

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIG/016 project, "Regional Programme to Support Primary Education Development in Dosso", is the follow up phase of NIG/011 project "Schools and Health II". The current phase started in October 2005 and will end on 31 December 2009. Lux-Development has commissioned the consultancy firm AFC Consultants International of Bonn, Germany, to carry out the final evaluation of the project. The evaluation mission took place in Niger from 6 to 24 September 2009 with the participation of Dr Agnes Gerold, Mr Ali Sekou and Mr Moussa Garba.

The main objectives of the mission were to analyse

- the specific results and objectives achieved at the time of the evaluation compared to the plans set out in the respective project documents;
- the results achieved by the project in terms of capacity development, management and monitoring, paying particular attention to monitoring the various levels of intervention (inputs, tasks, results and specific objective);
- the project in accordance with the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, also taking into account the cross-cutting issues (poverty eradication, governance, gender and the environment);
- the lessons learned and make recommendations for future projects in the Dosso region in Niger.

In accordance with the PRODOC, the project implementation should lead to the overall objective:

Contributing to the implementation of the Ten Year Programme for Development of Education (PDDE1) in the Dosso department.

The PDDE (2003-2013) is the Niger government's tool to implement the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the area of education. Its objectives are concerned with the coverage of education, fair access to education, the performance of the education system and informal education (literacy). The project takes into consideration the PDDE objectives and contributes to achieving them.

The project has the **following specific objective**:

To improve the accessibility and quality of primary education stages I and II as well as literacy in the Boboye and Dosso departments.

In terms of its activities, the programme is focused on the following results:

Result 1: An improved level of coverage of educational infrastructure and facilities (basic education levels I and II) in the Boboye and Dosso departments.

Result 2: Improved health conditions and environment of the schools targeted and their villages and communes.

Result 3: Improved continuous training of teachers and supervisory staff on health issues (hygiene, water, and sanitation), school environment and social organisation.

Result 4: Improved management capacity (especially for educational management) of villagers' and commune organisations.

Looking at the results of the programme it can be stated that they have generally been achieved through the activities carried out. Accessibility, attractiveness and quality of basic education have

¹ PDDE: Programme Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation

been improved. The objective of increasing the girls' school attendance has been achieved, but the disparity between girls and boys in the existing rate of education has not been reduced by the methods used.

A large number of investments (schools, latrines, office buildings, etc.) have been made that are of a high quality and highly appreciated by the local population. The local population has been given more responsibility, through its organisations (COGES²), for managing these facilities and investments. The use of a participatory approach has enabled the COGES to be given considerably more dynamism.

However, independent of the approach used, the COGES should benefit of further support to develop their capacities. This involves above all diversifying their funding sources, i.e. developing their own initiatives for finding material and financial support from natural and legal persons, or indeed from other technical and financial partners in their area. The COGES need members and actors with knowledge in administrative writing and in formulating applications to initiate, plan and carry out microprojects. These members would be responsible for pleading their case to decision-makers, projects and programmes or to any other actor, with a view to maximising education funding.

The improvement in the teaching quality has been limited to the fact that ideas related to the environment, hygiene and sanitation have been incorporated into the programme. The need to consider these aspects, especially at the behavioural level, is obvious, but this does not improve teaching quality on the cognitive level, especially for the essential disciplines on which evaluations are based, in particular at the end of an educational stage.

Cross-cutting issues such as education in the environment, health and sanitation should in principle be included in host disciplines in educational programmes such as the sciences, civic and moral education, etc. The inclusion of these cross-cutting issues as part of the host disciplines requires a certain expertise on the part of the teachers, especially from a didactic and cognitive viewpoint. However, teachers often do not have the required teaching skills to integrate the cross-cutting issues into the basic disciplines on which the evaluations and examinations of educational knowledge are based. Moreover, the cross-cutting issues, although they are relevant, need additional time, to the extent that the programmes and use of official time do not schedule them in their timetables. Teaching them is often related to local or tolerated arrangements, which poses a problem in retaining the lessons learned.

Considering these conclusions, the mission has made the following recommendations:

To retain the experience gained in developing and supporting the COGES, APes³ and AMEs⁴ and replicate it in other schools (integration at the national education level). Above all, the participatory approach applied in collaborating with the associations in the education sector and the development of their capacities to make them into active organisations able to in manage and promote their schools (capacities to access additional funding sources, etc.).

To support the education sector organisations (COGES, APes and AMEs) to unite at the commune level. The advantage of increasing participation and control by the local population does not solely affect monitoring schools and managing educational infrastructure. The local population must eventually be capable of representing its interests through its organisations (COGES, APes and AMEs) to mayors and municipal councils so that (basic) education can be taken into account as part of municipal development.

² Comités de Gestion scolaire = educational management committees

³ Associations des Parents d'Elèves = parents' associations

⁴ Associations des Mères éducatrices = associations of parent-teachers

To support the Ministry of Education and initiate a political dialogue with a view to:

- revising the curricula in order to retain the knowledge of the programme in terms of sanitation education,
- adopting the educational development plan as a model with general application at school level and
- promoting hygiene, sanitation and the environment (curricula, timetable).

To promote the improvement of teaching quality in its entirety through improved, intensive teacher training. Taking into consideration the level of teaching quality in (rural) schools, improving its quality must be a primary objective. In this context, it is not enough to intervene at individual school level: rather, improvement measures should focus on reviewing and redefining the system as well as on teacher training (teaching methods, content, etc.).