



# SWEDD

AUTONOMISATION  
DES FEMMES ET  
DIVIDENDE  
DÉMOGRAPHIQUE  
AU SAHEL

SAHEL WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
AND  
DEMOGRAPHIC  
DIVIDEND

# SWEDD: People-centred and family-based

## A Sahelian Success Story



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“Young people make up 75 per cent of the population SWEDD countries which represent a huge potential of assets for the private sector. Investing in human capital will determine whether or not Africa is able to acquire human capital that is commensurate with its desire for emergence.”

*Mabingué Ngom, UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa Office - WCARO*





# Chapter 1

## How a partnership for change was formed

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“SWEDD Project is a common vision that Niger shares with other countries on the challenges of the development of our continent, especially those related to the acceleration of the demographic transition, the empowerment of women and the development of human capital which are the irreplaceable levers for accelerating economic growth and increasing the well-being of African populations, particularly in the Sahel region.”

*President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger*

## A common need for Sahel's countries

The Sahel is one of the most complex regions in the world facing a combination of crisis situations, where extreme poverty, climate change and insecurity threaten the lives of millions of people.

These situations have increased violence, caused human rights violations, undermined economic opportunities particularly for young people, led to radicalization, depressed social services, provoked mass migration, destroyed public infrastructure, particularly schools and health facilities, triggering severe food insecurity, strained social safety nets and increased the region's populations' vulnerability. The region remains susceptible to disease outbreaks such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and Ebola among others which further constrain the fragile health system.

In most countries in the region, the remarkable efforts made towards stimulating economic growth over the past two decades, with growth rates of around five per cent per year, have been offset by rapid population growth, which is exacerbating poverty levels by reducing per capita income. Thousands of women die each year from preventable causes related to pregnancy. While the benefits of schooling are well recognized, in some countries millions of children are

deprived of education and find themselves on the streets due to poverty, early marriages and conflicts among other reasons that limit their access to school.

To respond to these seemingly insurmountable challenges and improve the well-being of those in the Sahel region, the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) was born following the appeal on demographic challenges, launched on November 6, 2013 in Niamey by His Excellency Elhadji Issoufou Mahamadou, President of the Republic of Niger, accompanied by Heads of States from the Sahel countries notably Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Mauritania, in the presence of Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, who was then Secretary General of the United Nations, the late Dr. Babatundé Osotimehin, former Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund Population (UNFPA), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who formerly served as Chair of the African Union Commission and Mr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group (WB):



"I renew my commitment and that of the Government of Niger to invest in the health and nutrition of our women and our children, to better education and to keep our girls in school for as long as possible. To ensure they are not to marry them early, to work with everyone to ensure better health and future for families and for young people. I am convinced that my counterpart heads of state in the Sahel will act in the same direction. I invite our international partners to support the countries of the Sahel on this path that will lead to a richer, more prosperous and more inclusive region."

*His Excellency Issoufou Mahamadou, President of the Republic of Niger,  
November 06, 2013 in Niamey*

SWEDD is a regional project that unites these six western and central African countries with the main objective of **"accelerating the demographic transition, to spur the demographic dividend, and to reduce gender inequality in the Sahel region"**.

SWEDD was officially launched on November 2nd, 2015 in Niger's capital city of Niamey. Niger also happens to chair the Regional Steering Committee.

When it was initiated SWEDD had an operational time frame that was scheduled to run until the end of 2018. However, owing to

an impressive list of achievements on all of SWEDD's intervention strategies in the region the 2018 time scale has been extended to 2023 and neighbouring states have expressed their interest to join the inspiring and transformational SWEDD initiative.

In 2018, Benin was added as the seventh country in the SWEDD initiative which strengthens the empowerment level of women and adolescent girls in the member states. SWEDD's working framework supports access to quality reproductive, child and maternal health services, and improves knowledge production and sharing.

**Marie France Digbeu – Mentor,  
“Safe Space” programme, Côte d’Ivoire**

I lost my parents at a tender age. I lost my father at age 6 and my mother at 8 years old. What I do is what I wish should have been done for me.

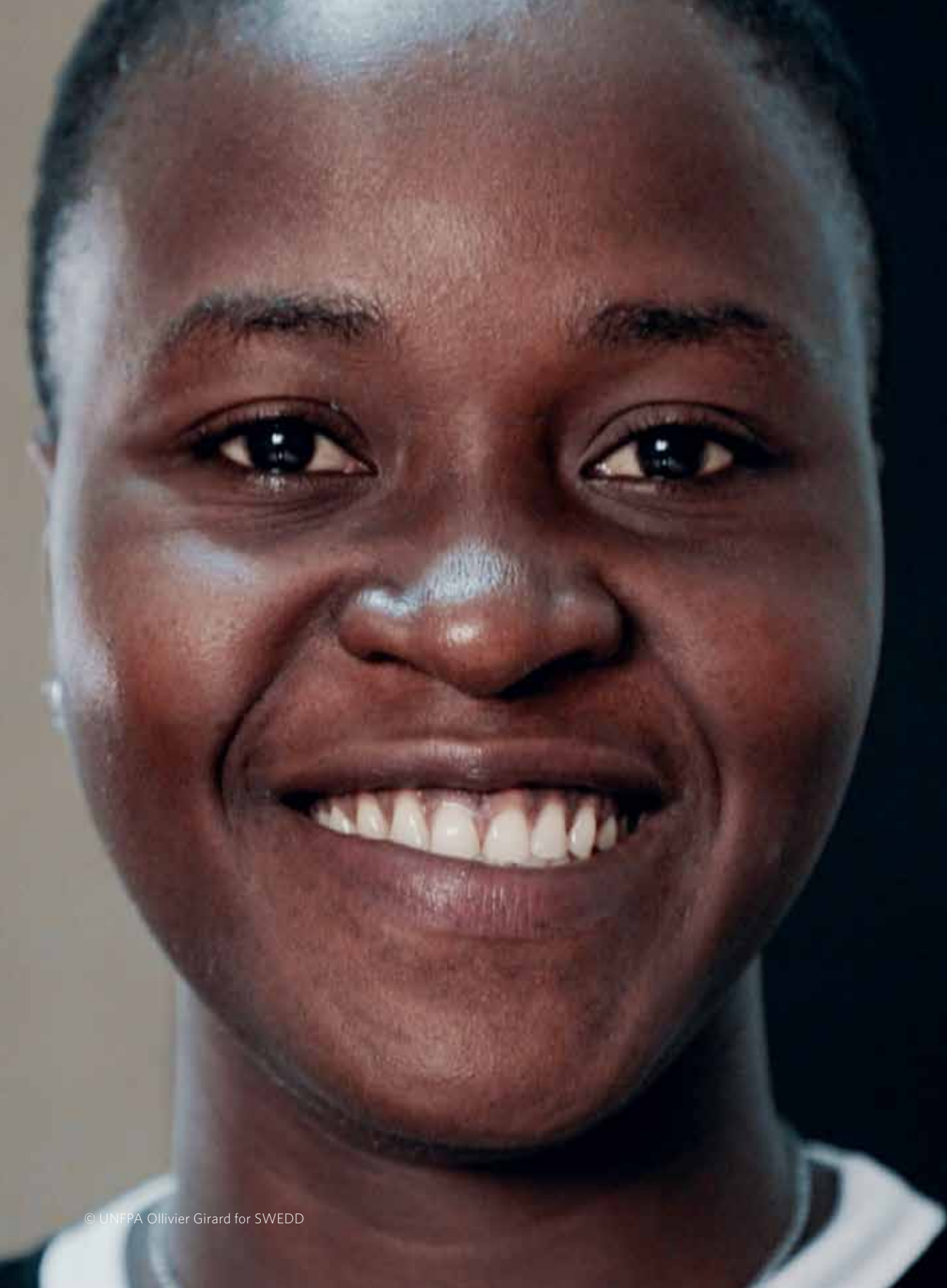
As a mentor, I'm here to bring good humour to the girls. We share and chat.

I like it. I want people to feel good. We talk, we have fun. Then I remind them of the project. We do a little show and we dance. I also get them to understand what we want them to do.

For example, how to change their behaviour and getting them to share their feelings.

It's also about sharing with them what I've been taught. So I feel great to be there for these girls, and to share different things. It makes me feel great to be there for these girls and to share different things with them.

For me it is a useful role and to those who already do it to continue doing it with a lot of love. I have heard that we all have a second chance when you realize that you can get up. Thanks to the girls and I encourage them to come and share these moments with the mentors and relive all those experiences.



# Chapter 2

## Embracing Sahelian diversity with global best practices

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SWEDD is principally a Sahelian people-centred project that broadly deploys family-based approaches leading to its extraordinary accomplishments as its all-inclusive strategy provides for support for improving reproductive, neonatal, child health and nutrition together with mainstreaming women's economic empowerment; education; and the much-needed support for reducing early marriages among girls.

"Safe Spaces" and "Husbands' Schools" are local initiatives that SWEDD has scaled up from Niger and replicated them to other countries in the region.

The "safe spaces" and the "husband-to-be schools" are SWEDD's two novel projects being up-scaled. These two win-win empowerment

strategies are a bulwark of SWEDD's success and are now being replicated across the region.

These two major innovative ideals are deployed through a community-based approach to transform girls and boys into agents of social change with an aim to overcome vulnerability, act independently and responsibly and participate in community development initiatives. These are the "Safe spaces" and "husband-to-be schools" ideals which have introduced four dimensions of personal development:

- a) knowledge,
- b) skills (acquisition of information and skills through modular sessions and literacy classes),

- c) consent (development of self-esteem and respect for others) and
- d) power (acquisition of capacities and resources to guarantee empowerment and gender equality).

This interactive and participatory approach introduced by the SWEDD project overcomes the segmented approach to target groups, whose needs vary greatly. The community approach involves changing social norms to develop life and reproductive health skills and to empower those involved so that they can be responsible.

The “safe space” is designed as a “liberty zone” that welcomes 100 girls, of which two thirds are aged between 9 and 14 years and the remaining third are aged 15 to 19. These are girls who have not had the chance to access school or who are out of school, vulnerable and at risk of being married before reaching the age of 18. The “safe spaces” strategy is structured around a three-dimensional intervention encompassing the girl, her community and institutions.

The core aim delves on reducing child marriages, by delaying them to the minimum age of 18, reduce early teenage pregnancies and increase the use of family planning services. The first line of intervention targets adolescent girls through weekly modular sessions over a time-frame of 6 months, with training on life skills, health, hygiene and reproductive health. The skills development includes economic empowerment and vocational training with a view to changing their behavior and embrace empowerment, enlightenment and responsibility.

Communal action is the second line of intervention geared at shifting social norms to enhance the development of adolescent girls to assist them to explore their potential.

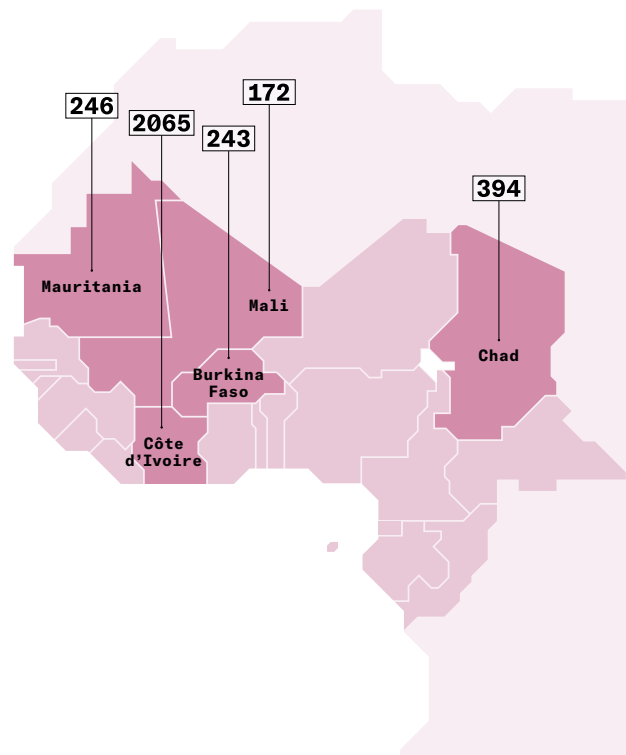
The third line of intervention seeks to build partnership bridges with government and civil society on all civic affairs concerns.

Among the six SWEDD countries, the “safe spaces” concept which was launched in Niger in 2013 under the name “*Initiative for Adolescent Girls - Knowledge for Dignity*” has now grown to 640 safe spaces with 300 others expected to be opened soon.

“Safe Spaces” taking root in SWEDD countries:

- i) Burkina Faso → 243
- ii) Chad → 394
- iii) Côte d’Ivoire → 2065
- iv) Mauritania → 246
- v) Mali → 172

It is projected that these Safe Spaces will reach 102,600 out-of-school girls and young women and that by 2019, there will be 4,060 safe spaces involving 104,932 girls and young women.







## **Fintiéri Makora – Enrolled in Husbands School, Burkina Faso**

It was an NGO that came to introduce us to the Husbands School and I signed up.

Before we used to let our women work in the fields and at home.

We learned that we had to be next to them to help them.

Women have also seen this solution positively.

The relationship in our homes is better, our lives have really changed.

When I get home, we talk, we do a lot of things we didn't do before.

The other men who do not participate in the club, they see what we're doing in the club it's important.

What we have learned is that it is good that we can share it.

It's going to change our lives. It's going to change everyone else's in the commune.

We are all winners because it is about health.

If we can help each other, the woman will be at peace and healthy.

What I want to say to others:

if there's a second phase, it's to register.

If they see us do it, they will do the same thing.



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To reduce gender inequalities the husbands and “husbands-to-be” clubs have also been set up as part of SWEDD. These male forums act as platforms for accurate and comprehensive information exchange. They are designed as spaces to forge voluntary discussions and actions so as to instill community responsibility among the men folk and encourage peer-to-peer counselors. The objective is to promote the involvement of men, who hold decision-making power within the family units and wider community especially as it concerns the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and gender equality. The successful Husband Schools and Future Husbands’ Clubs have been implemented in Niger since 2008.

Presently 1,640 husband and husband-to-be clubs are being set up with an expected outcome of 49,200 people reached.

These two interventions are contributing to the acceleration of the demographic transition and leading to the attainment of the demographic

dividend which will enable SWEDD countries to boost economic and social development.

### **SWEDD “Centres of Excellence” supports a new generation of qualified health professionals**

In its endeavour to achieve its objectives SWEDD established “Centres of Excellence” for training health workers, especially midwives and nurses. The best example is the transformation of three midwifery training institutions into centres of excellence where education now follows the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) system, with the necessary institutional changes.

Three new centres of excellence for the Masters in Nursing and Obstetrics were opened in Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Niger. Three existing institutes in Abidjan, Bamako and Niamey now offer the Bachelor-Masters-Doctorate system, in order to upgrade and deepen basic education by granting both midwives and nurses access to a





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Graduate-level degree courses over a period of four academic semesters.

Each centre trains cohorts in equal numbers from the six SWEDD countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger in three different courses, namely:

- (i) the Health Sciences Education course at the National Training Institute for Health Workers (Institut National de Formation des Agents de Santé- INFAS) in Abidjan,
- (ii) the Health Services Management course at the National Training Institute in Health Sciences (Institut national de formation en sciences de la santé - INFSS) in Bamako and finally
- (iii) the Gyneco-Obstetric course at the National School of Public Health (École Nationale de Santé Publique - ENSP)/ Damouré Zika in Niamey.

This comprehensive initiative has dual intentions. It is making it possible, to give future prospects to young people with an interest in the medical vocation to be part of the medical profession. Similarly it is changing attitudes and perceptions about the profession that has been overlooked for long. By attracting more students and providing them with the opportunity for a modern and high-quality education, with access to sophisticated modern equipment like manikins, e-learning opportunities and work placements, the SWEDD project supports a new generation of qualified health professionals in the field of maternal and child health.

In addition to the centres of excellence, SWEDD supports the maternal health unit in the development of a handbook on the clinical mentoring of midwives. This handbook is now in use training Senior Mentors at the ENSP in Nouakchott, Mauritania, which serves as the Regional Reference Centre for the Clinical Mentoring of Midwives.

## **Kone Bintu Tounkara – Midwife, Mali**

When I came here in the morning, there are quite a number of cases of diseases. I undertake prenatal and medical consultations in connection with the doctors. There are others who come for postnatal consultations. I am a promoter of this private practice. It works a lot. The office was opened on October 4, 2018 and we have made 508 consultations.

So that means there is an increase and I am motivated that it works.

To help reduce maternal and infant mortality, is what motivates me to be with these women and to be present in a private practice.

Because we are far from the nearest health facility which is the Diola Health Center and around here, there are a lot of homes who do not have faster means such as vehicles to commute.

So when they come to do their consultations, they only move a short distance.

I wish that all the mothers coming for consultation should be supported in a space like ours.





# Chapter 3

## SWEDD: a proven regional approach

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The UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO), based in Dakar, Senegal, hosts the SWEDD project's Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) and is responsible for strengthening the project management capacities of the implementing agencies at the national and regional levels.

The Regional Technical Secretariat has made a significant contribution through various interventions and technical assistance coordination in the region leading to the effectiveness of synergy between regional institutions in relation to its Secretariat mandate.

SWEDD is designed based on the realities of the strained management of reproductive health issues and their negative impact on controlling

population growth, gender inequalities, women's economic vulnerability and the lack of awareness of the development potential of achieving the demographic dividend in visions for development.

To this end the technical assistance provided by the Regional Technical Secretariat is aligned with member states priorities and its mandate.

The location of the Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) in the UNFPA Regional Office in Dakar allows it to share its facilities and benefit from its logistics. Sharing offices with the Regional Office also leverages a significant part of the Office's non-SWEDD staff time for SWEDD activities. It also enables RTS staff to benefit from the knowledge of other experienced professionals. Putting all these in perspective this



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positioning is strategic as it enables the RTS and SWEDD to capitalize on the added value of UNFPA, a United Nations specialized organization with extensive experience in SWEDD themes.

In addition to the dedicated SWEDD team, high-level experts participate in technical support, project promotion and advocacy for the mobilization of additional resources and the commitment of the region's national leaders to the demographic dividend and the empowerment of women and adolescent girls. The concept of the demographic dividend is gradually being integrated into national development policies and strategies and is now being adopted by States across the continent.

The eight SWEDD subcomponents do structure the specific activities to be carried out in this regard, and the Technical Assistance activities of the joint annual work plans include the special support required for the sub-projects, interventions and country activities. All these are aimed at accelerating the demographic

transition and promoting the empowerment of women and adolescent girls. Similarly, the UNFPA Regional Technical Secretariat supports the development of sub-projects and implementing initiatives that have proven to be best practices with high impact on expected changes in countries, addressing, reproductive health, child health, demography, gender equality and the socioeconomic integration of young people. These include project models for developing safe spaces, husband and husband-to-be clubs, optimal schooling for girls and income-generating activities for the economic empowerment of women and adolescent girls.

The "safe space" is a space that welcomes 100 girls, of which two thirds are aged between 9 and 14 years and the remaining third are aged 15 to 19. The "safe spaces" concept was launched in Niger in 2013 under the clarion call "*Initiative for Adolescent Girls - Knowledge for Dignity*".





# Chapter 4

## Bolstering SWEDD: The four-Point Intervention Plan

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Benin's accession to SWEDD and the prospect of further accessions is a hallmark of the successes of the initiative and bodes well for the project's sustainable future.

The visibility and influence of the SWEDD project, which has been running for three to four years now, makes it appealing. This accomplishment is related to its institutional standpoints', geographical positioning, project themes and the regional activities implemented by the Regional Technical Secretariat.

Benin has just joined the initial group of the first six beneficiary countries of the project. Guinea and Cameroon have now expressed their interest in doing the same. Senegal has also indicated its willingness to join the project.

To increase the recognition and visibility of the added value of SWEDD a communication plan of the project at the regional and country levels, enunciating the profiles and comprehensive studies on the demographic dividend and policy notes, is being rolled out to publicize and highlight milestones to the general public.

SWEDD has identified a four-point intervention plan which serves as opportunities for partnership that builds up on the current successes, prepares for the future and is ready to accommodate new members:

**Opportunity 1:** Establishing an elaborate mass education program, highlighting the rationale and major benefits for achieving SWEDD objectives at the country and regional levels



**Opportunity 2:** Emphasizing, the status of partners (UNFPA, World Bank, WAHO, member states) together with stakeholders to develop innovative partnerships mobilizing additional resources and at the same time detailing their roles and functions including their mandates.

**Opportunity 3:** Sensitizing NGOs and CSOs to the objectives of SWEDD and increasing their involvement in activity programming by inviting them to participate in the meetings and activities of the Project bodies.

**Opportunity 4:** Guaranteeing that the human resources trained under SWEDD are effectively deployed to address the deficiencies identified.

Globally, the West and Central African region has the highest dependency ratio, at 87.2 per cent (for the age groups 0-14 and 65 +), highest fertility rate at 5.2 children per woman and annual population growth estimated at 2.7 per cent. The population is predominantly young, with almost 60 per cent of population under the age of 24. Despite the fact that a number of countries in the region have reached the status of middle income country, and experience high growth in terms of gross domestic product, this has not translated to prosperity due to inequalities and slow demographic transition.

“The African Union has prioritised the demographic dividend as a vehicle for sustainable development, and the continent has made great strides towards harnessing the potential of its people, especially its women and youth. Nevertheless, we need greater commitment to reduce the inequalities that continue to hinder the demographic transition and leave too many people behind. Africa’s success in achieving the SDGs and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 will depend on women’s empowerment and the level of self-reliance they achieve.”

*UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem*



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Other than the six member nations, SWEDD incorporates the World Bank's International Development Association as a lead donor and two intergovernmental agencies namely the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) representing the United Nations system and the West African Health Organization (WAHO) on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Interestingly, Chad and Mauritania are not members of ECOWAS, and neither are they members of or, therefore, of WAHO. These convergence of variety is a key pillar of SWEDD.

The diversity of the Sahel region makes the implementation and coordination mechanism for this regional project complex and a study in adopting local solutions, merging global best

practices and embracing dynamic approaches to accommodate all those concerned. As countries are not at the same level and are progressing at different rates SWEDD takes pride in being able to manage the diverse capacities in different countries to implement regional technical assistance.

SWEDD initiative remains one of the most remarkable and successful projects of UNFPA-WCARO. This regional initiative has been accelerating the demographic transition which continues to create the conditions for a demographic dividend that promotes economic growth and the reduction of gender inequalities between men and women in the Sahel region.

# Chapter 5

## UNFPA-WCARO boosts SWEDD

The UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office (UNFPA-WCARO) in Dakar, where the Regional Technical Secretariat is located, is responsible for SWEDD's Technical Assistance expenditure geared towards achieving six key responsibilities. These are:

1. coordination of technical assistance
2. ensuring programme implementation
3. coordinating the Regional Steering Committee Secretariat
4. promoting knowledge-sharing
5. strengthening policy harmonization

6. supporting national activities under the project

The placement of the technical assistance provided by UNFPA Regional Technical Secretariat with its mandate has proven to be effective as implemented actions cover all six of its responsibilities.

The advantages of positioning the Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) within the UNFPA Regional Office in Dakar enables it to capitalize on the added value of UNFPA, a United Nations specialized organization with extensive experience in SWEDD themes. The location of the RTS within the UNFPA Regional Office also enables it to share the latter's facilities and benefit from its logistics - communication, security and administrative support - so that it complies

with United Nations regulations. In this regard, the contribution of the operations, finance and human resources departments is vital in implementing procurement and administrative and financial management activities that comply with UNFPA and World Bank procedures.

Sharing premises with the Regional Office also enables RTS staff to benefit from the experience of other professionals in the office. 12 non-SWEDD employees in the Regional Office, most of whom are qualified professionals, spend between 15 and 50 per cent of their working time on the SWEDD project (25 per cent, on average) (Table 21). This pooling of resources and staff allows for savings and is a further step towards optimizing the success of RTS activities and the achievement of the SWEDD objectives.

Dakar in Senegal acts as a coordination office with direct connection and maintaining open communication channels with Niamey, N'Djamena, Abidjan, Nouakchott and Bamako all SWEDD member states offices together with bilateral partners. New cities will join this clutter-free communication node.

### SWEDD's Triple-Components

The three components that define SWEDDs transformational intervention strategies are:

**Component 1** Generate demand for reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child health and nutrition (RMNCHN) services by promoting social and behavioral change alongside the empowerment of women and adolescent girls;

**Component 2** Reinforce the regional availability of RMNCHN commodities and qualified health workers;

**Component 3** Reinforce advocacy and dialogue at high levels and promote policy development and the project's implementation.

A comprehensive independent assessment that examined the entire SWEDD management and operational mechanisms notes that since its official launch in November 2015, the initiative has recorded phenomenal growth and spurred positive change. SWEDD which embraces local homegrown solutions, adapts global best practices and translates them with the realities on the ground has become a beacon of hope for the Sahel.

The Technical Assistance activities contributed to:

- a. SWEDD implementation
- b. Planning
- c. Developing subprojects (women's empowerment, distribution of reproductive health products) to facilitate disbursement
- d. Managing procurement procedures
- e. Developing midwifery training curricula
- f. Establishing and running demographic dividend observatories
- g. Advocacy for a facilitative environment
- h. Establishing alternative strategies to increase the availability of reproductive health products up to the last mile
- i. Implementing project monitoring

The World Bank which is a key partner in SWEDD has commended the planning of the project appeals process, which proved to be a suitable initiative in terms of the effectiveness and success of the empowerment and RMNCHN product distribution sub-projects.







# Chapter 6

## Coordinating SWEDD to reach the grassroots

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The location of the Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) in the UNFPA Regional Office in Dakar allows it to share its facilities and benefit directly from logistics, communication, security and administrative support as it coordinates the SWEDD initiative.

Sharing offices with the UNFPA Regional Office enables RTS staff to gain from the experience of other professionals in the office. More generally, this positioning facilitates the RTS and SWEDD to capitalize on the added value of UNFPA, which is a specialized United Nations organization with extensive experience in all of SWEDD themes.

UNFPA/RTS contributed significantly to the effectiveness of synergy between regional institutions, in relation to its Regional Steering

Committee (RSC) Secretariat mandate, through various interventions and TA coordination in the region. The allocation of additional responsibilities to the RTS with the inclusion of supervision and validation of the activities and applications for funding of the PMUs has improved the interaction between the partners.

Considerable work is now being deployed to develop a tool to monitor the work and recommendations of the RSC and the clarity of the National Steering Committee (NSC)/Country actions and address the difficulties in reconciling government and programme agendas.



President of Niger during the SWEDD Rountable in the margins of the UA Summit 2019 © UNFPA Ollivier Girard for SWEDD

## Political Goodwill

The factors that help encourage good collaboration among project stakeholders are associated with political commitment at the highest level of countries and partner institutions. The successful launch of the SWEDD project by His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou, President of Niger, in 2015, the public positioning of high-level government officials in hosting Regional Steering Committee meetings, followed by concrete commitment to mainstreaming women's empowerment and the demographic dividend in their national development and poverty-reduction policies all constitute positive factors.

In addition, the existence of other regional initiatives contributing to the achievement of project results, such as the Ouagadougou Partnership, SWEDD First Ladies Forum all contributed to the bid to reposition family planning in several SWEDD countries.

## First Ladies mobilise global leaders to bolsters SWEDD

SWEDD has made significant strides committing considerable resources in harnessing the demographic dividend, reducing child marriages, reducing early teenage pregnancies and increasing the use of family planning services.

A global high-level summit under the patronage of SWEDD's First Ladies led by Niger's First Lady, Dr Lalla Malika Issoufou, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) West and Central Africa Regional Office, SWEDD organised a high-level side-event on the margins of the 73rd session of the General Assembly in New York in September 2018.

UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, officially opened the high-level event. The Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem together with other dignitaries,



First Lady of Niger, UN SDG, UNFPA ED and Traditional Chief © UNFPA Ollivier Girard for SWEDD

including President Alpha Conde of Guinea, the ECOWAS Chairperson, WHO Director-General, then Secretary-General of the International Organisation of La Francophonie, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström, among other high ranking officials spoke at the event. Over 100 delegates attended the event, including several First Ladies and heads of International Organisations.

Dr Issoufou led various speakers to share best practices and community interventions geared at reducing child marriage and promoting women and girls' well-being that has largely contributed to the reduction of the fertility rate in Niger.

The session showcased the best practices and community interventions that have enabled the country to improve the well-being of women and girls, leading to a reduction in the fertility rate from 7.6 to 6 children per woman. How the country is overcoming its main challenges and developing successful community interventions which are now acting as bench-marks on best practices for other countries in the region is the new narrative from Niger.

The interventions have reduced child marriage, improved enrollment and retention rates of girls in schools and increased contraceptive access for adolescent girls.



Artist Sidiki Diabaté © Antoine Tempé

## Communicating the right message

### The Six-pillars that make SWEDD Effective

After three years of a bold, well timed and all inclusive intervention strategy an Independent financial and technical review panel on SWEDD has found out that the technical assistance provided to the countries is relevant and aligned with its mandate.

This success is attributed to six pillars that enable SWEDD to fulfill its mandate. These are:



**1**  
**The regional communication campaign** undertaken under the Social and Behaviour Change Communication

(SBCC) was a significant activity led directly by the Regional Technical Secretariat.

A very successful regional campaign reached more than 300 million people in five months on television and radio channels, including TV5 Afrique, Canal+, A+, Novelas TV, Nollywood TV, Trace TV, BBlack TV, Ouest TV, and RFI. The Banoni series published on the campaign's Facebook page was viewed more than 4 million times. It mobilised journalists, the media and celebrities – who were appointed as 'champions' – among others, to support keeping young girls in the education system up to the age of 18, as well as the economic empowerment of women and girls. The involvement of people who are influential to young people (well-known artists, celebrities) can increase the visibility of awareness-raising campaigns and help the target population to better absorb the messages. As part of the regional campaign, several artists took part in the production of media materials (TV advertisements, songs, videos) and in social mobilisation activities. Large-scale events lasting several days brought together political leaders, the media, and, in particular, young

people, around issues such as: the empowerment of women and harnessing the demographic dividend; dialogue and raising people's awareness about the challenge of harnessing the demographic dividend; and the promotion of economic and social growth in the Sahel.

Various guides and manuals were provided to stakeholders through the technical assistance.

1. Regional Strategy for Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) 2017–2019 (84 pages)
2. Saturation+ Handbook: How to design and run a media campaign for social and behavioral change (10 pages)
3. Media Analysis Guide: an analysis of the media landscape in the six SWEDD countries (17 pages)
4. Social Media Handbook : How to conduct a campaign on social media (13 pages)
5. The Training Manual on the information system of the Demographic Dividend Observatory (49 pages)
6. The Training Manual on monitoring dimensions and indicators for the Demographic Dividend Observatory (154 pages)
7. Guide to Programming the demographic dividend: from Theory to Experience (147 pages)
8. The brochure for the Regional Demographic Dividend Observatory – Consolidated Report (32 pages)
9. Revised guide to the establishment and operation of an observatory for monitoring demographic dividend indicators under the SWEDD project (32 pages)
10. Sahel's Countries window of opportunity 38 years to harness demographic dividend (6 pages)
11. Dependency in SWEDD Countries, a surplus period of 36 years on average (6 pages)
12. Gender in SWEDD Countries (6 pages)
13. Youth and Labor market in SWEDD Countries. Wealth that comes mostly from self-employment (6 pages)
14. Governance in SWEDD Countries: Encouraging performances (6 pages)
15. Inclusive growth in SWEDD Countries: when inclusion remains a challenge (6 pages)
16. Sahel's economic clusters: an alternative for local development (6 pages)
17. Successful experiences in the implementation of the SWEDD Project (2015-2018) (26 pages)





Symposium of N'Djamena 2017 © UNFPA Ollivier Girard for SWEDD



## 2 Partnerships and collaboration: How a partnership for change was crafted

The commitment of the World Bank and other sources from which states have secured funding, the visibility of the project and synergy of stakeholders have all increased.

Winning the hearts and minds of religious leaders to support of the demographic dividend and population programmes in the Sahel was a vital standpoint of SWEDD as they are critical actors and allies for change. Religious and cultural factors are considered to be of major importance in the lives of people, communities and society in the Sahel courtesy of their great influence, appropriate skills and diverse platforms to deliver key messages to their congregations.

SWEDD Regional Technical Secretariat identified and mobilised influential figures among Faith-based organizations, Muslim intellectu-

als and religious and traditional leaders in the countries concerned. These religious leaders were prepared for their role as public influencers of change and champions of harnessing the demographic dividend by SWEDD. The project organised international trips for them to share experiences, identify good practices and build the capacity of religious leaders' on issues concerning the demographic dividend, mother and child healthcare and the harmful and degrading practices which affect women and girls.

Under the theme: '*Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Well-Being*' two major conferences were organised in 2017 in N'Djamena (Chad) and in Nouakchott (Mauritania) 2018 respectively.

To keep abreast with demographic changes in each country the governments established observatories designed to serve as monitoring tools and information on the demographic dividend. The data collected is aimed at enabling decision-makers to design and base their policies on the population changes observed.





Public-Private Partnership Forum in Abidjan 2018 © UNFPA Ollivier Girard for SWEDD

Other than crafting a structure and developing standardised indicators in order to network the observatories at the regional level all SWEDD countries have national Demographic Dividend (DD) observatories capable of producing and analyzing population dynamics reports.

Continued dialogue with the World Bank has contributed to improved coordination, funding and quality of project management and implementation. Financial allocation and quality of the offers were supported by introducing pre approval of applications for subprojects addressed to the World Bank.

The UNFPA Regional Office's investment in implementing the mission of the project's RTS ensured the continuous functionality of the RSC and facilitated regional coordination of the SWEDD project.

Links with universities outside the ECOWAS region and experiences in strengthening essential medicines distribution and quality control

systems in collaboration with WAHO have boosted SWEDD immensely. The completeness and quality of UNFPA's support to all of SWEDDs strategic nodes has contributed to the synchronization and harmonization of information and ownership of project management. All meetings were carefully prepared by UNFPA/ RTS and recorded. The support and participation of UNFPA country offices in all meetings has been systematic, participatory, involving project stakeholders, host governments, project partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Based on the meeting outcomes, good practices and cross-cutting gaps are reviewed continuously.

A public-private partnership forum, which brought together over 120 participants in Abidjan, took place on 17 and 18 December 2018 culminated in the signing of a compact with the private sector and a roadmap for holding a round-table discussion on mobilising resources.

The deployment of regional collaborative mechanisms has led to an increase in knowl-

edge and skills. This has contributed to reducing inequalities in skills across country teams and harmonizing understanding of commitment and good practices to achieve SWEDD goals. Such mechanisms include:

(a) joint regional initiatives including SBCC campaign, political advocacy, sharing meetings, training of tutors and additional resource mobilization strategy,

(b) the development of regional reference documents such as a shared and adaptive communication strategy together with training manuals.



### 3 Training and evidence-based knowledge sharing

In three years, UNFPA/RTS' actions have produced several enviable and sustainable results.

A major first attributable to UNFPA/RTS is the establishment of an ISO certified laboratory for the quality control of reproductive health products in the SWEDD countries.

Other examples include the strengthening of African institutions notably: :

1. CREFAT, the Ivorian Centre for Economic and Social Research (CIRES),
2. The National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ENSEA),
3. Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la Population [Higher Institute of Population Sciences] (ISSP),
4. Institut National de Formation des Agents de Santé [National Training Institute for Health Workers] (INFAS),

5. École Nationale de Santé Publique [National School of Public Health] (ENSP) and procurement centres, and the aforementioned capacity-building for African and Sahelian managers in administrative management and supply chain management.

The various actions of UNFPA/RTS have also led to the strengthening of national skills in several areas. Thus, the communication strategy has led to the creation of a pool of SBCC experts to provide benchmarks so that countries may use community mobilization to respond to social norms, attitudes and practices to ensure the sustainability of results.

Similarly, a pool of experts was established to focus on issues related to economic empowerment, school enrolment and retention of girls at school, as well as community strategies for husband and husband-to-be clubs. This capacity-building provides a basis for sustainability to ensure that the corresponding activities can continue without technical assistance.

The existence of six national demographic dividend observatories to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals is also evidence that countries are moving towards sustainability

- Training for 240 national experts and government representatives from the countries on Social and Behaviour Communication Change in six countries
- Training for 206 national experts and government representatives from the countries on NTAs, developing regional profiles on the demographic dividend, developing policy briefs and further studies
- Training for 30 trainers on the use of the new harmonized midwifery programme in four countries

- Training for 656 midwives and 120 trainers
- Training for 115 people on drug regulation
- Training for 4,000 people in new midwifery skills and reproductive health through both short and long training programmes
- Training for 83 national experts on results-based management and financial procedures
- Training on the LQAS approach for the baseline assessment of reproductive health knowledge, attitudes and practices as part of the implementation of SBCC, safe spaces and husband clubs, 26 to 30 November, in N'djamena

SWEDD funding for study grants to finance statistical and demographic analysis also contributes to capacity-building for the member countries concerned in these areas.

CREFAT, a research institute within the *University of Thiès*, trains professionals in each country on how to prepare national transfer accounts (NTAs). It is also tasked with helping establish national demographic dividend observatories that are responsible for producing and analysing the data needed to monitor the demographic dividend indicators and for contributing to the development of policies and programmes that integrate the demographic dividend.

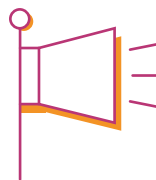


## 4 Sharing of experiences

Sharing of experiences, constraints and the adjustment of approaches and action plans remain as a vital part of the coordination of the annual meetings of the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) secretariat and coordinators. Three regular annual meetings

of the RSC have been held and reports of each meeting produced offering valuable insights and lessons regarding SWEDDs interventions.

Regional meetings covered the three project components, addressing the planning and operationalization needs of the system-building solutions also raising awareness, mobilizing and equipping representatives of civil society and faith-based organizations to provide continuity in the countries and communities covered by the project. These high-level events required high levels of funding and effort. They were necessary during the first part of the project as they strengthened drug control mechanisms and distribution systems, established centres of excellence to develop the knowledge of paramedical staff at the master's level and launched demographic dividend observatories in the six SWEDD countries.



## 5 High level advocacy

From a political point of view, the role of UNFPA/RTS was welcomed, both in organizing regional meetings and in addressing high-level representatives at regional and continental meetings to promote and advocate for the mainstreaming of women's empowerment and the demographic dividend in country development policies.

Additionally, promoting the regional harmonization of the registration and quality control of RMNCHN commodities, carried out in cooperation with the West African Health Organisation, contributes to the countries' empowerment in the quality control of medicines by strengthening their technical capacities and equipping their national laboratories for drug control.



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## 6 Performance Targets

SWEDD's performance index is illustrated in three documents. These are the annual workplans (AWPs) for countries, the joint annual work strategy and the acceleration plans. The joint AWP's are aimed at mainstreaming and strengthening the adoption of practices that have proved to be successful in Asia and East Africa allowing the expected results to be achieved.

The joint AWP's and acceleration reports show that between 2017 and 2018, demand for technical assistance varied widely among countries touching on the key components that define SWEDD's programme.

In 2017 and 2018, a total of 381 activities were planned and implemented by country and subcomponent: 139 under Component 1 (36 per cent), 136 under Component 3 (36 per cent) and 106 under Component 2 (28 per cent).

The activities planned and implemented increased from 163 in 2017 to 218 in 2018, with

a more balanced distribution by component in 2018 than in 2017, but with significant differences per subcomponent.

### Suited to Sahelian needs

The solutions provided by SWEDD are well suited to the unique Sahelian needs, providing locally based technical assistance targeted at the specific needs of the member countries.

The proactive nature of the Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) ensures that particular attention is paid in the joint annual work plans implemented by the country offices and special attention is accorded to the fragile context of member countries.

The same applies to the training in lot quality assurance sampling (LQAS), support for assessing distribution systems as a prerequisite for the development of pilot initiatives to cover the last mile and training in national transfer accounts (NTAs). These technical assistance responses met expectations and provided best practices adapted to their respective contexts.



# Chapter 7

## SWEDD's Prudent use of technical assistance

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In the short period that the SWEDD initiative has been in existence it has recorded significant milestones of success by effectively and prudently appropriating the technical assistance received to achieve its overall objectives:

The independent evaluation undertaken on SWEDD concludes that “the technical assistance provided by the Regional Technical Secretariat has been broadly relevant and well aligned with its mandate and with country priorities.”

A significant finding of the independent evaluation was on the Regional Technical Secretariat's capabilities to sufficiently adapt to “changing needs in the planning and implementation of technical assistance at the country and regional levels.”

The actions of the UNFPA's Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) have also resulted in bolstering a sustainable model producing a steady stream of remarkable results. These include the national capacity-building for procurement, drafting of subprojects, transformation of three midwifery training institutions into centres of excellence and the strengthening of several African institutions to boost SWEDD's mission.

To cushion and enhance the results attained by the training institutions an ISO certified quality control laboratory for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health products in SWEDD countries' and the strengthening of several African institutions has been established.



They also led to the establishment of pools of experts in Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) focused on issues related to economic empowerment, school enrolment and retention of girls at school, community strategies for husband and husband-to-be clubs and in the setting up of national transfer accounts. Consultancy profiles and procurement procedures are adequate and appropriately resourced.

The emphasis on skills enhancement have provided a basis for SWEDDs sustainability to ensure that the corresponding activities continue even without technical assistance.

**Financial Fidelity:** In line with their contractual commitments and obligations, SWEDD countries contributed 13 per cent of the funds received from the World Bank's IDA each year to UNFPA-RTS. As at 31 December 2018, UNFPA received three tranches of advances of US\$ 5.2 million each, totaling US\$ 15.6 million out of the US\$ 26 million projected for the duration of the project. This has allowed the Regional Technical

Secretariat to achieve an overall satisfactory performance in its implementation of planned activities. The financial implementation rates achieved above 100 per cent performance rates in 2017 and in 2018 it showcased the dynamic nature of the UNFPA-Regional Technical Secretariat led planning in agreement with countries and the World Bank.

**Financial Prudence and Accountability:** The rate of achievement of planned results increased from 73 per cent in 2016 to 80 per cent in 2017 and jumped to 96 per cent in 2018. As a result, the planned activity implementation rate for the three years under review was an impressive 90 per cent which justifies the extension of the project..

Overall, the management of the financial resources allocated to the Regional Technical Secretariat shows prudent accountability with an efficiently disbursement protocol to achieve SWEDD's objectives.

# Chapter 8

## SWEDD: Facing a hopeful future

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SWEDD project is structured to allow member States, technical and financial partners namely the World Bank, the United Nations through the UNFPA, and the WAHO, to engage in broad-based development consultation at the sub-regional level seeking robust answers to resolve development problems on combating child marriages, promoting access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services and family

planning, and eradicating gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS through the improvement of skills and empowerment of the women and girls of the Sahel. Extending of the SWEDD project to 31 December 2023 is a great opportunity to unlock and unleash the potential of young women and girls and actively engage them in the development of the countries of the Sahel as independent and thriving individuals.









# SWEDD

AUTONOMISATION  
DES FEMMES ET  
DIVIDENDE  
DÉMOGRAPHIQUE  
AU SAHEL

SAHEL WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
AND  
DEMOGRAPHIC  
DIVIDEND

