

Project Information

- **Country:** Niger
- **Project Name:** The Project on Support to the Improvement of School Management through Community Participation (School for All) Phase 1 & 2, "School for All": The Project on support to educational development through community participation (Technical Cooperation)
- **Cooperation Period:** 2004 - 2010/ 2012 - 2016
- **Implementing Organization:** Ministry of Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages

1. Background and Project Summary

The gross enrollment rate of primary education in Niger was 82% in 2013, which is one of the lowest rates in the world. There are two major causes of the low enrollment rate: the absolute shortage of classrooms and the psychological distance between schools and parents as well as communities. The government of Niger, while building classrooms, had set up a School Management Committee in each primary school that consists of the principal, teachers and parents to realize better school management through community participation. The system, however, did not fully function due to the lack of a strategy to implement. JICA and the government of Niger launched the "School for All" project in 2004. The project established a functioning community-based school management model and expanded the model nationwide. As a result, School Management Committees have been set up at all 13,700 primary schools, and the Committees, with the participation of the communities, carry out various activities such as building classrooms and purchasing teaching materials without support from outside. The major factor behind this success is that the activities facilitated by the project such as the democratic election of committee members from the community and formulation of a school action plan with community participation have contributed to growing the sense of ownership toward a school among community members, which has led to various activities implemented by community members themselves.

At present, the "School for All" project, with the aim of improving the quality and access of basic education, includes secondary education within its scope, and establishes a sustainable system to monitor and support School Management Committees and a model for educational quality improvement through community participation activities such as a subsidiary scheme for

School Management Committees and arithmetic drill activities.

2. Basic Education in Niger from the Gender Perspective

Disparity in primary education between boys and girls has been remarkably improved since the launch of the "Ten-year Educational Development Plan 2003-2012" by the government of Niger. However, there still exist educational disparities by gender. The gross enrollment rate in primary education stood at 85% for boys and 67% for girls in 2010/11. The completion rate stood at 60% for boys and 43% for girls in the same year, which indicates that more girls left schools before completing primary education. Barriers to girls' enrollment and completion in primary education include: girls are required to work at home, parents do not value education, parents put education for boys before girls, parents cannot afford the costs of stationery and school uniforms though primary education itself is free.

The gross enrollment rate in lower secondary education (grade 7 to 10) is low with 20% for boys and 13% for girls in 2008/9. No significant improvement in the gender gap has been observed in this stage of education. It is noted that early marriage and distance to secondary schools could be a factor in the low enrollment rate of girls in secondary education. Secondary schools are mainly located in urban areas, and parents tend to disapprove of their daughters traveling far from their home village.

3. Gender-responsive Activities

(1) Campaign for promotion of girls' education

In 2009 in Tillaberi and Maradi Province, campaigns for promotion of girls' education were conducted by School Management Committees and organizations concerned with education. As a result of the campaigns, the ratio of boys to girls as registered pupils in the first grade improved from 87 girls for every 100 boys to 97 girls to 100 boys in Tillaberi and from 74 girls for 100 boys to 85 girls to 100 boys in Maradi Province. It can be understood that the campaigns for promotion of girls' education played a positive role to facilitate an understanding about girls' education in the community since such an improvement was not observed in other provinces where no campaigns were conducted. The campaigns will be implemented in neighboring Burkina Faso in 2015. In addition,

community-organized events in which community and pupils share the importance of education through dramas and songs also contribute to promoting better understanding about girls' education (see below).

(2) Community preschools

The community preschools run by School Management Committees, initially introduced by the project in 2006, have rapidly expanded with the cooperation of UNICEF. 446 preschools were operated with more than 20,000 pupils in 2010/11. It is known that pre-primary education has a positive effect on the improvement in primary school enrollment, educational performance, grade promotion, repetition and dropout rates, because pre-primary education contributes to enhanced nutritional conditions and improved cognitive skills, as well as changes in parental expectations and

perceptions of their child's potential. It is also pointed out that pre-primary education has a greater positive impact on girls' enrollment. The share of girls enrolled in community preschools was 52% in 2010/11. The study conducted by the project in Tahoua and Zinder Province indicates that most of the pupils have progressed to primary schools after completing community preschools. The establishment of community preschools has contributed greatly to girls' access to primary education.

In Niger the participation of parents and the community in school management has led to improvement in enrollment of both boys and girls, as well as the educational environment of schools. The project continues its activities toward further improvement in educational performance of boys and girls in order not to discourage parents' positive attitude to schooling.

“Mother and father, let me go to school”

- ♪ We would like to tell you
- ♪ Women need education to live
- ♪ Girl's enrollment rate is low because women are weak
- ♪ This world, we, do not need ignorance
- ♪ Take us to school
- That's what we like to tell you, mother and father
- ♪ You will notice how poor children who could not go to school are
 after time goes by
- ♪ We are crying behind you,
 thinking that please let me go to school
- ♪ Niger is our country, we are children of Niger
- ♪ We, children, stand up and shout, “let me take to school”
- ♪ Teacher, you too, please listen to our voices
- ♪ Niger is our country, we are children of Niger
- ♪ Please, give us education, with your hands
- ♪ Please let us go to school



Girls at Tsernaoua central primary school who sang the song

This song was sang in Hausa by the girls at Tsernaoua central primary school in a community-organized event, *Drama and chorus contest among School Management Committees*, held in February 2005 in Tsernaoua city. The song expressed the sad feelings of girls who hope in vain to go to school. The girls thought about the lack of

education they faced and made the song to share with the community, which makes this song a most powerful message on girls' education to fathers and mothers in a village. The song, though it is less elaborate, can be a useful tool for promotion of girls' education in every village in Niger where there exist many girls and parents in a similar situation.