Niger State, one of the 36 States in the Federal Government of Nigeria and the largest in terms of landmass. The state covers 76,363 km² and has a population of 4.5 million people. It borders the Republic of Benin to the west, Kebbi and Zamfara states to the north, Kaduna and Federal City Territory (FCT) to the east, and Kogi and Kwara to the south. Niger state is popularly known as the “Power State” as it is home to three major Hydro Electric Dams in Nigeria (Kanji – 960MW, Jebba – 540MW, Shiroro – 600MW) and Zungeru (700 MW) which is under construction. Niger state, potential hot bed for economic activity produces large quantities of rice, millet, maize and yam for local consumption and export. It is also endowed with mineral deposits like gold, iron, copper, lead and columbite.

The state has four major urban centers, Minna (state capital), Bida, Suleja and Kontagora which are rapidly growing putting tremendous strain on the ability of the state government to provide basic urban infrastructure services. Urban poverty is evident from youth unemployment, poor housing and inadequate mobility is rife in Minna and Suleja urban areas.

Considering this, that Niger State Government with a vision of economic transformation sought assistance of UN-Habitat through the Niger State Urban Technical Support Programme.

The programme aims to provide technical assistance to Niger State Government to implement the New Urban Agenda through among others; - formulation of Niger State urban development policy, preparation of urban development plans for Minna and Suleja, development of pilot smart city in Suleja, capacity development and technical support to various Niger State projects.
FORMULATION OF NIGER STATE URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

To ensure sustainable and equitable growth for all, Niger state will localize the National Urban Development Policy, 2012 through the State Urban Policy (SUP). The SUP will help Niger State facilitate positive urbanization patterns to support productivity, competitiveness and prosperity of the towns and cities and also create compact, connected, socially inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

Led by the Niger State Government, formulation of the SUP will be a bottom-up stakeholder driven process and a basis for building consensus on the urban development challenges of the State; agreeing on a sustainable path for building individual and collective prosperity; instilling in Nigerlites the willingness and ability to contribute to service provision; and developing citizens proprietary pride in their State.

PREPARATION OF INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR MINNA AND SULEJA

Rapid urban development coupled with irresponsible planning to address rapid urban development in Niger State has left cities like Minna and Suleja choking with waste, informality and non-existent services. To respond to planning needs, the project will through a stakeholder driven, bottom up approach formulate Integrated Development Plans (IDP) for Minna and Suleja.

The IDPs will identify development priorities and systems for the cities; Identify and facilitate development of local economic potentials and create a framework for attracting investment in infrastructure among other projects. Further, it will establish a framework for residents’ equitable share contribution to cost of service provision and enhancement government revenue; equitable sharing of state and cities prosperity and establishment of a modern, sustainable and data driven urban management system.

Beyond achieving compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities that are financially self-sustaining and resilient to climate change, the plans will develop models for replication in other cities of Bida, Kontagora and New Bussa.
DEVELOPMENT OF PILOT SMART CITY, SULEJA

Niger state aspire to become a national and regional hub for developing smart, compact, walkable and connected towns and cities. This project will develop smart plans and strategies and further pilot a new smart city in Suleja. Smart cities will be implemented in collaboration with international partners and through private sector investments in various sectors of the state’s economy.

FACILITATE URBAN RURAL LINKAGES

Urbanization can bring development and prosperity to regions beyond the city. This programme plans to strengthen synergies between urban and rural areas in Niger State by building and strengthening capacities of policy makers and change agents at all levels to collect and use evidence for fostering cross-sectoral, multi-level frameworks and action plans for integrated and inclusive territorial development that promotes urban-rural linkages and reduces the development gap. Priority capacity areas will include improving connectivity, strengthening capacity for economic development, environmental protection, fostering small and intermediate cities and improving food security. Further the project will document and share innovations, inspiring practices, experiences on urban-rural linkages for sustainable development and poverty reduction in the cities.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND PEER TO PEER LEARNING TO SELECTED STAKEHOLDERS

Niger State Urban Support Programme will be implemented by different stakeholders including government ministries, departments and agencies. UN-Habitat will enhance their implementation capacity through several capacity development and training activities. Further trainings focusing on other project components i.e. Sub national urban policy development; Enhancing Rural Urban Linkages; Formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Integrated Regional Development Plans and Smarts city development will be undertaken. Training materials customized to the various needs and demand in Niger State urban areas will be developed. Peer-to-peer learning events, benchmarking and exchange visits to selected projects and countries will be organised and facilitated.
Through NSUSP, UN-Habitat will provide technical assistance to Niger State Government on a range of urban development issues. Technical notes on new towns planning and development will be prepared and guidance notes focusing on infrastructure, services and investments, smart cities strategies will be developed. Furthermore, a New Urban Agenda programme for Niger State identifying key state government needs, entry points for partners, activities with viable funding potential shall be prepared. Transformative projects related to rehabilitation of public spaces along flooding zones, livelihoods improvement and advisory services on their development and implementation shall be undertaken.