelerator investments and progress made towards the 2030 GGWI ambition (2025).

However, improvement efforts currently being put in place through the GGW Accelerator to strengthen accountability do not envisage the establishment of any complaints, investigation or protection mechanisms. Nor do they envisage any measures to strengthen the integrity of the GGWI generally or the PAAGGW specifically. These are critical blind spots in GGWI governance that now need to be addressed.



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# APPENDIX

## LIST AND NUMBER OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

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The number of people interviewed appears in brackets.

### Regional level

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<b>PAAGGW</b>	Executive secretary, M&E, Adm. & fin. director, IGS officer (4)
<b>African Union</b>	GGW representative (1)
<b>UNEP</b>	GGW focal point (1)
<b>UNCDD</b>	Accelerator (2)
<b>UNDP</b>	Regional office in Dakar, Senegal (1)
<b>World Bank</b>	Senior staff and SAWAP project evaluator (2)
<b>AfDB</b>	Regional representative (1)
<b>GEF</b>	African representative (1)
<b>CIFOR-ICRAF</b>	Senior policy advisor (1)

### National level

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<b>National agencies</b>	Niger (1), Senegal (2), Burkina Faso (2), Chad (2), Nigeria (2), Ethiopia (1), Djibouti (1)
<b>NGO/CSO/private sector</b>	BRICKS project under SAWAP (1)
	CILLS (Niger) (3)
	APEFE (Burkina Faso) (1)
	SPONG (1)
	TREE AID (BF, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger) (1)
	Bird Life International (continental & transboundary) (2)
	REFEDE-Mali (1)
	NGO consortium (11 countries) (2)
	Mosaic (2)
	RESAD Niger & Burkina Faso (2)
<b>GGW project focal points</b>	FLEUVE Project, The Local Environmental Coalition for a Green Union, 2014–2018 (1)
	Sahel and West Africa Programme in support of the GGW (SAWAP) 2013-2019 (1)

# ENDNOTES

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- 5 [https://catalogue.unccd.int/1551\\_GGW\\_Report\\_ENG\\_Final\\_040920.pdf](https://catalogue.unccd.int/1551_GGW_Report_ENG_Final_040920.pdf)
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- 7 Specifically, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
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- 10 Pillar 1: Investment in small and medium-sized farms and strengthening of value chains, local markets, organisation of exports; Pillar 2: Land restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems; Pillar 3: Climate-resilient infrastructure and access to renewable energy; Pillar 4: Favourable economic and institutional framework for effective governance, sustainability, stability, and security; Pillar 5: Capacity building.
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- 12 The 11 countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan. Niger and Senegal have been selected as case studies because they are two countries that have set ambitious goals and have already had an experience of GGW implementation but at two different levels and in different contexts.
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