



Final Report for States of Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission, May 2013

IMPROVING EDUCATION IN AGRO-PASTORAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN NIGER

With special thanks to States of Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission for your support.

Improving access and quality of education in agro-pastoral community schools.

Duration: 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013
Report Period Covered: 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013
Location: Tillabery region, West Niger

Target Beneficiaries:

The Oxfam education programme in Niger, which this project is part of, aims to reach over 2,500 school children.

Beneficiaries Reached:

Last year 900 students were able to attend school for the first time. Support from the States of Guernsey this year directly benefitted 198 school children and indirectly helped 1,544 community members.

Project Grant: £39,425 **Project Spend:** £39,481

Overview

Drought-stricken Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world where access to education, clean water and sanitation is limited. Niger is ranked last in the world according to the UN 'Education Development Index' (128 out of 128) and has the lowest scores in the 2013 Human Development Index measurement of national achievement in health, education and income.

The average person in Niger receives just 1.7 years of education; this decreases to only 1.2 years for women. Niger has over one million children of primary school age who are currently out of school; nearly 700,000 of them are girls. More than 80 per cent of these children are expected never to enrol in school.

Niger has the second-lowest adult literacy rate in the world and therefore has to overcome significant challenges in order to reach the Millennium Development Goal on education by 2015. Despite the importance of improving education within Niger to significantly increase people's livelihoods opportunities, the Ministry of Education lacks the resources necessary to build classrooms and sanitation facilities in the remote Tillabery region. Sanitation facilities are crucial in schools, especially in encouraging girls to attend.

We are extremely grateful to the States of Guernsey Overseas Aid Commission for having supported our education programme in Niger for three years.



The Tillabery region in south-west Niger.



Planned Project Activities

This project is part of a bigger programme aiming to improve access and quality of education for at least 2,500 children in Niger who attend agro-pastoral community schools. It is a continuation of the project that the Commission previously supported in Niger, and builds on the development of our relationship with the Ministry of Education.

Planned activities in the identified villages for this project included: (1) building three classrooms and latrine blocks in three schools; (2) provision of furniture for the three classrooms; (3) training nine *animatrices*¹ and members of three Schools Management Committees (SMCs) on management; and (4) training on child-to-child approaches² to sensitise children and teachers about hygiene.

Oxfam aimed to continue to use this project to lobby the Ministry of Education to invest in improving the quality of education; building the capacity of parent-teacher committees and helping the members clearly articulate their needs to government authorities. The Civil Society Organisations were also going to support the dissemination of best practice models more widely in Niger.

Final Report on Activities

1. Build three classrooms and latrine blocks in three schools

Before the project began, we held a meeting with all our local partners - including VIE (Volontaires pour l'Intégration Educative) and ADD (Action pour un Développement Durable) - to analyse our previous projects and their impact on children lives, and to assess where improvements could be made. These local partners are community associations that we have been working with on our education programme in Niger for eight years. They were chosen as partners after a thorough assessment process.

Oxfam and partners also worked with the local Government to define which schools would be selected for this project. The chosen schools are in agro-pastoral areas (where agriculture and livestock rearing predominate) and have had very little support from Government. Despite this, the communities were keen to support education initiatives to ensure their children have a brighter future.

The funding was used to build three classrooms and latrine blocks with separate facilities for boys and girls in two schools. The schools are in Gorogaro (two classrooms) in Tera district and Guilinga (one classroom) in Torodi district. The table below shows the number of children per school per year.

Village	District	Grade 1			Grade 2			Grade 3			Grade 4			Grade 5			Grade 6			Total			
		B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	Boys	Girls	Total	% Girls
Gorogaro	Tera	16	18	34	12	17	29	22	12	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	47	97	48
Guilinga	Torodi	15	15	30	7	16	23	0	0	0	11	6	17	10	21	31	0	0	0	43	58	101	57
Total		31	33	64	19	33	52	22	12	34	11	6	17	10	21	31	0	0	0	93	105	198	53.03

¹ *Animatrices* are female school support workers who help tackle the issues that keep children, particularly girls, out of education. They work with parents and teachers to change negative attitudes towards girls and schooling and to reinforce the right to education.

² Child-to-Child is a rights-based, participatory approach to children's participation in health promotion and development. In this project, children support their peers to improve their behaviour on health and hygiene with the older pupils training the youngest ones. www.child-to-child.org

Before the project began:

- In Gorogaro school, three huts served as classrooms. There were no latrines so children defecated outside and there were only 10 desks between 65 children.
- In Guillinga school, the 90 children had no furniture or latrines. There were three huts which served as classrooms.

Before the project, the schools had to re-build their straw hut classrooms every year. This was very time and labour-intensive - using time the School Management Committees could have put to better use. Sometimes wind, rain and other weather conditions prevented students from studying. Without tables or chairs, it was even more difficult for them to focus on their studies, especially learning how to write.



“The students studied in straw classrooms, and animals would destroy them before the end of the school year in June”

Mariama Tinni, a member of the Feto Boga mother’s association, Tillabery who participated in an earlier phase of the project.

Left: The straw hut ‘classrooms’

Photo: Oxfam

Our staff and local partners discussed with the community and the SMC (School Management Committee) the project and their roles and responsibilities in June 2012. An engineer worked with the SMC to identify where the new classrooms and latrines should be situated. A tender document was produced and a call for bids was advertised in the local paper and radio on 1 August 2012. All infrastructure specifications were designed to meet Government regulations. A tender committee was trained that included Oxfam and partner staff, the Director of Infrastructure for the Ministry of Education and the project engineer, who together made the final decision.

As agreed, the community supplied water, local unskilled labour and security for all materials as part of their contribution. Construction began in September 2012. The build was supervised by the project engineer with the SMC and the partner. Support from the States of Guernsey enabled the building of two classrooms in Gorogaro and one classroom in Guillinga plus latrines. Building work was completed in February 2013.

With these permanent classrooms, the schools are more sustainable in the long-term and people do not need to spend valuable time re-building temporary classrooms. The new

classrooms provide more protection from wind and rain and provide a safer and healthier environment for students.

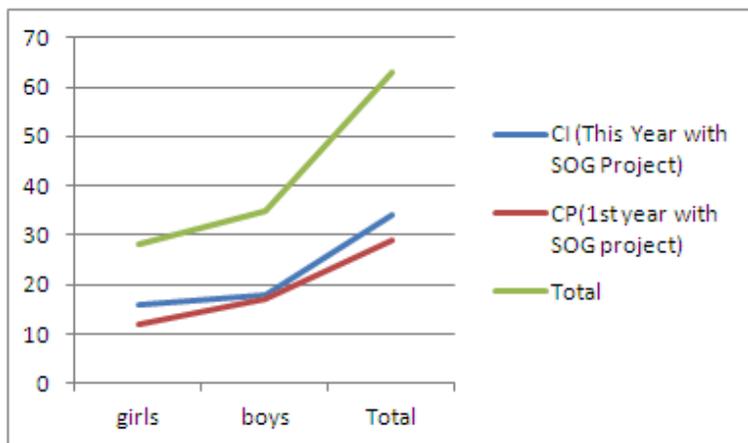
“In general, parents often consider the location and condition of learning environments when assessing school quality and this can influence school participation.”

Defining Quality in Education, Unicef, 2000

We have not yet received the final evaluations because we are not at the end of the school year, which is July. However, the impact of the new facilities is clearly illustrated by the increase in student enrolment. For example in Gorogaro school, 29 new children were enrolled in 2011, whereas 34 new children have been enrolled for the second year.

Level	girls	boys	Total
CI (This Year with SOG Project)	16	18	34
CP(1st year with SOG project)	12	17	29
Total	28	35	63

* CI is Grade 1, CP is Grade 2



Two classroom blocks and latrines built for the school in Gorogaro Village. Photo: Daouda Mounkaila/ VIE

The improvement in teaching conditions not only enhances the quality of the education, but means more time can be invested in school management. Where school enrolment has already increased, we also expect improvements in student’s grades.

The safe sanitation facilities provided in these schools combined with good hygiene practices adopted by communities will decrease water-related infections. Latrines are particularly

important for girls' education. Without latrines, girls will miss school, drop out or miss parts of lessons because they have to walk to find somewhere private to go to the toilet.

“Such factors as on-site availability of lavatories and a clean water supply, classroom maintenance, space and furniture availability all have an impact on the critical learning factor of time on task. When pupils have to leave school and walk significant distances ... they may not always return to class.”
Defining Quality in Education, UNICEF, 2000

2. Provide furniture for the three classrooms to improve the learning environment

Funding from the States of Guernsey has provided 25 table and bench sets for each classroom (75 in total) plus three sets of desks, chairs and cupboards for teachers. School supplies, such as books, were provided by another funder.

The importance of good buildings, furniture and water and sanitation cannot be underestimated.

“There is a need for physical comfort when sitting, reading and writing and furniture plays a major role in ensuring the comfort of learners and thus enabling the learning process.”
Delivering Cost Effective & Sustainable School Infrastructure, Bill Leathes, The TI-UP Resource Centre

3. Train nine animatrices and members of three Schools Management Committees (SMCs) on management

Nine *animatrices* (community mobilisers) and 43 members of the school management committees were trained in management for better governance in the target schools. This training is key to the sustainability of the project.

Training covered topics including communication techniques, gender issues in school, leadership, and community mobilisation techniques. It was aimed at helping parents to understand the importance of being involved in their children's education. This training will increase opportunities for parents to support the education for their children to access to higher levels of education.



An *animatrice* in Zindigori, Tillabery, instructs children in peer-to-peer training on raising awareness about good hygiene practices.

Photo: Issoufa/Oxfam.

4. Train on child-to-child approaches to sensitise children and teachers about hygiene.

Twenty-five people were trained in Child-to-Child techniques (four education advisers, 16 teachers and four staff of project partners). Sessions run in the community have helped to spread hygiene messages throughout the villages. Hygiene kits were provided for the schools using funding from another funder.

The communities reported enjoying the knowledge that their children were now safe at school and benefitting from improved learning conditions thanks to this project.

Monthly field visits by project partners (ADD and VIE) have been conducted to ensure that activities are implemented as planned. Communities are now well organised to improve the quality of support provided to the pupils.

Possible future developments

In line with the campaign of education (“2015 is tomorrow, act for education”) developed in Niger, Oxfam aims to work in partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs) and other actors to provide ongoing support to the parent and CSOs to lobby for better access and quality for education. By building links with local organisations, developing awareness-raising activities with strong community understanding and acceptance, we will be able to influence stakeholders at both local and national level to increase support for education.



The inauguration ceremony of a classroom funded by SoG in 2012, with the participation of the Niger Ministry of Education.



Gorogaro village school pupils.

Budget

	Activities	No. of units	Unit	Unit cost £	Amount requested	Expenditure March 2013	Variance
1	Build Latrines and Classrooms				34,910	34,966	56
1.1	Classroom construction	3	School	9,448	28,344	28,400	56*
1.2	Construction of three latrine blocks (separate for girls and boys)	3	Latrine blocks	1,752	5,256	5,256	0
1.3	Technical engineer	1	Unit	1,310	1,310	1,310	0
2	Purchase School Furniture				444	444	0
2.1	Tables and chairs for three classrooms	6	Desks and chairs	74	444	444	0
3	Training				2,821	2,821	0
3.1	Train nine 'animatrices' and members of three SMCs on management	2	Session	850	1,700	1,700	0
3.3	Hold a training session on child-to-child approach to sensitise children and teachers about hygiene	1	Session	1,121	1,121	1,121	0
4	Project management, monitoring and evaluation				1,250	1,250	0
4.1	Contribution to project management, monitoring and evaluation	1	Lump sum	1,250	1,250	1,250	0
	Total				39,425	39,481	56

*The variance of £56 for classroom construction was covered by Oxfam.