



“School for All” Project in Senegal

In 2000, the primary school enrollment rate in Senegal was 67.2%. The school completion rate, meanwhile, was less than 50%. Among the difficulties preventing children from continuing until graduation were the distance from their homes to school, the need to prioritize household work, a shortage of classroom space offering a cozy teaching/learning environment, and a high rate of absenteeism among the school teachers.

To tackle this issue, the Senegalese government drew up the Ten-Year Education and Training Plan in 2000 and began building classrooms and making other improvements to the teaching/learning environment. In 2002, Senegal’s president announced the government decision to establish school management committees in each school, consisting of representatives from such groups of stakeholders as parents, teachers, and community leaders.

The idea was that if schools and communities could come together and proactively tackle issues, they would discover existing obstacles themselves and solve their own prioritized problems. The reality, though, was that even some years later, committees were found to be ineffective or had not been set up at all in many areas. Many points were unclear to schools and communities: what exactly school

management committees were; how they should be formed; what role they would play; and how they should proceed with their activities.

STRIKING IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

JICA—which had a significant track record of encouraging local community initiatives through school management committees in Niger, also in western Africa, since 2004—stepped in to offer new technical cooperation. In 2007, it began its Project for the Improvement of the Educational Environment in Senegal. This aimed to increase the effectiveness of school management committees in the Louga Region, where educational conditions were particularly challenging.

The project paid off with a clear improvement in access to and quality of primary education at schools with effective school management committees. Compared with before the project, the enrollment rate improved by 16.1% and the pass rate for the primary school completion exam rose by 26%. The second phase began in September 2010, with the aim of consolidating and extending a sustainable model for more effective school management



The school management committee holds a residents’ meeting to discuss needs and prepare an annual plan.

committees at the around 9,000 schools in all of Senegal’s 14 regions. As of 2011, Senegal’s national primary school enrollment rate had risen to 93.9% and the completion rate to 66.5%.

Chief advisor in Senegal Nobuhiro Kunieda, who also worked on the Niger project, started with his colleagues at the Ministry of Education by training the educational administrators at regional and departmental levels. These administrators would go on to support the establishment of school management committees and later monitor them. The committees are based on cooperation among schools and administrators, village heads, religious leaders, leaders of women’s groups, and other residents. Thanks to this broad-based participation, the undertaking has become known as the “School for All” Project.

The school management committees’ roles include holding residents’ meetings and preparing annual plans. If there are not enough desks for students, local stakeholders (including parents, teachers, and artisans) make them; they also hold campaigns promoting continued schooling for girl students. They hold supplementary classes for children who cannot keep up with regular classes and support teachers who live a long way from schools. Their resourcefulness in doing as much as possible with their limited finances is the secret of their sustained activity over the long term.

Through these actions, small changes have begun to take root throughout the country. One resident commented, “Before, only the school master and some of the parents were involved with school management, and the rest of us didn’t know what they were doing. Now, information is made public. Everybody gets involved.”

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEXT STEPS

JICA has been working hard to improve access to primary education, one of the Millennium Development Goals. Senegal today is a showcase for its success in this field. In the Fatick and Kaffrine regions, where school management committees have begun to work effectively, the teaching/learning environment enjoyed by the children and the teachers’ instruction environment are seeing solid improvements. These include the repair of classrooms and other school facilities, the organization of mock exams, and the purchase of needed learning/teaching materials. Notably, these activities do not rely on external support: all funds, resources, and labor are procured locally by schools and community residents.

In the “School for All” Project, JICA aims to go beyond simply improving access to primary education and provide a model for raising the quality of education for the post-2015 development agenda.



Residents cast votes to choose member of the school management committee (left); community-provided housing for teachers.