



**NIGER**

**Education**

**Sectoral and Thematic Report**  
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Prepared by  
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### I. Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
C4D	Communication for Development
CAMOS	Cellule d'appui à la mise en oeuvre et au suivi de PSEF ( <i>Support Unit for PSEF Implementation and Monitoring</i> )
CDRR	Conflict and Disaster Risk Reduction
CEA	Centres d'Education Alternative ( <i>Alternative Education Centres</i> )
CFM	Centre de Formation aux Métiers ( <i>Skills Training Centres</i> )
DREP	Direction Régionale d'Enseignement Primaire ( <i>Regional Directorate of Primary Education</i> )
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ETSP	Education and Training Sector Plan
FCSE	Education Sector Basket Fund
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JEC	Jardin d'enfant communautaire ( <i>Community Kindergarten</i> )
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KRC	Key Results for Children
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEP	Ministre d'enseignement primaire ( <i>Ministry of Primary Education</i> )
MES	Ministre d'enseignement secondaire ( <i>Ministry of Secondary Education</i> )
NFQE	Fundamental Standards of Quality and Equity
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OOSC	Out-of-school Children
PASEC	Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFOMEN ( <i>Programme for Analysis of the Educational Systems of CONFEMEN Countries</i> )

PMAQ	Paquet minimum axé sur la qualité ( <i>Package of minimum intervention focused on quality</i> )
PNSAS	Plan National de Suivi des Acquis Scolaire ( <i>National Plan for Monitoring of Learning Outcomes</i> )
ETSP	Education and Training Sector Plan
SADE	Soutien à distance des enseignants ( <i>Supporting Teachers at a Distance</i> )
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMQ	Strategic Monitoring Questions
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

## I. Executive Summary

In 2018, UNICEF continued to support the ministries of education in Niger at both upstream and downstream levels to improve access to and quality of education, especially for the most marginalized children. Access to primary education in Niger continued to grow, with 2,928,113 children (45.6% girls) enrolled in primary education compared to 2,768,305 children (45.5% girls) in 2017. This represents a Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 79.2% in 2018, compared to 77.8% in 2017. However, equity, quality and security challenges continued to impact the functioning of Niger’s education system, as well as concerns over the reliability of education statistics.

The Government of Niger began the revision of the Education and Training Sector Plan to better align with national and international priorities, including Sustainable Development Goal 4. At the upstream level, UNICEF is the co-lead for the education sector Financial and Technical Partners’ group, and was designated as grant agent for the Global Partnership for Education Sector Development Grant. As part of this process and for wider evidence generation, UNICEF coordinated the launch of eight sectoral studies. Moreover, strategic partnerships within the Education Sector Basket Fund enabled UNICEF to advocate for key issues including decentralization, gender equality and education in emergencies.

Downstream, UNICEF’s technical and financial support benefited 8% of the total population of children age 7 to 16, or over 415,000 children (182,834 girls). The Ministry of Primary Education initiated innovative approaches to improve the quality of education through introducing continuous learning assessment in school, support mother tongue education and develop monitoring tools for preschool education.

With UNICEF’s support, the Ministry of Primary Education trained 1,137 headmasters in pedagogical and administrative leadership, as well as 20,350 teachers (representing 27% of teaching force of Niger primary level) in mathematics, gender equity and violence prevention, and developed a pre-school children’s assessment sheet to improve their primary entry skills. An innovative pilot programme introduced by UNICEF with technical partnership with the Japan International Development Agency enabled a 19-point improvement upon baseline results of children in alternative education centres in conflict-affected Diffa region. In addition, UNICEF supported training for 3,468 people in menstrual hygiene management as well as on responding to and reducing gender-based violence.

The security situation of Niger worsened in 2018 with attacks in Tillabery and Tahoua regions bordering Mali and Burkina Faso as well as Diffa region of Lake Chad basin. Five attacks in Tillabery directly targeted schools, resulting in the temporary suspension of 37 schools in the region, depriving 1,984 children of learning opportunity. As the Education Cluster Coordinator,

UNICEF advocated for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration that Niger endorsed in 2015 to ensure schools in conflict-affected zones are made safe for children.

Initiatives to improve the timeliness and quality of education statistics were conceived (RapidPro, EduTrack and Data Must Speak) with UNICEF’s support. It is expected that these data innovations will support the ongoing decentralization process by allowing the community, municipality and regional actors to access data regarding the situation of their schools in an easily understandable format.

The results achieved in 2018 would not have been possible without the generous support of resource partners – especially those who provided flexible funding – and the close collaboration with the many operational partners active in Niger. UNICEF extends its sincere appreciation to all its partners for helping to change the lives of Nigerien girls and boys.

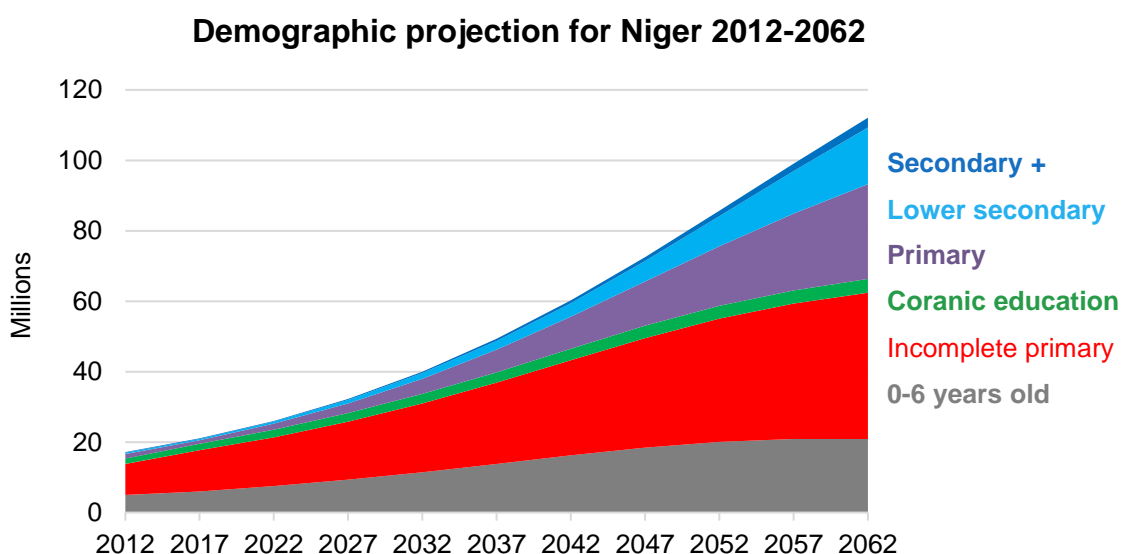
## II. Strategic Context of 2018

### Overall country trends

Niger is a landlocked Sahelian country of 21.5 million people, most of whom live in rural areas (84%). The population is young, with 58% of Nigeriens being under 18, and nearly half of the population is poor, despite reductions in the poverty rate over the past decade. The country, which ranked last on the 2017 Human Development Index, sees its development constrained by several factors: high population growth, climatic conditions that hinder rural development, vulnerability due to the absence of economic diversification, gender equality issues, low levels of literacy and education, and the size and landlocked nature of the country, which obstruct the provision of essential goods and services to the population.

In addition, Niger is confronted to recurrent crises. For many years, the country has suffered from chronic food insecurity, and faced food and nutrition crises in 2010 and 2012. It also regularly experiences epidemics, including cholera, as well as floods. Moreover, instability in the Sahel region has in recent years led to insecurity and population displacement, especially in the eastern part of the country affected by the armed conflict with Boko Haram and in the western areas bordering with Mali.

### Context of education for children in Niger



In 2018, access to primary education in Niger continued to grow, with 2,928,113 children (45.6% girls) enrolled in primary education compared to 2,768,305 children (45.5% girls) in

2017. This represents a Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 79.2% in 2018, compared to 77.8% in 2017. Girls' enrolment remains significantly below that of boys (GER 73.5% vs. 84.7%), and is even lower for vulnerable children, for those in rural areas or for those living with disabilities.

Despite this continuous growth, inequities in terms of access to quality services persist, and appear to be widening, particularly between rural and urban environments. The number of out-of-school children, estimated at 2.6 million of children aged 7 to 16 (half of the school-aged population), remains a major concern. The population is growing rapidly, estimated to reach 112 million<sup>1</sup> by 2062 according to projected trends, putting significant strain on already limited resources. The Incheon Declaration recommends 15-20% of national budgets devoted to education: while Niger allocated 19.3% in 2018, the share has been declining and in real terms has not kept up with the rapidly growing school-age population.

Learning outcomes remain persistently low, with the latest reports showing that only 41% of primary school leavers have basic competence in maths, and 29% in French in 2018. Poorly qualified teachers and high absenteeism are major contributing factors to the low levels of learning observed. The implementation of mother-tongue education is underway, but progressing slowly due to resource constraints.

Only 8% of children attend pre-school, and access is often dependent on location (urban-rural) or household wealth levels. The transition to secondary education, limited by the low number of schools, is only at 58% (56% for girls), and only 6% finish the education cycle. Girls continue to be most at risk of not completing a quality education, and high rates of child marriage and pregnancy persist in the country.

Teacher training continues to be a priority, following the results of the 2017 evaluation of teachers' competences. The Ministry of Primary Education (MEP) has invested in several distance learning initiatives to support school directors and teachers, including with support from technical and financial partners. Contract teacher management has also shifted to the municipalities, with contracts being handled by mayors rather than the central level. To improve quality, teacher training colleges have also tightened their entrance requirements to ensure higher basic competency levels in the student-teachers from the beginning of their training.

## **Keys education sector developments in 2018**

Revision of the Education Sector Plan: The Government of Niger is revising the Education and Training Sector Plan (ETSP 2014-2024) halfway through its implementation in order to better align with national and international development plans and the current context of education in Niger. This transitional plan will support Niger's application for the next round of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) financing in 2020, and the development of a new, more comprehensive sector plan from around 2024. This revision process comes after a comprehensive analysis of the education sector. As grant agent for the GPE Education Sector Plan Development Grant, UNICEF is coordinating eight studies aimed to improve the evidence base and inform sector planning as well as the evaluation of the first phase of the ETSP.

Addressing data quality: the ETSP evaluation uncovered significant issues with the quality of both the population and education data: the data could not be used in the simulation models for the next phase of the ETSP. A technical analysis and high-level discussions under joint UNICEF and European Union coordination led to a common understanding on the way forward. The focus in 2019 will be on supporting the ministries on how they collect, analyse and present data.

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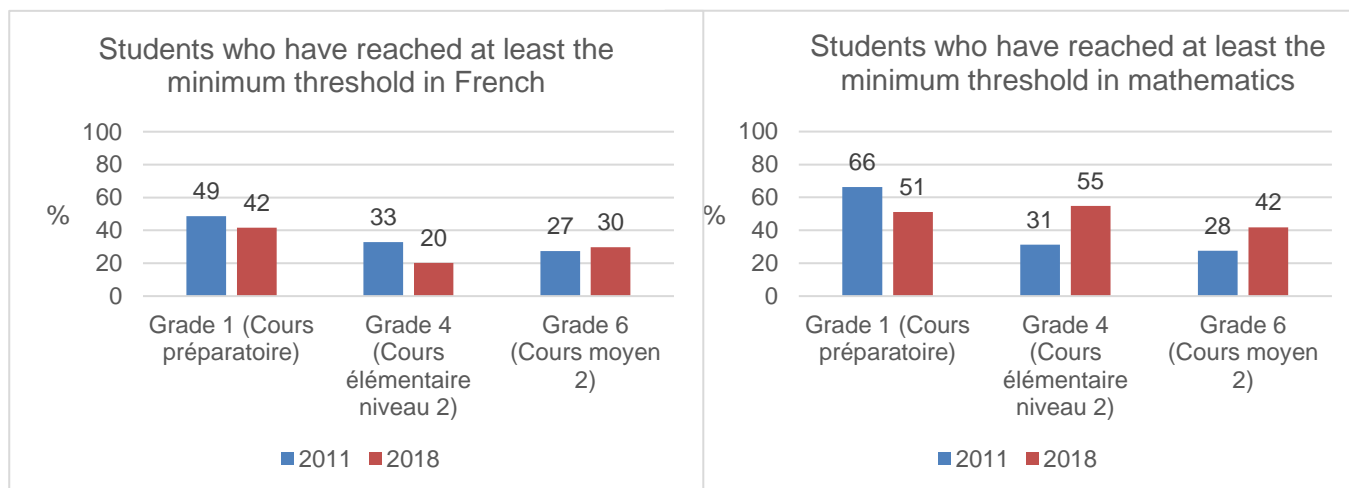
<sup>1</sup> Population projections from the EDUDEM study undertaken by the Institute of Statistics with UNICEF support – preliminary results

**Decentralization:** The decentralization process came into effect for the education sector in 2018 and critical technical support, including UNICEF-funded training, was provided to regional education officials, especially for teacher management and other essential areas. It is expected that closer involvement of the concerned populations in planning and allocation of resources will lead to improved accountability and results for children.

**Operationalization of the Education Sector Basket Fund (FCSE):** Established in 2017, the FCSE was able to effectively start disbursing funds from mid-2018. The majority of funding is allocated towards the regions and decentralized levels, in line with the planned transfer of functions and resources as a part of the decentralization process. UNICEF is one of the five partners in the fund, chaired in 2018 by the Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation.

**Increased emphasis on girls' education, innovation and learning assessments:** Following the signing of the 2017 Presidential Decree on the protection of the schoolgirl, increased momentum has been given to the fight against child marriage, and the revision process of the national policy on girls' education has been launched. More emphasis is also placed on assessing learning, with a national assessment conducted in 2018 to assess French and mathematics competencies.

The table below illustrates the mixed progress between 2011 and 2018: while older students have improved notably in mathematics, the skills of younger students have declined, particularly in French. Part of the decline in French skills may be due to the shift to local language teaching in the early years, with less exposure to French in schools until Grade 3. The low learning levels prompted the MEP to impose a two-month remedial language and mathematics curriculum at the start of the 2018-19 school year in an effort to improve competencies.



**Worsening security situation:** Cross-border attacks in Tillabery and Tahoua regions (bordering Mali and Burkina Faso) and in Diffa regions (the Lake Chad basin crisis), have included attacks specifically targeting schools and education personnel. Schools, children and staff in these areas remain highly vulnerable, as there is no national strategy for preventing, preparing and responding to the risks of conflicts and disasters.

**Partnerships and policy dialogue:** Under the coordination of the Ministry for Higher Education, Niger's education ministries organized for the first time two annual reviews in 2018, which enabled the approval of the sector budget for 2019 before the end of the year. UNICEF played a key role for this achievement as the sector coordination co-lead. This achievement is

expected to greatly improve the utilization of the sector budget, and strengthen Niger's application for GPE funding.

### UNICEF's support to education in Niger

UNICEF supports the Government's efforts to ensure access to quality education in line with Niger's Education and Training Sector Plan (ETSP) 2014-2024, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). As the co-lead of the education sector partners, UNICEF has a key advocacy and influencing role. As per the 2014-2018 country programme, UNICEF Niger focused its work on four outputs: access to quality education, education in emergencies, system strengthening, and demand for education.

UNICEF is prioritising actions around key themes to maximise impact, including on how to successfully accompany the Government, the municipalities and local communities to: (i) innovate and operationalize quality and equity interventions; (ii) implement decentralisation and transfer skills and resources; (iii) reduce the number of out-of-school children, in particular girls, and implement meaningful alternatives; and (iv) evaluate and capitalize on lessons learned and good practices.

### III. Results Achieved in the Sector

Throughout 2018, UNICEF continued to play a key role in ensuring both equitable and sustainable access to education, which has been prioritized by UNICEF Niger as a Key Result for Children in Niger. UNICEF support, including outreach activities, provision of learning materials, and diversification of education services, reached over 415,100 children, representing 8.4% of all children aged 7-16. This includes the provision of education or training for 4,500 particularly vulnerable children (children with disabilities, out-of-school children and youth).

<b>Education – 2018 Results</b>			
<b>Education Indicators</b>	<b>Baseline 2013 (% and/or #)</b>	<b>Target 2018 (% and/or #)</b>	<b>Progress 2018 (% and/or #)</b>
<b>Education Outcome: By 2018, school-age children, particularly girls, children who live in rural areas and vulnerable children, have access to and make greater use of quality basic education services</b>			
Percentage of primary school age out of school children:	28.8%	22%	50.3%
Pupil/teacher ratio in primary education	1/36	1/40	1/41
Percentage of children aged 36-59 months with whom an adult has engaged in activities to promote learning and school readiness in the past 3 days	6.3%	11.4	7.3
Children in humanitarian situations targeted by UNICEF and partners accessing formal or non-formal basic education (including pre-primary schools/early childhood learning spaces)	11,500	31,000	39,315 (including 15,878 girls)*
Gross enrolment ratio in preschool by sex (%)	T : 6.3% G : 6.3% B : 6.3%	T : 11.4% G : 11.4% B : 11.4%	T : 7.3% G : 7.5% B : 7.1%
Gross enrolment rate in primary:	T : 71.2% G : 64.7%	T : 90% G : 82.7%	T : 79.2% G : 73.5%

	B : 77.3%	B : 97.2%	B: 84.7%
Gender parity index (G/B) at the primary level (based on gross enrolment rate):	0.81	0.85	0.87
Completion rate for primary school (by sex):	T: 56% G: 48% B: 64%	T: 80% G: 78% B: 89%	T: 82.3% G: 74.5% B: 90.2%
Completion rate for primary school (urban/rural):	U: 87% R: 48%	U: 96% R: 68%	U: 137.7% R: 67.9%
Gross enrolment in secondary school by sex (%):	T: 20% G: 16% B: 23%	T: 31% G: 28% B: 32%	T: 36.8% G: 32.3% B: 41.4%
% of pupils of sixth year in primary school achieving the minimum required standard in mathematics:	28%	50%	41.7%
% of pupils of sixth year in primary school achieving the minimum required standard in French	27%	50%	29.8%
<b>Output 1: By 2018, schools and training centres (pre-school, primary and lower secondary cycle and non-formal education centres) offer a package of services conducive to educational achievement in an inclusive and gender-sensitive environment, including for children living with disabilities</b>			
Number of out of school children in the reporting year accessing formal or non-formal education with support of UNICEF	0	1,250	37,978
Number of primary schools implementing basic quality and equity standards	0	250	200
Number of teacher training colleges that integrate inclusive education in periodic evaluations of student teachers	3	11	3
% of primary schools targeted by UNICEF in the Convergence Municipalities that have a community kindergarten	0	30	30
Number of teachers (females and males) in the 147 rural colleges in the Convergence Municipalities benefiting from at least one mathematics training session in the course of their employment with the support of UNICEF	0	500	500
Number of children (girls) with a disability in ordinary schools	1,377	4,000 (at least 1200 girls)	, (1,354 girls)
<b>Output 2: By 2018, families, communities, schools and institutions are equipped with the tools to ensure the continuity of education for children affected by crises, especially girls and the most vulnerable</b>			
UNICEF-targeted children in humanitarian situations accessing formal or non-formal basic education (including pre-primary schools/early childhood learning spaces) - number & percent	8,068	95,611	39,315 (41% of targeted children) **
Cluster coordination mechanism for education sector rating for the 7 core cluster functions (incl. accountability to affected populations)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of children (boys and girls) aged 7-12 years targeted by UNICEF that have	6,665 (3231	12,000 (5,760 girls)	27,917 (14,515 girls)*



access to a quality education	girls)		
Number of children (boys and girls) aged 9-14 years targeted by UNICEF that have access to quality non-formal education	103	1,600 (45% girls)	2,775 (46% girls)
Number of teachers (including women) trained by UNICEF in psychosocial support	80	5,000 (2,500 women)	1,008
<b>Output 3: By 2018, management and leadership of the education system will be strengthened, especially in convergence municipalities, towards improved performance</b>			
Education Sector Plan or Transitional Education Sector Plan developed with UNICEF support available	No	Yes	Ongoing
Number of regions with a Regional Education Development Plan in accordance with the Sectoral Education and Training Programme (ETSP)	0	8	0 (Regional Committees have been formed, but plans are not yet available)
Proportion of annual investment plans in the 35 Convergence Municipalities that include a budget greater than or equal to 10% for education and have executed at least 50%	0	25	37 (13/15)
Annual Statistics for the preceding school year made available by the Ministry of Primary Education by September of the current year at the latest	1	1	0
Annual Statistics for the preceding school year made available by the Ministry of Secondary Education by September of the current year at the latest	0	1	0
Out-of-School Children Study is completed and a strategy to implement the key recommendations is available.	N/A	YES	OOSC study is completed. TOR for the action plan published
<b>Output 4: By 2018, families and communities have strengthened capacities to create favourable conditions for increased and sustainable demand for education</b>			
Community (including students') participation in school management committees at primary and secondary levels - score (1-4)	2.5	3	3
School management committees (or parent teacher association or school communities or similar structure) trained with UNICEF funding	100	580	2,200
Proportion of school management committees members at both primary and lower secondary, that received training on their roles and responsibilities	0	50	56
Number of school management committees that have implemented local action plans for girls' education	0	850	0 (activity discontinued after 2017 because of implementation and follow-up)

			challenges)
Proportion of school management committees that organized at least one information campaign during the year on peace-building and combating violence in the school environment	0	25	56
Proportion of school management committees in the 35 convergence municipalities that have received at least once during the year an information session on early childhood stimulation	0	30	0 - activity linked to JECs which were not supported in 2018
Number of school management committees that organized extracurricular activities during the year with a view to improving the level of college students	0	40	48

\*These figures come from the latest officially published and validated document, namely the UNICEF Situation Report of December 2018. Figures reported in the 2018 UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQ) reflected the most recent data at the time of reporting, namely the October 2018 Situation Report.

**Output 5.1: By 2018, schools and training centres (pre-school, primary and lower secondary cycle and non-formal education centres) offer a package of services conducive to educational achievement in an inclusive and gender-sensitive environment, including for children living with disabilities**

To contribute to improving learning outcomes that are linked to the performance of teachers, UNICEF supported the training of 1,137 headmasters in pedagogical and administrative leadership, as well as 20,350 teachers (representing 27% of Niger's teaching force at the primary level) in mathematics, gender equality and violence prevention. With UNICEF's technical and financial support, the Ministry also developed a national learning assessment plan to promote regular follow-up of pupils' learning outcomes.

Innovations were also introduced to support improvements in education quality. The Supporting Teachers at a Distance (SADE) pilot in Niamey, which initiated teacher coaching via telephone or Skype, successfully enhanced the understanding of participants of the reformed curriculum and the teacher observation-feedback loop. Headmasters changed the way they conducted their feedback sessions and teachers felt more supported in their roles.

Five regional primary and secondary education directorates launched the pilot project, Mon école numérique, in order to introduce technology into schools. Tablets with education literacy and numeracy games will be provided to students, and used to both improve basic numeracy and literacy and support teachers to plan and deliver lessons more effectively. The tablets are expected to support children's interest and engagement in learning, and improve learning results by exposing children to new and differential materials. and used to complement the teachers' lessons. Teacher and school directors will receive training on the technical and pedagogical side of the tablets.

The initiative to pilot mother-tongue education in target schools in Diffa with UNICEF and partner NGO support showed positive results in Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), with children with zero-score decreasing from 77% to 41% since 2017. At the same time, additional school management committees in 100 schools were supported to implement the Fundamental Standards of Quality and Equity (NFQE) through their action plans that received seed grants covering 22,414 students including 10,218 girls. In addition, the provision of class kits in 188 middle schools, 200,000 early grade kits and 10,000 primary class kits also facilitated children's learning.

At the central level, the Ministry of Primary Education developed and validated a pre-school children's assessment sheet. This improves teachers' ability to assess children's learning at entry to primary and better orient their teaching. The Ministry also initiated the process to develop the preschool teachers training programme in teacher training colleges, as well as teachers monitoring tools to improve their services in preschools, with the technical and financial support of UNICEF.



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UNICEF supported the training of 3,468 people in menstrual hygiene management in 2018, including 500 members of school management committees and mothers' associations, 2,000 girls and 968 boys in 120 schools across Maradi, Zinder and Tahoua regions. The Ministry is also putting more efforts to establish and empower student governments, including through the development of related manual and implementation guidelines for school directors and teachers. They lay out the student government structure and operating principles.

To support out-of-school children and youth, the Regional Directorate of Primary Education in Zinder introduced alternative education centres (CEA) for the first time in the region by developing additional manuals and opening 30 new centres. The Ministry of Technical and Vocational Training provided equipment to 24 skills training centres in Dosso, Tillabery, Tahoua and Zinder regions in order to improve training for over 360 learners.

3,446 school-aged children with disabilities (40% girls) were identified, referred and supported to remain in school. This strengthened the feeling of trust between parents and the education system, motivating parents to enrol their children with disabilities in school. UNICEF successfully piloted the nomadic school model in Maradi region, giving access to 646 nomadic children. The project was expanded to Agadez region in 2018, where UNICEF is implementing the model in four municipalities, targeting 53 primary schools, 4 secondary schools (2,500 nomadic children).

**Output 5.2: By 2018, families, communities, schools and institutions are equipped with the tools to ensure the continuity of education for children affected by crises, especially girls and the most vulnerable**

Intensive 'Back to School' campaigns were conducted with UNICEF support in the nomadic region of Agadez and in the crisis-affected regions of Tillabery and Diffa. The campaigns used mass media, such as radio and television, to broadcast messages about enrolment to improve parent's commitment to their children's education. This contributed to the new enrolment of 27,917 children (14,515 girls) by the end of the year.

The UNICEF-led education in emergencies response helped ensure learning opportunities for 39,315 children and youth (including 20,050 girls) through the rehabilitation of 435 temporary spaces and 120 evolutive classrooms constructed of mixed material in Diffa as well as 30 temporary learning spaces in Tillabery, in collaboration with the Regional Directorate of Primary Education and partner NGOs. All these classes were equipped with hand washing devices to ensure a hygienic learning environment, with training provided by the teachers to students on proper hygiene practices.

To support quality and safety in emergency-affected schools, 53,556 pupils benefited from school materials (textbooks and school kits) in the regions of Diffa and Tillabery, while 92 teachers received guides in mathematics and French. 465 teachers from the Diffa and Tillabery regions received training in psychosocial support and risk analysis to develop and implement preparedness and risk response plans in their schools, awareness raising on cross-cutting themes, support for pedagogical supervision, and reporting protection incidents via SMS-based system RapidPro. Psychosocial support training was provided to 1,008 teachers in 2018, covering all the teachers in the emergency zones of Diffa region and branching out to other regions. The number of teachers reached was impacted by the 2017 teacher evaluation, where low performing teachers were dismissed from their posts.

In Diffa region, UNICEF also technically and financially supported the provision of skills training to almost 1,000 out-of-school youth. In addition, with technical collaboration from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNICEF launched a catch-up numeracy programme with self-learning exercises allowing children to learn according to their own level and pace. Test results, which were initially low, had increased by 19% at the end of the programme (see case study below).

In the zones of Tillabery region affected by floods, UNICEF technically and financially supported basic rehabilitation of damaged classrooms, the distribution of equipment and school supplies, the establishment of temporary classes, construction materials (tarps and ropes) to schools in emergency to facilitate the implementation of temporary learning spaces with community participation, outreach to disaster victims on the protection of school investments, raising awareness for the authorities on not using schools as shelters during crises. Advocacy with education sector partners is needed for a more sustainable response to rebuilding severely damaged classrooms.

As the Education Cluster co-lead, UNICEF ensured capacity development through training of the Education Working Group members in some regions to better prepare them to respond to various types of emergencies in the education sector.

### **Case study - Package of minimum intervention focused on quality (PMAQ)**

#### **Top Level Results:**

UNICEF supported 14 Alternative Education Centres (CEAs) in Diffa to implement a mathematics programme centred on the level of the child. The approach, developed by JICA, ensures learning at the pace of the child using self-learning exercise books. UNICEF was able to support over 300 marginalized children within CEAs who were unable to enter or continue in the formal education system. After only 10 weeks of implementation, results showed an improvement of 19 points in the number of children correctly responding to test questions.

#### **Issue/Background:**

Insecurity and attacks are a major contributor to the low education quality and learning outcomes observed in Diffa, which has the lowest proportion of students attaining the minimum levels of competency in numeracy and literacy nationally. Additionally, 78% of children aged 7-16 are out-of-school in Diffa, demonstrating the low absorption capacity of the formal system.

#### **Rationale:**

The CEAs provide an alternative path for children who have not entered the formal system or who have dropped out of school. After three years of an accelerated curriculum, the objective is to integrate them into the formal system. However low absorption capacity by the system, poorly trained teachers and limited resources mean that many children fail to acquire the necessary competencies and are unable to continue after the three years. The CEAs are usually overcrowded, and the facilitators are unable to give each child the individual attention

they need.

UNICEF supported PMAQ implementation in the CEAs to reinforce basic numeracy skills of marginalized children and strengthen teacher competencies. The programme focuses on basic mathematics skills and capacities by providing children with individual booklets with repetitive exercises aimed at drilling the children in an engaging way to master the core skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The intervention ran from October to December 2018 (10 weeks). The objective was to improve the basic maths skills of the students in the 14 targeted CEAs.

### **Strategy and Implementation:**

With technical support from JICA and financial support from UNICEF, the Regional Directorate of Primary Education in Diffa (DREP) trained 14 facilitators from the targeted CEAs in the PMAQ methodology. Each CEA then administered a pre-test for the children, which identified the baseline level of each child. Booklets were then distributed based on the test results, allowing each child to begin at a level appropriate to their individual ability. The CEA facilitators helped the children to understand the exercises and correct any mistakes. To ensure local support for the initiative, community members were included in the initial training to promote understanding of the methodology.

The PMAQ approach was integrated into the official CEA teaching hours, resulting in 12.5 hours of dedicated time per week. During the 10-week implementation period, the DREP inspectors and UNICEF conducted regular monitoring visits to check that the activities were being correctly implemented, give advice, and address any challenges. The DREP also supported the creation of a WhatsApp group amongst the CEA teachers to facilitate peer exchanges and learning. A post-test was administered under the supervision of the DREP and UNICEF, at the conclusion to evaluate progress.



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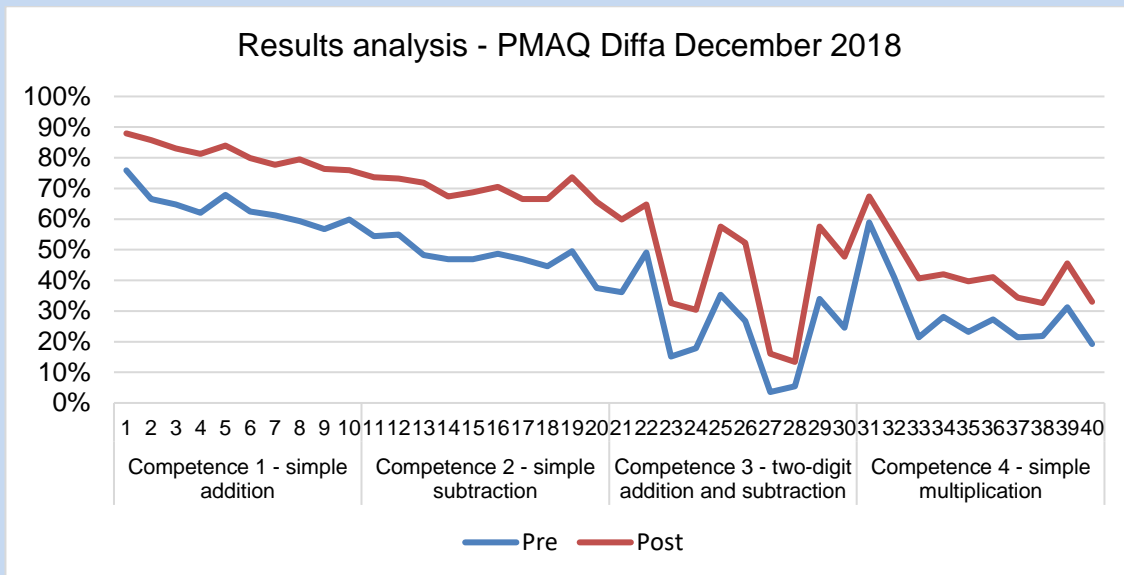
### **Resources Required/Allocated:**

Each of the CEA facilitators received one week of training. UNICEF also provided the exercise books for the CEAs (from the pre-mathematics to book 4), and each child received their own individual book appropriate to their level. As they advanced, new books were provided. In total, UNICEF printed 3,000 books and supported training and monitoring at a cost of US\$8,500.

Two DREP inspectors dedicated considerable time to the programme, from training to follow-up. UNICEF was involved in the training, the preparation of materials, testing and the monitoring. JICA, the developer of this approach, provided technical assistance.

### **Progress and Results:**

After 10 weeks of implementation, the children were retested. Significant progress was achieved, with the percentage of children correctly answering the questions rising by 19 points. A similar level of improvement was observed for girls and boys: the most significant improvements were made in the basic addition and subtraction problems, as expected, given the methodology of PMAQ that focuses on ensuring the basic skills before advancing to more complex problems. The graph below shows the change between pre- and post-test.



When UNICEF first supported the piloting of PMAQ, due to limited monitoring and follow-up, no real conclusion on the efficacy of the approach could be made. Drawing lessons from this, the DREP developed and implemented a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan, which included at least two monitoring visits to each CEA. This allowed any challenges to be tackled immediately. UNICEF also supported the development of the testing and follow-up tools, and building the capacity of the DREP to implement and monitor these types of projects.

The CEAs suffer from poor student and teacher attendance. The average attendance across the 14 CEAs was 74%, and out of the 311 students who were initially tested, only 227 took the post-test (73%). However, analyses indicates that it was not the weakest students who dropped out, providing evidence that students at all levels were able to improve their competencies. Anecdotally, the facilitators attested to the great enthusiasm of the children for PMAQ, stating that several children would come to class specifically for the PMAQ lessons.

**Lesson Learned:**

Despite progress, the results of this approach demonstrate that there is a need to reinforce basic competencies. However, poor teacher capacity means that regular follow-up and capacity building is needed to ensure correct implementation. The monitoring visits were an important part of the approach as it provided an opportunity to correct errors quickly. The creation of the WhatsApp group was also a promising way to enhance support for teachers, however the uptake was slow and only about half the CEAs participated due to connectivity challenges.

One of the challenges in Diffa is the high absenteeism rate by both teachers and the students. While anecdotal evidence suggests that the PMAQ enticed the children to attend classes, it was challenging to prove this through data collection. While PMAQ clearly improved the results of students, higher attendance would have resulted in even greater progress. It was also noted that less improvement was made in the higher order problems, generally those involving two numbers. As PMAQ was only implemented for 10 weeks, it is uncertain if this was due to lack

of time to address these types of calculations or if more exercises were needed to strengthen these areas. Overall, PMAQ is an emerging best practice that the Ministry shows interest in retaining and developing further.

#### **Moving Forward:**

Together with JICA, UNICEF is considering digitizing the PMAQ content. One of the challenges of PMAQ is the number of exercise books that need to be provided, and the resulting costs. Each book can only be used once, and each child needs the next level book every one or two months. Digitizing will eliminate the need for additional printing, however it also creates different challenges, particularly as power and connectivity are a concern for many CEAs.

UNICEF is also planning on expanding PMAQ to other CEAs in Diffa, as well as to Zinder region. The lessons from Diffa can certainly be applied in the neighbouring Zinder region, and the DREP Diffa is willing to share their experiences and provide support and training. When scaling up and expanding, further attention will be given to the development and implementation of a follow-up and monitoring plan, potentially including deeper engagement by the communities. This will support local ownership and increase the amount of supervision and support received by each CEA.

#### **Output 5.3: By 2018, management and leadership of the education system will be strengthened, especially in convergence municipalities, towards improved performance**

Niger is revising its current Education and Training Sector Plan (ETSP) to better respond to the current needs and latest sector developments. UNICEF was designated as the partner agency for the GPE Education Sector Development Grant to guide the revision process. As part of this process, UNICEF was responsible for launching and coordinating eight sectoral studies: 1) the evaluation of ETSP Phase I; 2) the school feeding strategy; 3) the school infrastructure strategy; 4) the analysis of barriers to girls' schooling; 5) determinants of success in school-leaving exams; 6) management of student flows to vocational and technical training; 7) supervision and development of universities; and 8) networking of youth training centres and arts/cultural training centres.

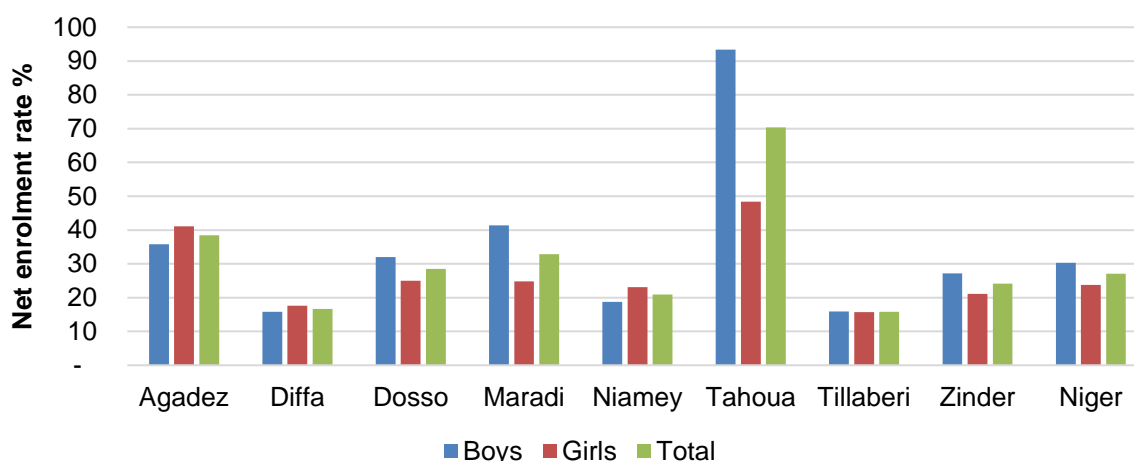
The ETSP revision process revealed significant issues concerning the reliability of the education sector statistics, impeding the ability to document progress and execute the financial simulation model for the ETSP. Advocacy efforts by the Education Sector Financial and Technical Partners and technical assistance from UNICEF supported a revision of the 2017-18 education data, enabling the next steps on the ETSP revision to proceed.

In addition to regular support for the production, publication and dissemination of the annual statistical bulletins for both primary and secondary levels, UNICEF supported the Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education to improve data timeliness and quality through the introduction of SMS-based system RapidPro in 256 schools in Diffa. The Ministries are jointly introducing EduTrack in 2019. Both of these tools increase real-time availability of data, improving decision making, particularly around resource allocation and the need for further support. UNICEF also supported the 'Data Must Speak' process, with over 80 participants ranging from community members to officials from central ministries discussing the use of data for decision-making and improved accountability of schools towards students and their communities.

Gender and geographic disparities in access to lower secondary school in Niger are significant (see graph). To address this, Niger is piloting the 'proximity middle school' model, which brings secondary schools closer to rural populations (within one kilometre). A study on the model was shared and debated with all regional authorities to ensure its relevance to different

contexts. The Ministry of Secondary Education conducted a study visit in December 2018 to Côte d'Ivoire so that Niger can draw inspiration from the Ivorian experience. This mission was technically and financially supported by UNICEF, in collaboration with AFD and the World Bank. This work has inspired the piloting of the model for an estimated 20 middle schools in 2019. For 2019, the ministry of lower secondary education will organize a national consultation to conceptualize and validate a model of proximity middle school based on the lessons learned in Cote d'Ivoire.

**Lower secondary enrolment rate Niger 2017-2018**



**Output 5.4: By 2018, families and communities have strengthened capacities to create favourable conditions for increased and sustainable demand for education**



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In 2018, the ministries of education began the development of a girls’ education action plan and the revision of the laws relating to girls’ education, which is expected to be finalized in 2019. Girls’ education developed into a key priority for the Local Partners Education Group, particularly the sub-group on ‘access’, where UNICEF advocated for a mapping exercise to coordinate interventions promoting girls’ education.

Governors, in collaboration with civil society and decentralised education actors covering the whole country, organized eight regional awareness campaigns. The campaigns included the nationwide dissemination of 50,000 pamphlets on the presidential decree through both traditional and more innovative means, including mobile cinema to reach less literate and more remote communities. UNICEF also supported 10 television broadcasts in French and local languages.

To advance the ongoing decentralization process and the transfer of competencies related to girls’ education, UNICEF supported capacity building for 35 girls’ education focal points around the country through a training held on Nigerien Women’s Day (13 May) to understand and tackle gender-based violence. Through the focal point training, 173,700 girls were reached. Technical assistance was also given for



the capacity building of 2,200 school management committees on gender-based violence in and around schools.

During the revision of the ETSP, the ministries of education included a focus on girls' education. The sector analysis highlighted gender disparities and identified key gender issues which will be addressed in the revised ETSP. Furthermore, the ministries commissioned a study on secondary girls' education, coordinated and supervised by UNICEF and the Support Unit for ETSP Implementation and Monitoring (CAMOS).

With UNICEF's technical and financial assistance, the Directorate of Education Statistics developed a database of key girls' education indicators in municipalities to inform future planning and programming for community-level interventions. Extra-curricular activities for boosting the demand for girls' education were conducted across 48 secondary schools in Agadez and Tahoua regions. UNICEF also supported the Government to send a representative to participate in a panel at the World Girls Summit, highlighting the continued high incidence of child marriage in Niger. A national response and advocacy strategy and action plan on this issue is being developed, following strong advocacy efforts from UNICEF and partners.

#### IV. Financial analysis

**Table 1: 2018 planned budget by thematic sector (in USD)**

Intermediate Results	Funding Type <sup>1</sup>	Planned Budget <sup>2</sup>
1: By 2018, schools and training centres (pre-school, primary and lower secondary cycle and non-formal education centres) offer a package of services conducive to educational achievement in an inclusive and gender-sensitive environment, including for children living with disabilities	RR	674,053.37
	ORR	2,255,731.46
2: By 2018, families, communities, schools and institutions are equipped with the tools to ensure the continuity of education for children affected by crises, especially girls and the most vulnerable	RR	174,876.90
	ORR	1,175,053.91
	ORE	3,537,711.00
3: By 2018, management and leadership of the education system will be strengthened, especially in convergence municipalities, towards improved performance	RR	946,131.55
	ORR	583,707.70
4: By 2018, families and communities have strengthened capacities to create favourable conditions for increased and sustainable demand for education	RR	290,250.81
	ORR	757,197.35
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>10,394,714.05</b>

<sup>1</sup> RR: Regular Resources, ORR: Other Resources – Regular, ORE: Other Resources - Emergency.

<sup>2</sup> Planned budget for ORR and ORE does not include estimated recovery cost.

In 2018, UNICEF and the Government of Niger signed a joint work plan for the education programme budgeted at US\$10.4 million. Following the trend from 2017, the budgeted amount remains above the amount planned per year when the 2014-2018 country programme was developed (US\$4 million, excluding ORE), demonstrating the need for quality education interventions and support. This is further demonstrated by the expenditure of almost US\$10

million, a rate of execution of 95.5%. In particular, there has been an increased need for support to education in emergencies.

**Table 2: Country-level thematic contributions to thematic pool received in 2018 (in USD)**

Donors	Grant Number	Contribution Amount	Programmable Amount
Denmark*	SC1899040025	1,998,401.00	1,867,664.17
Denmark	SC1899040095	2,855,496.28	2,668,687.40
Finnish Committee for UNICEF	SC1899040021	201,301.11	188,131.74
German Committee for UNICEF	SC1899040027	111,077.40	103,810.26
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,166,275.79</b>	<b>4,828,293.57</b>

\*This amount was received in December 2018 and will be used in 2019

Thematic contributions received in 2018 accounted for 46% of the planned budget. The grant from Denmark (SC1899040025) arrived only at the end of December 2018 and will be utilized for the 2019-2021 country programme. Excluding this grant, the programmable amount received totaled US\$2,960,629.40, or 28% of the budgeted amount for 2018. Funding from the Finnish National Committee was received for education in Niger for the first time. Thematic funding will be valid until 2021.

**Table 3: Expenditures by results areas (in USD)**

Organizational Targets	Expenditure Amount*			
	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	All Programme Accounts
22-01 Equitable access to quality education	972,504.38	3,062,850.25	1,673,932.23	5,709,286.86
22-02 Learning outcomes	-9,070.95	2,711,632.41	1,107,291.47	3,809,852.93
22-03 Skills development	-1,032.68	377,800.81	27,406.84	404,174.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>962,400.76</b>	<b>6,152,283.47</b>	<b>2,808,630.54</b>	<b>9,923,314.76</b>

\*All expense amounts are provisional and subject to change.

The majority of the funding (58%) was used to expand equitable access to education. This included responding to the emergency situation in the Lake Chad Basin, with funding for emergency accounting for 17% of expenditure under this output. Overall, 10% of expenditure was dedicated to the emergency response (ORE), with Other Resources (OR, including ORE and ORR) taking up 62% and Regular Resources (RR) accounting for 28%.

**Table 4: Thematic expenses by results areas (in USD)**

Row Labels	Expense*
<b>Other Resource – Emergency</b>	<b>2,988.44</b>
22-01 Equitable access to quality education	2,988.44
<b>Other Resources – Regular</b>	<b>4,842,514.02</b>
22-01 Equitable access to quality education	2,449,242.24
22-02 Learning outcomes	2,351,334.25
22-03 Skills development	41,937.53
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4,845,502.46</b>

\*All expense amounts are provisional and subject to change.

As per the 2018 programme, the majority of the thematic funding supported activities for increasing access to, and quality of, available education services in Niger. The thematic funding greatly enabled the delivery of planned results in 2018 and the achievements described in this report. Thematic funding were particularly important for UNICEF to achieve results in the following areas: advancing girls' education, especially through community outreach efforts; pre-primary education; alternative education; sector coordination; and the development of the next Education Sector and Training Plan.

Of the US\$4.8 million spent in 2018, 43% was transferred to counterparts, including to the Regional Directorates of Education and NGO partners carrying out field activities. These partners working closely with communities to boost demand for education, teacher training, and improving accountability mechanisms. UNICEF also continued to support the purchasing of educational materials (accounting for 31% of the expenditure), including for pre-school and primary levels. This is an important contribution helping to overcome financial barriers to education faced by households. The remainder was used for monitoring activities and necessary staff costs to support efficient implementation and follow-up of activities.

The flexibility of thematic funding enables UNICEF to respond quickly to time-sensitive needs, and allows UNICEF to take action in critical areas, contributing greatly to strategic work. This included support to pre-school and primary education as well as support to the decentralization process. Moreover, the multi-year and pooled nature of the education thematic fund helps reduce transaction costs and maximise the time that UNICEF staff spend on field activities.

**Table 5: Expenses by specific intervention codes (in USD)**

Row Labels	Expense*
22-01-01 Provision of (formal and non-formal) early learning / pre-primary education (including in temporary learning spaces)	1,340,793.37
22-01-05 Provision of (formal and non-formal) multiple-levels or alternative pathways of education (including in temporary learning spaces)	730,229.80
22-01-06 System strengthening - inclusive education for children with disabilities	149,976.47
22-01-08 System strengthening - risk informed programming, including climate, resilience, disaster, conflict, and emergency preparedness	77,272.65
22-01-09 Peacebuilding education	132,178.16
22-01-13 Education humanitarian cluster/humanitarian sector coordination	4,863.49
22-01-14 Education Management Information System (EMIS) (excluding learning assessment systems)	312,100.51
22-01-17 School Related Gender-based Violence (SRGBV)	3,247.83
22-01-99 Technical assistance - Equitable access to quality education	1,642,774.78
22-02-03 Provision or procurement of secondary education learning materials	572,660.43
22-02-04 Provision or procurement of multiple-levels (or alternative pathways of education) learning materials	2,090,969.13
22-02-12 Provision of training of school communities e.g. parent teacher associations, school management committees	278,745.66
22-02-21 System strengthening - community participation and social accountability, e.g. school management committees	162,992.50
22-03-03 Provision of skills development for multiple age groups (including in temporary learning spaces)	288,630.09

22-03-11 Education sector planning including coordinating role, SDG 4, etc.	64,898.87
26-02-01 Situation Analysis or Update on women and children	13,180.10
26-02-03 Data architecture and use	2,035.12
26-02-05 Administrative data, registers and non-MICS household surveys and censuses	8,236.84
26-02-08 Programme monitoring	8,966.21
26-03-01 Advocacy and partnership-building for social behaviour change	5,784.99
26-03-02 Capacity and skills development for social behaviour change	52,464.53
26-03-03 Children, adolescent and youth engagement and participation	36,473.54
26-03-04 Community engagement, participation and accountability	4,554.89
26-03-06 Research, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management for C4D	6,280.04
26-03-07 Strengthening C4D in Government systems including preparedness for humanitarian action	20,009.44
26-03-99 Technical assistance - Cross - sectoral communication for development	69,014.74
26-04-01 CO/RO Supply - technical assistance and collaboration in supply chain, procurement of goods and services, and logistics	14,355.39
26-06-04 Leading advocate	21,662.32
26-06-05 Leading voice	21,273.74
26-06-06 Supporter engagement	7,793.01
26-06-07 Leading brand	8,677.36
26-06-08 Emergency preparedness (cross-sectoral)	493,858.95
26-06-12 Learning	465.47
26-07-01 Operations support to programme delivery	1,258,911.38
27-01-15 CO programme coordination	37,269.29
27-01-16 CO advocacy and communication	18,455.97
28-07-03 Country office leadership and direction	97.85
28-07-04 Management and Operations support at CO	-38,840.15
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>9,923,314.76</b>

\*All expense amounts are provisional and subject to change.

2019 is the first year of the new country programme 2019-2021. The UNICEF education workplan for 2019 will build on the achievements from the previous country programme and is estimated at US\$14 million, with a current shortfall of US\$5.8 million, mainly for the humanitarian response. A great emphasis will be placed on the quality of educational services (50% of the budgeted amount without ORE); this includes improvements to alternative learning pathways. 30% of the budget will be utilized towards improving access to education, including in emergencies, and 20% will go to supporting sector management. In particular through a focus on the decentralization process.

**Table 6: Planned budget for 2019 (in USD)**

Intermediate Result	Funding Type	Planned Budget <sup>1</sup>	Funded Budget <sup>1</sup>	Shortfall <sup>2</sup>
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1. Families, communities and municipalities have enhanced capacities to promote enrolment, retention and protection of children in school, especially girls, and those affected by crises.	RR	930,000	791,867	138,133
	ORR	1,800,000	1,520,821	279,179
	ORE	4,984,281	400,000	4,584,281
2. Actors in basic, non-formal education and vocational training have enhanced capacities for quality teaching/learning and providing a safe and protective environment.	RR	1,550,000	987,105	562,895
	ORR	3,000,000	3,090,716	-90,716
3. Education system managers have capacities and tools for better decentralized management of equitable and quality education services, including in humanitarian situations.	RR	620,000	500,000	120,000
	ORR	1,200,000	1,008,578	191,422
<b>Sub-total Regular Resources</b>		3,100,000	2,278,972	821,028
<b>Sub-total Other Resources - Regular</b>		6,000,000	5,620,115	379,885
<b>Sub-total Other Resources - Emergency</b>		4,984,281	400,000	4,584,281
<b>Total for 2019</b>		14,084,281	8,299,087	5,785,194

<sup>1</sup> Planned and Funded budget for ORR and ORE excludes recovery cost. RR plan is based on total RR approved for the Country Programme duration

<sup>2</sup> Other Resources shortfall represents ORR and ORE funding required for the achievements of results in 2019.

## V. Future Work Plan

In cooperation with the Government and in consultation with United Nations country team and partners, UNICEF has developed a new country programme to align with the Government's Economic and Social Development Plan 2017–2021 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2019–2021. To maximize impact, the programme will begin a strategic shift from a predominantly service-delivery mode to more-important investments in systems strengthening and capacity-building. This spirit will also permeate UNICEF humanitarian response interventions, with sustainable solutions pursued to maximize contributions to national and local development plans.

The vision for the new country programme is to support the Government towards ensuring that all children, especially the most vulnerable, enjoy their rights; adolescents and youth are empowered; communities and systems are strengthened and resilient; and humanitarian assistance and development address the structural causes of fragility and vulnerability.

For the first year of implementation of its new country programme, UNICEF Niger will continue its efforts to address key challenges in the education sector. Focus will be on the following issues: (i) expanding access to quality education services to reach vulnerable and marginalized children, including girls, children with disabilities, and out-of-school children and youth; (ii) ensuring education for children affected by emergencies; (iii) strengthening education management system and leadership; and (iv) increasing the social and community demand for education. Greater emphasis will continue to be placed on piloting innovative approaches, in part thanks to thematic funds, whose flexibility will enable UNICEF to explore alternative solutions.

More specifically, in 2019 the education programme will focus on:

- Capacity building educational actors at all levels, from central to community
- Support for out-of-school children and youth (CEA, skills training, community mobilization)
- Advocacy and engagement for girls' education
- Advocacy for parenting education
- Prevention, preparation and response to risks / emergencies
- Monitoring and improving learning achievement
- Capacity development of school directors
- Promoting child leadership and participation
- Introducing innovations
- System strengthening (including data management and utilisation)
- Evidence generation and advocacy



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From 2019, UNICEF will take over as the chair of the Education Sector Financial and Technical Partners Group. This will consolidate UNICEF's key role in the education sector plan revision process as well as the next GPE funds application process. This will be an opportunity to advocate for equity, specifically the right to education for the vulnerable and marginalized children, especially girls.

A portion of the budget required for these activities has already been covered, thanks in part to the generous contributions of resource partners through thematic funding. This support is much appreciated, as the flexibility of these funds will give UNICEF the means to explore innovative solutions to long-standing issues. There remains a US\$5.8 million funding gap for 2019, mainly to support education in emergencies, girls' education, alternative education and skills training. UNICEF will continue its efforts to raise flexible resources to meet the education needs of children.

## VI. Expression of Thanks

On behalf of the children and women of this country, UNICEF Niger would like to thank the donors who are supporting its education programme. No development is possible without basic education for girls and boys, and the support of resource partners is essential to achieve meaningful results. We would also like to thank the Government of Niger and other major partners, whose collaboration was instrumental in achieving these results.

## Annex 1: Human Interest Stories

### Piloting innovation for marginalized children in Diffa

“Off, back to class with you,” Madame Amina shoos the children away from the classroom door as the testing process commences. The children, curious to see what is going on, continue to peek through the doorway and the cracks in the straw-constructed walls. Despite her tone, there is a smile on her face as she turns back to face the class, a fondness for her students clearly evident. “I worry about them.” She confesses. “What will become of them after three years here? What are their options and opportunities?”

She looks in particular at a boy sitting in the front, his long legs stretching out from under the table. He is concentrating hard on the test paper in front of him, drawing lines on the blank page to solve the single-digit multiplication problem.  $7 \times 7 = 48$ , he writes after carefully counting the ‘sticks’ he has drawn. He clearly understands the concept of multiplication, but has not yet memorized the multiplication table and accidentally miscounts his lines.



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“Khalid is already 18 years old, the third of eight children.” Madame Amina explains. “He’s been here two years, so this is his third and final year. But what can he do afterwards? He’s too old to be integrated back into the normal school system. And I don’t know how to ensure more training for him. He wants to learn.”

Madame Amina teaches at the alternative education centre (CEA) in Diffa, near the border with Nigeria, an area under the threat of attack by Boko Haram. The CEA caters to children who have not been able to enter the formal education system on time. Many learners, like Khalid, live in remote rural areas, farming or raising livestock with their parents and siblings.

Khalid is taking a baseline test as part of the UNICEF-supported remedial numeracy programme implemented by the Ministry of Primary Education in 14 CEAs across Diffa region. The programme, developed by JICA, focuses on children learning at the right level. Regardless of their age or grade, children are given the exercise book and lessons appropriate to their current abilities, with activities identified to support their specific learning challenges. This type of targeted learning has been shown to improve the basic competencies of children in various different countries and environments.

“It’s not always easy for them. But I know that these little ones”, she points to some of the youngest in her class of 20 students, “will at least be integrated back into the formal system after a few months. Here they can learn the basics and therefore be more comfortable with their classmates in the regular school.”

It’s not always easy for Amina herself, either. A mother of two, she understands the importance of education, and her eldest is enrolled in the kindergarten located on the same grounds as the CEA. She must leave her youngest with a caretaker though, and during breaks, she hurries off to breastfeed him as he is only 3 months old. She has been with the CEA since its creation two years ago: “It is good, it [the centre] gives options for those who weren’t able to join school at the age of 7. But more needs to be done.”

“Khalid was lucky,” she says: “his parents moved him here so that he can gain some education at last. His two older brothers, they never went to school. Now he has some education. He can read, and at least do basic sums. This will help him find a better job. And his younger brothers and little sister are enrolled here, in the primary school. They have hope.”

As for Amina, she is committed to her profession, and her priority is to complete the state entrance exam to gain further professional qualifications. “I will try,” she smiles: “then together we can find a way to make sure all these children continue to learn.”



## Escaping child marriage to pursue education in Bermo

Pammou, age 12, is one of the few young Fulanis enrolled in the first year of lower secondary education in Bermo, Maradi region. She is a native of Toumba-Dégi, a community composed of nomadic herders and farmers. In fact, the Fulanis are known as the 'Waddabe', or the 'new-comers'. Due to their migratory lifestyle, they often converge around wells and water points in Bermo.

Pammou's story and determination are remarkable. She recounts:

"The tradition of *tchiré*, or the stealing of brides, isn't practiced anymore in our family. My grandparents however still took part in it. It is still practiced in some families, but not ours. However, forced marriage still exists – I should know, I am a victim myself!"

Pammou's nightmare began the year she was to start secondary school, having finished the primary education cycle without challenges. While her peers continued to secondary school, her father told her that further education was not possible; he claimed that the school education was not of good quality and that the results of her school entrance exam were not available. She would have to get married.



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"As soon as I was told this, I cried and said that I didn't want this, I didn't agree... Furthermore, my aunt and uncles were furious with me, claiming that I wanted to go to secondary school to become a prostitute and learn bad behaviours. My aunt even spread this rumour among the rest of my village, and soon the whole village was against me and my desire to study. Nobody spoke to me..."

Pammou was ousted from her family and her village, which criticized and blamed her for her situation. She felt lost and lonely, so one day, she decided to run away.

"One night, I just left. I walked a long distance, all night long. I was so afraid, it was dark and all I could think of were the nightmare stories of sorcery and witchcraft and demons told by our elders. I almost turned back, on multiple occasions, but determinedly continued walking and running. I was so alone, so exhausted, in the middle of the night, vulnerable to all kinds of risks and threats..."

After a night of walking, she arrived in Bermo, the village of the municipal chief. She found refuge with Léllé, a volunteer teacher and tutor known for her continuous support and fight for the education of nomadic children. She was also generous with her hospitality, providing lodging and support for secondary school students without anywhere to stay.

"It's the only way I can contribute to the education of the nomadic children. I do it because I am convinced it is the right thing to do, and I am passionate about it. Pammou isn't the only one staying with me, and her success gives me strength to continue. I spoke to the mayor who in turn spoke to the village elder, and I am following up on her case to ensure she can continue her studies" Léllé says.

Before finding Lélé and her support, Pammou had gone to the secondary school headmaster. “She came to my house one night, in tears, telling me that her dad was going to force her to get married. She begged me to support her, to do something. I first calmed her down, then reassured her of my help,” the headmaster recounts.

“The third day of my escape, I was able to join my peers in school, escorted by the military thanks to the efforts of Lélé, the mayor and the community elder. The day after, my father came by motorcycle to get me back. He threatened my host, saying she had been complicit in my escape, but the municipal authorities stopped him and questioned his intent. My father finally acknowledged that he was in the wrong, and gave in. He gave me 6,500 West African francs to buy necessary school and sports equipment. Lélé assured him of my ability to stay long-term with her, on the condition that I continue to study hard. This is my challenge now.”

In Niger, child marriage continued to be one of the major challenges for girls’ education. 76% girls are married before the age of 18 years and 36% of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years have already given birth or are pregnant. Evidence shows that girls’ education is one of the key contributors to the development of a country. UNICEF is supporting the modelling and piloting of nomadic schools in Bermo and in Agadez region. The model brings quality education closer to the children, with a strong focus on girls.

## Monitoring learning outcomes on a regular basis in Niger



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"I am convinced that the learning outcomes in schools of Niamey District 5 under my supervision must be monitored more regularly at all levels, including at class and school levels." said Mr. Haro Abdoulaye, Inspector of Niamey District 5.

Niger has the lowest learning outcomes indicators in West Africa, with only around 8% of pupils reaching a level of sufficient proficiency in reading and mathematics by the end of primary school (PASEC 2014). Consequently, improving the quality of learning has been at the heart of interventions carried out by the Government of Niger and its education sector partners.

A National Plan for Monitoring of Learning Outcomes (PNSAS), which provides for a regular follow-up of learning outcomes, has been developed by the Ministry of Primary Education, with UNICEF's technical and financial support. The plan also includes remedial measures for students with learning difficulties.

To implement this plan, the Ministry trained 686 inspectors and teaching advisers (more than half of the target group) on testing methods and remedial strategies so that they can strengthen teachers' capacities to regularly assess learning and take care adequately of children with learning difficulties

Mr. Haro is one of the inspectors benefiting from the training. He explains how much the training has been beneficial to him and how, in turn, he has trained others in his area.

"Soon after the training, and convinced of the importance of the mechanism put in place, I gave the same training to all the teaching advisers in my district who have not yet been trained so that they in turn train their school principals and teachers".

Currently most of the pedagogical actors of Niamey District 5 possess the techniques and the tools required to evaluate the learners, to take regular measures of learning outcomes, to analyse the results and subsequently apply the necessary remediations.

The implementation of the National Plan for Monitoring of Learning Outcomes will allow Nigerien school managers to have a mapping of results by class, school, and school district. They will be better equipped to intervene more effectively during the in-service training, which must be focused on the learning results.

This will certainly contribute to the improvement of the quality of education, which remains a major concern for Niger.

## **Annex 2: Donor Feedback Form**

UNICEF is working to improve the quality of its reports and would highly appreciate your feedback. To fill our online feedback form, please use the links below:

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