

The Republic of Niger

Ex-Post Evaluation of Japanese Technical Cooperation Project “Project on Support to the Improvement of School Management through Community Participation”

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1 Overview of the Project



Project Location



Mouwadala I Primary School
(Tahoua Region)

1.1 Background

The Republic of Niger, one of the poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, has suffered from poor standards of education with huge regional and gender disparities. To address this situation, the Government of Niger developed the Ten-Year Education Development Programme (Programme Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation: PDDE) 2002-2012, which aimed to enhance access, quality and the system of education. Above all the PDDE places great value on the decentralization of education through community participation and more specifically the Government encourages each primary school to set up a school management committee (comité de gestion de établissement scolaire: COGES), composed of six members: a principal, one teacher's representative, one mother's association representative, and three parent's association representatives. This COGES policy lets those stakeholders assume responsibility for making a school action plan and implementing activities, such as: maintenance of buildings, procurement of textbooks and materials, and administration of contract teachers, thereby improving school management and establishing superior quality of education. The Government also expects a

COGES will dispel community people's distrust in schools and shorten the psychological distance between a school and its community.

COGESs were organized on a pilot scheme basis in February 2002. It was then recognized at the COGES evaluation meeting in September 2003 that while some COGESs had produced positive achievements, others had not functioned. The attendants in the meeting therefore shared viewpoints that to make COGESs functional it was necessary to: provide training(s) for COGES members, involve more women, establish rules, and strengthen the regional education officers' support system.

Under such circumstances the Government of Niger officially requested the Government of Japan to implement a technical cooperation project designed to develop, through capacity building of central and local administrators, an effective COGES model.

1.2 Project Outline

Overall Goal	A model for School Based Management with community participation through COGES is expanded.
Project Purpose	A model for School Based Management with community participation through COGES is reinforced.
Output	1. Community participation in school management is enhanced.
	2. Capacity of COGES in the target schools is enhanced in Tahoua Region.
	3. Functional "COGES communes" (alliance of COGESs) are formed.
	4. Support system for COGES is consolidated.
	5. Replicability of COGES management model experimented in Tahoua Region increases.
Inputs	【Japanese side】
	1. Dispatch of Experts (119.5M/M): 4 Long-term experts (104.4MM)/3 Short-term experts (15.1M/M)
	2. Counterpart Training in Japan: 5 persons
	3. Provision of Equipment: 30,336 thousand yen (until the time of terminal evaluation)
	4. Operation Cost: 118,504 thousand yen (until the time of terminal evaluation)
	【Nigerien side】
	1. Assignment of Counterpart personnel: 23 persons
	2. Office Space for Experts from Japan: 2 rooms
	3. Operation Cost: None (No budget was allocated for the project operation)
Total Cost	365,019 thousand yen (until the time of terminal evaluation)
Period of Cooperation	1 January 2004 - 31 July 2007 (The project was first planned for three years [until 31 December 2006], but it was extended to 31 July 2007)
Executing Organization in Niger	Ministry of National Education
Supporting Organization in Japan	None
Related Projects	Project on Classroom Construction in the Departments of Dosso and Tahoua in the Republic of Niger (Grant Aid)

1.3 Summary of the Terminal Evaluation

(1) Achievement of the Overall Goal on Project Completion

The national policy paper stipulated that this project's COGES local model should be adopted as the national model, however the project model was not introduced in other regions. The terminal evaluation report stated that, with the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (Ministère de l'Éducation de Base 1 et Alphabétisation: MEB/A) – later renamed the Ministry of National Education (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale: MEN) – the achievement of the overall goal is likely in the future.

(2) Achievement of the Project Purpose on Project Completion

The project purpose was mostly achieved, however, among the outputs modified and added by mid-term evaluation, the output of forming functional COGES communes – later renamed the communal federation of COGES (fédération communale des COGES: FCC) – was found to be too difficult to establish even after a seven month project extension; after which period it was taken over by the Phase 2 of the project, starting from August 2007.

(3) Recommendations by the Terminal Evaluation Team

In the short term, the following are recommended: 1) documentation of the COGES model, 2) standardization and clarification of FCC's role and function, 3) support to the COGES working group, 4) organization of stakeholder workshops at a national level, 5) external review of the COGES model, and 6) reinforcement of COGES policy. In the medium/long-term, the following are recommended: 1) strengthening of the Section of Promotion of COGES (Cellule de Promotion des COGES: C.P.COGEs), 2) formulation of strategies at a national level, and 3) ensuring sustainability of the COGES model.

2 Outline of the Evaluation Study

2.1 External Evaluators

Satoru TAKAHASHI (IMG Inc.)

Shimako NARAHARA (IMG Inc.)

2.2 Duration of the Evaluation Study

Duration of the Study: October 2009 – September 2010

Duration of the Field Study: 13th March 2010 – 11th April 2010

2.3 Constraints during the Evaluation Study

The evaluation team planned to visit as many COGESs and FCCs as possible in the project sites of Tahoua and Zinder Regions. However, due to a coup staged in February 2010 and an increasing threat from Al-Qaeda, most parts of the regions became off-limits for civilian visitors and consequently the team was only allowed to visit one third of the whole targeted area. Under such conditions the team with a local assistant visited and interviewed stakeholders at 36 COGESs and 6 FCCs in Tahoua as well as 31 COGESs and 8 FCCs in Zinder.

The team found that documents and records were missing at schools because principals usually took them when they were transferred to another school, meaning that no school possessed quantitative data for the past few years. In lieu of this the team had to visit the Educational Inspector's Offices (Inspection de l'Enseignement de Base: IEB) to obtain records.

After the project was over on 31st July 2007, Phase 2 of the project targeting the whole country, including the said two regions, started on the following day with a three year total duration. As a result it was impossible to completely separate the influences caused by the subsequent project (which was still in operation at the time of this report).

3 Results of the Evaluation (Rating: B)

3.1 Relevance (Rating: a)

3.1.1 Relevance with the Nigerien Government Policies for Development

Niger's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is equivalent to Niger's development policy or strategy, marks out the education sector as an important area. The Basic Education Law (Loi sur l'Education de Base) promulgated in 1998 placed education at the top of the nation's list of priorities. The PDDE 2002-2012 aims, through sharing responsibility with communities, to attain sustainable development and it regards community participation as a key element in realizing this. The project also coincided with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), one of whose goals is to achieve universal primary education.

3.1.2 Relevance with Development Needs

According to the Statistics of Basic Education (Statistiques de l'Education de Base) 2004–2005 the gross enrolment rate (GER) in primary education in Tahoua Region was 48%, with a female student GER of 33%. They came in fourth and eighth respectively out of the eight Niger regions. In Zinder Region GER was 41% (eighth place) and female GER was 35% (seventh place). Female student proportion out of all students was 34% in Tahoua (last place) and 42% in Zinder (fifth place). The completion rate of primary education in Tahoua was 28% (sixth place) with the female completion rate being 17% (last place), and in Zinder completion rate of

primary education was 24% (last place) with the female completion rate being 19% (seventh place).

Thus the two target regions had relatively lower educational indicators in Niger and were in greater need of educational development. The approach focusing on community participation was also appropriate to address the issues of access, quality and the system of education.

3.1.3 Relevance with the Japan's ODA Policy

In the third Tokyo International Conference on Africa Development (TICAD) held in 1993, the three pillars of Japan's basic policy for assistance to Africa were announced, namely: "human-centered development," "poverty reduction through economic development," and "consolidation of peace." In TICAD IV in 2008 Japan announced that it would double its assistance to Africa.

In 2002 Japan announced its "Basic Education for Growth Initiative" (BEGIN) to the international community at the Kananaskis (Canada) Summit, identifying its strategy to support basic education in developing countries. BEGIN sets out three priority areas: 1) assistance for ensuring access to education, 2) assistance for improving quality of education, and 3) improvement of management of education.

Thus the project is consistent with the Japanese Government's commitments in Africa and its aid policies for basic education.

This project has been highly relevant with: the Nigerien development plan, development needs in Niger, as well as the Japan's ODA policy; therefore its relevance is high.

3.2 Effectiveness (Rating: a)

3.2.1 Achievement of the Project (Outputs)

3.2.1.1 Output 1

Output 1 is "Community participation in school management is enhanced." Two indicators were set for this output.

Table 1 Achievements of Output 1

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
1. Percentage of schools that set up a COGES by democratic election in Tahoua Region	80% of schools	98% of schools
2. Average number of activities implemented by a COGES	One or more activities implemented by 80% of COGESs	Over 5 activities implemented by 98% of COGESs

Source: Terminal evaluation Mission Report (2007)

The first indicator target of 80% (of schools that set up a COGES) was met and passed: 1,205 schools representing 98% out of a total number of 1,229 schools in Tahoua Region (except in areas where other donors have interventions in operation) set up COGESs. A COGES consists of six members; a principal, one teacher's representative, one mother's association representative, and three parent's association representatives. Except a principal and a teacher, COGES members are democratically elected. The second indicator target of 80% (of activities implemented by a COGES) was also met and passed: on average more than five activities were implemented. Thus both targets were met and Output 1 was achieved.

3.2.1.2 Output 2

Output 2 is "Capacity of COGES in the target schools is enhanced in Tahoua Region." Four indicators were set for this output.

Table 2 Achievements of Output 2

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
1. Percentage of newly targeted schools whose COGES members received training on school activity planning	90% of schools	94% of schools
2. Percentage of early-established COGESs whose members attended a seminar for improving the relationship between teachers and community	90% of COGESs	100 % of COGESs
3. Number of COGESs in Bouza and Konni Districts whose members received APP training	65 COGESs	64 COGESs
4. A report summarizing the activities and lessons learned of the "School project"	A report was written.	A report was written.

Source: Terminal evaluation Mission Report (2007)

The first indicator target of 90% (COGES members received training) was met and passed: 962 schools – representing 94% – of a total of 1,017 newly targeted schools received training on school activity planning. The second indicator target of 90% (early-established COGESs members who attended seminars) was also met and passed: all of the 151 schools (100%) attended a seminar for improving the relationship between teachers and community. The third indicator target of 65 COGESs (members receiving APP training) was very nearly met: 64 COGESs members from schools in Bouza and Konni Districts received training on the practical and productive activities (activités pratiques productives: APP). The fourth indicator target of report writing was completed in eight pilot schools by summarizing activities and lessons learned through the "school project"⁴⁹; however, COGES members had difficulty in distinguishing between the implementation of a "school project" and the development of a

⁴⁹ The "school project" is a sub-project or pilot activity under the main project. It is not a singular activity, but a steady effort to solve fundamental and time-consuming problems in schools. With seed money funded by the main project, income generation activities were conducted to earn financial resources.

school activity plan, and they found it difficult to implement and manage income generation activities, so the “school project” was terminated without expansion to other schools.

Other than those above, there were three COGESs that founded community kindergartens in their schools and two COGESs opened a second chance class intended for children coming in over the normal school attendance/entry age.

Regarding the targets and achievements above Output 2 was by and large achieved. However, most of the indicators were related to training received so they are not sufficient to measure the extent that the COGESs capacity was enhanced. It is thought it should be in the COGES’s capacity to cover: organizational strength, decision-making and implementing and financial capacity, and due to these various roles it was difficult to evaluate COGESs with limited description in the terminal evaluation report, so this issue will be covered later in “3.5 Sustainability” where firsthand information was presented at the time of the Ex-Post Evaluation.

3.2.1.3 Output 3

Output 3 is “Functional “COGES communes” (alliance of COGESs) are formed.” Two indicators were set for this output.

Table 3 Achievements of Output 3

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
1. Percentage of communes that set up a FCC by democratic election	70% of communes	100% of communes
2. Average number of activities implemented by a FCC	One or more activities implemented by 80% of FCCs	One or more activities implemented by 100% of FCCs

Source: Terminal evaluation Mission Report (2007)

The first indicator target of 70% (communes that set up a FCC) was met and passed: 39 communes were set up – representing 100% – with 12 people selected from the COGES membership by democratic election (“COGES communes” was later renamed “communal federation of COGES” [FCC]). The second indicator target of 80% (one or more activities implemented by a FCC) was also met and passed: one campaign promoting school enrolment was conducted by the seven early-established COGESs in 2005 and another campaign for “improving quality of education” was conducted by 39 – representing 100% of the target communes – FCCs in 2006.

As described above FCCs were formed but these indicators alone cannot corroborate whether FCCs are functional or not, although in regards to this the terminal evaluation report states that: the formation of functional FCCs has not been achieved and this remains a challenge ahead, adding that the strengthening of FCC’s monitoring capacity and establishing of efficient monitoring methods are necessary. The report also judged that in Phase 2 of the project, which

started without interruption and was initiated to tackle these challenges, Output 3 was not achieved even after the period of cooperation was extended for seven months.

3.2.1.4 Output 4

Output 4 is “Support system for COGES is consolidated.” Three indicators were set for this output.

Table 4 Achievements of Output 4

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
1. Holding a FCC meeting in Tahoua Region	Holding a FCC meeting at least once in all 39 communes	Held a FCC meeting four times in all 39 communes
2. Holding a COGES officer meeting	Holding a regular meeting	Held a monthly meeting
3. Clarifying and stipulating the role and relationships of/among various COGES-supporting institutions	Clarification and stipulation	Completion of a guideline

Source: Terminal evaluation Mission Report (2007)

The first indicator target of all 39 communes in Tahoua Region holding a FCC meeting at least once was achieved: meetings were held four times by every commune. The second indicator target of holding regular COGES officer meetings was also achieved: they were held on a monthly basis from January 2004. The third indicator of clarifying and stipulating the role and relation of/among various COGES-supporting institutions and organizations was achieved by completing a guideline.

As stated above, the foundation of the support system for COGES was strengthened, but the support system itself had yet to be consolidated; the terminal evaluation report points out in regards to this that the COGES-supporting system had nearly been established, but documentation of the FCCs’ role was inadequate.

3.2.1.5 Output 5

Output 5 is “Replicability of COGES management model experimented in Tahoua Region increases.” Two indicators were set for this output.

Table 5 Achievements of Output 5

Indicators	Targets	Achievements
1. Percentage of schools that set up a COGES in pilot schools in Zinder Region	80% of schools	100% of schools
2. Average number of activities implemented by a COGES	One or more activities implemented by 80% of COGESs	Over 4 activities implemented by 98% of COGESs

Source: Terminal evaluation Mission Report (2007)

The first indicator target of 80% (schools that set up a COGES in pilot schools) was surpassed: 60 schools – representing 100% – out of all the pilot schools in Zinder Region that set up a COGES. The second indicator target of 80% of COGES implementing one or more activities was also surpassed: more than four activities on average were implemented. The school activity fund collected from parents and villagers were on average 210,000 FCFA.

Thus both targets were met and Output 5 was achieved, in addition COGESs were established not only in the 60 pilot schools but also in all the 1,544 schools in Zinder Region as the project, by following the recommendation made by the terminal evaluation team, pressed ahead with a full application of itself.

The Nigerien Government used to have a policy of gradually increasing the COGESs by one thousand every year, but it suddenly changed its policy in April 2005 and made the establishing of a COGES compulsory in all schools across the whole country. In response to this, it was agreed at the time of the mid-term review, to include Zinder Region as an additional project site with the 60 pilot schools being inside this region.



Photo 1 A fence constructed based on a school activity plan in Takeita Centre Primary School in Zinder Region



Photo 2 A thatched classroom constructed based on a school activity plan in Biliangue Primary School in Tahoua Region

3.2.2 Achievements of the Project Purpose

The project purpose is “A model for School Based Management with community participation through CIGES is reinforced.” The three following indicators were set for the project purpose.

In 80% of primary schools in Tahoua Region, except areas experiencing interventions by other donors;

- 1) COGES members are elected by democratic election.
- 2) School activity plans approved at community meetings are implemented.
- 3) Monitoring is conducted by FCCs or COGES officers.

As stated in “3.2.1 Achievements of the Project Outputs” COGESs were set up by democratic election in 1,205 schools – representing 98% – out of a total of 1,229 schools in Tahoua Region.

Then based on a school activity plan, an average number of 5.16 activities were implemented by COGESs, however, COGES officers were unable to conduct monitoring; this was because COGES officers (and even at the time of this report) were not assigned at the commune level, but at the district level. The area of a district is too vast for only one COGES officer to monitor all the schools in his/her district, conversely FCCs had meetings four times a year and yet they were still inexperienced with little proficiency for monitoring COGESs.

Thus, reinforcement of the School Based Management model with community participation through COGES was achieved, as was the project purpose in general. However, it was judged at the time of terminal evaluation that the strengthening of FCCs' monitoring capacity and system was necessary. The report also remarked that the project would need more time for modeling a FCC, and in response to this, the project was extended for seven months until the end of July 2007. Even with this extension the COGES monitoring system fell short of being modeled. Phase 2 of the project was initiated in August 2007, with a three year duration, to continue to tackle this challenge.

In light of these, this project has largely achieved its objectives; therefore its effectiveness is high.

3.3 Efficiency (Rating: b)

3.3.1 Inputs

Components of Inputs	Plan (at the time of the preparatory study)	Results (at the time of the terminal evaluation)
Dispatch of Experts	- Long-term experts: 2 (72M/M) - Short-term experts: 2 per year (upon necessity)	- Long-term experts: 4 (104.4M/M) - Short-term experts: 3 (15.1M/M)
Training in Japan	A few per year	5 persons (mainly in educational administration)
Training in a Third Country (Burkina Faso)	n/a	13 persons (in school based management with community participation)
Provision of Equipment	Vehicle: motorbike	Vehicle: motorbike
Operational Cost	n/a	118,504 thousand yen
Total Cost of Cooperation	Nearly 250,000 thousand yen	365,019 thousand yen
Inputs from the Nigerien Government	n/a	None

3.3.1.1 Input Components

(1) Background

When the Record of Discussion (R/D) was signed in December 2003 the project purpose was to strengthen community participation in school management at 171 COGES experimental schools in the Tahoua Region. However, after the Nigerien Government's policy change (making COGES compulsory in all schools nationwide in April 2005) the mid-term review mission

concluded that the original project purpose had already been achieved and set out a new project purpose: “A model for School Based Management with community participation is reinforced.” In order to verify the replicability of the model, 60 schools were newly selected in Zinder Region where it was applied and tested. After that and in response to the recommendations made by the terminal evaluation team the model should be disseminated throughout Zinder Region, a total of about 2,800 schools (1,300 in Tahoua, 1,500 in Zinder) became targets of the project.

(2) Results of analysis

Firstly, a slight adjustment was made with training abroad, as training in a “third country” was not originally planned but was implemented in Burkina Faso as well as in Japan. Given the nature of a COGES policy and the progression of decentralization in the education sector, it became obvious that Niger differed from Japan. So with all the factors taken into consideration, including cost-effectiveness, the number of participants to be trained in Japan was reduced and the number of participants to be trained in Burkina Faso was increased.

Secondly, the aforementioned early achievement of the project purpose is proof that the quality, quantity and timing of each input component were appropriate. Other contributing factors were the complete use of experience gained through the soft component – which was aimed at the improvement of school management (Composant soft visant à l’amélioration de la gestion des écoles: COSAGE) under a grant aid project for Classroom Construction in Tahoua Region – and the collaboration with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) which was familiar with the geography and indigenous languages.

In the mid-term review, some modifications were made in the project design matrix (PDM) where a new output of forming functional FCCs was added. The project conducted activities to produce this output: extending the period of cooperation for seven months and providing additional input components. As a result it was observed that the FCCs had been somehow monitoring the COGESs, thereby achieving their minimum role. Yet, it also became clear that only a small number of FCCs had been able to collect contributions from COGESs, which was needed in order for an FCC to be deemed functional as written in the Phase 2 report issued in July 2007.

As stated above, a series of input components were duly created but they did not produce all the expected and desired outputs. Rather than attributing this to the inadequacy and irrelevance of the input components, one interpretation could be that the new output (the formation of functional FCCs) added in the PDM at the time of the mid-term review turned out to be more demanding than expected. Still, it is a fact that the project could not achieve the formation of functional FCCs, even with the cooperation period being extended. What is discussed here is the

quality or degree of difficulty (challenge level) of the output, and not the actual quantity of the output, so if appropriate but less difficult outputs were stipulated in the PDM they would have been produced within the period regardless of the quantity of them.

3.3.1.2 Project cost

Chapter 3 of the preliminary study report issued in January 2004 stated that the total cost of the project should be around 250 million yen; with the actual cost being over 365 million yen as a result of the extension of the cooperation period. For this extension, a new R/D and PDM (attached to the Minutes of Meeting) were signed again, and additional activities with extra inputs were implemented. Still, the output of forming functional FCCs was not fully achieved, but from some points of view such extra inputs would always be unavailing if they are considered from a position of entering the project in Phase 2.

3.3.1.3 Period of cooperation

This project was extended by seven months, and at last count the period of cooperation was three years and seven months. As mentioned earlier this extension was primarily attributable to the addition of a demanding output, specifically the formation of functional FCCs which evidently proved too difficult to accomplish (even after 7,500 stakeholders received training in the two regions). Considering that Phase 2 of the project of which the duration is three years had taken over this challenging task, the seven month extension alone was not long enough to produce this output.

In light of these, the total period of cooperation was insufficient to attain the outputs (and the project purpose) that were modified at the time of the mid-term review; therefore efficiency of the project is fair.

3.4 Impact

3.4.1 Achievement of the Overall Goal

(1) Background

According to the terminal evaluation report this project started as a pilot project aimed at creating a replicable model for school-based management, with lessons learned through trials in about 20 schools in Tahoua Region. However, in April 2005 the Nigerien Government changed its COGES policy, making it compulsory to establish COGES in every school throughout the country and as a result the government requested JICA to expand its target areas. To accommodate the PDM was modified at the mid-term review in July 2005, and the overall goal was changed from “Children’s learning environment is improved in the project site through community participation in school management” to “A model for School Based Management

with community participation through COGES is expanded.” As a consequence, the project “was transformed into one that focused on broad-based dissemination throughout the two regions”, as described in terminal evaluation report. The project, through following the recommendation made by the terminal evaluation team, increased the number of target schools from 60 to all the schools in Zinder Region and eventually the number of target schools increased up to nearly 2,800 schools (1,300 schools in Tahoua Region and 1,500 schools in Zinder Region).

(2) Results of analysis

A model of COGESs that could be disseminated was developed and applied in the two regions where the project activities were conducted, and in this sense the overall goal was achieved. This model was adopted into the COGES policy and became widespread throughout the nation. It was ascertained in January 2010 by the terminal evaluation team for Phase 2 of the project that at least five regions (Tahoua, Zinder, Maradi, Tillabéri and Dosso) had had a meeting (forum) at least once for all COGESs and education officers to attend.

The Ex-Post Evaluation team visited 67 schools (36 schools in Tahoua Region and 31 schools in Zinder Region) and met with COGES members such as principals, teachers, parents and villagers. All 67 schools (100%) selected COGES members by democratic election and it was also found that female members were selected not only from a mother’s association but also from a parent’s association and from teachers. But despite the regulations set by the ministerial decree, less than 40% of the schools had conducted a COGES election every year, meaning that the rest of the schools (60%) decided to have the same COGES members through just dialogue and not through an election (see “3.5 Sustainability”).

3.4.2 Other Impacts

This clause refers to the educational indicators in quantitative terms although they were not stipulated in the PDM. There was a positive tendency observed in the indicators at the schools which the Ex-Post Evaluation team visited and obtained reliable data from, this was also confirmed by the official statistics. These statistics showed that the target two regions had exceeded the national average for their increase in: percentage points of student enrolment, student GER, female GER, female ratio to all students, and pass rate of the final examination for the primary education certificate (Certificat de Fin d’Etudes du Premier Degré: CFPED). It cannot be asserted if they are impacts caused as a result of the project because there have been many intervening factors, but it is worth adding them here for the record.

(1) Quantitative impacts**(a) Student enrolment and GER**

Out of 67 schools which the Ex-Post Evaluation team visited, reliable data on student enrolment was obtained from 63 schools. From them there were 44 schools (70%) whose student enrolment had increased since 2007, whereas at 18 schools (29%) student enrolment had decreased and at one school (2%) no change has been observed.

For the period from 2006/07 to 2008/09, student enrolment in Tahoua Region increased by 36.8% and GER increased from 52.3% (sixth place from eight regions) to 67.6% (fourth place), an increase of 15.3 percentage points. During the same period in Zinder Region student enrolment increased by 30.1% and GER increased from 48.6% (seventh place) to 59.8% (seventh place), an increase of 11.2 percentage points.

Table 6 Increase in Enrolment and Enrolment Rate (School year 2006/07 – 2008/09)

Educational Indicators	Tahoua Region	Zinder Region	National Average
Increase in Enrolment (%) (from 2006/07 to 2008/09)	36.8 (207,616 to 284,004)	30.1 (192 966 to 251,136)	25.8 (1,235,065 to 1,554,270)
Increase in Enrolment Rate (percentage points)	15.3	11.2	10.8

Source: Ex-Post Evaluation Team

In the country as a whole, student enrolment increased by 25.8% and GER increased from 57.1% to 67.8%, an increase of 10.8 percentage points. So the student enrolment rate and the increase in GER percentage points in the two target regions outperformed the national average.

(b) Female GER and female ratio to all students

Out of 67 schools which the Ex-Post Evaluation team visited, reliable data on female student enrolment was obtained from 63 schools. From them there were 36 schools (57%) where a female student ratio to all students had increased since 2007, whereas at 26 schools (41%) female student ratio has decreased and at one school (2%) no change has been observed.

For the period from 2006/07 to 2008/09, in Tahoua Region the female GER increased from 37.2% (seventh place) to 52.8% (sixth place), an increase of 15.6 percentage points. The female ratio to all students also increased from 35.1% to 38.5%, an increase of 3.4 percentage points. For the same period in Zinder Region GER increased from 42.0% (sixth place) to 54.0% (fifth place), an increase of 12.0 percentage points. The female ratio to all students ratio increased from 43.4% to 45.3%, an increase of 1.9 percentage points.

Table 7 Increase in Female GER and Female Ratio to All Students
(% Point, 2006/07-2008/09)

Educational Indicators	Tahoua Region	Zinder Region	National Average
Female Student Enrolment	15.6	12.0	11.2
Female Ratio to All Students	3.4	1.9	1.6

Source: Ex-Post Evaluation Team

In the country as a whole, the GER increased from 47.4% to 58.6%, an increase of 11.2 percentage points and the female ratio to all students ratio increased from 41.5% to 43.1%, an increase of 1.6 percentage points. So the percentage point increase in GER and female ratio to all students ratio in the target two regions outperformed the national average.

(c) Pass rate of CFPED

Out of 67 schools which the Ex-Post Evaluation team visited, reliable data on the pass rate of CFPED was obtained from 53 schools. From them there were 39 schools (74%) whose pass rate has increased or remained at 100% since 2007, whereas there were 14 schools (26%) whose pass rate had decreased.

For the period from 2006/07 to 2008/09, in Tahoua Region the pass rate of CFPED increased from 37.8% (last place) to 52.5% (sixth place), an increase of 14.7 percentage points. For the same period in Zinder Region the pass rate increased from 52.0% (first place) to 67.2% (first place), an increase of 15.2 percentage points.

Table 8 Increase in Pass Rate of CFPED (% Point, 2006/07-2008/09)

Educational Indicator	Tahoua Region	Zinder Region	National Average
Pass Rate of CFPED	14.7	15.2	10.7

Source: Ex-Post Evaluation Team

In the country as a whole the pass rate increased from 42.6% to 53.3%, an increase of 10.7 percentage points. So the pass rate percentage point increase in the two target regions outperformed the national average.

(2) Qualitative impacts

Qualitative impacts were not stipulated in the PDM, however the following points were recorded through interviews with COGES and FCC members; they are far-reaching influences that go beyond normal school and education sector boundaries.

(a) Empowerment of schools through COGESs and FCCs

Schools used to be isolated and powerless entities before COGESs were set up or started functioning. However, after people who had been interested in and responsible for education

were organized as COGES members, they became able to think themselves, take necessary actions and make due requests to the government officials (primarily inspectors and COGES officers). So stakeholders around a school not only had a greater sense of ownership but also became more vocal by collecting and expressing their own opinions.

It is worth noting that FCCs linked every school together which all had previously had no interaction with each other. FCCs, composed of 12 elected COGES members, made this networking of schools possible. A FCC, basically, held general meetings three times a year where it calls for all COGESs in the commune to attend. A general meeting works in the following ways: implementation of school activity plans are monitored, new government policies and campaigns are announced, and common problems facing schools are discussed.

(b) Unity reinforcement in a community

The introduction of a democratic election system made an enormous impact on the traditional societies, with this system creating a new group of people and specifically (except a commune mayor) COGES members are only selected by election. No other government sector has this system, so consequently COGES members have pride that they are elected by people in fair election; while at the same time people in the locality trust them and visit them for advice even on non-educational issues.

So COGESs have served as a catalyst bring about various positive influences; some COGES members say that based on the relationship of trust strengthened through the implementation of school activity plans, people have become more united and willing to work together on community problems beyond a school's normal perimeters and responsibilities.

No negative social impacts caused by the project were observed, however the continued existence of FCCs may become an economic burden on COGESs and communities (discussed in "3.5 Sustainability").

Thus after this project was implemented some educational indicators were improved in quantitative terms and positive social changes were observed in qualitative terms. The scale of such improvements or changes would never be small.

3.5 Sustainability (Rating: b)

3.5.1 Related Policy and Institutional Sustainability

In PDDE 2002-2012 it placed value on a COGES policy as part of a vehicle for improving educational management, with two ministerial decrees concerning regulations on the establishing and operation of COGESs and FCCs being promulgated in November 2005 and in

October 2008 respectively; so sustainability has been ensured in policy and in institutional aspect.

The ministerial decree stipulates that a COGES election should take place every year with re-election permitted up to once, but the Ex-Post Evaluation team found that only 23 schools (38%) out of the 61 schools from which they obtained reliable data implemented an election in the school year of 2009/10⁵⁰. From the remaining schools, 36 schools (59%) had an election in the school year of either 2007/08 or 2008/09, and 2 schools (3%) have had no election except for the very first one; in these 2 schools, the same members had continued working without an election because they had been performing well.

Such a situation will not develop into a major problem in the short-term, but if it becomes a normal mode of operation it may increase the risk of returning to traditional gerontocracy ways, making COGESs inflexible and inactive, and merely titular.

3.5.2 Organizational Sustainability

The organizational foundation of the central government is relatively weak as described below, while at a regional and district levels it is relatively solid.

According to the preliminary study report's project document issued in January 2004, the Secretary General of MEB/A (later renamed as MEN) is the Project Director, the Director of the Department of Planning is the Project Manager, and then the primary counterpart is the Coordinator of C.P.COGEs. At a regional level the Directors of the Regional Office of Education and COGES supervisors are also project counterparts, and at a district level the COGES officers and inspectors are the people who worked most closely with the project.

The weakness in the organization and capacity of C.P.COGEs was pointed out in the project's terminal evaluation report. According to one expert, from Japan, on Phase 2 of the project, the coordinator of C.P.COGEs is only the person who has the ability of policy-making although there were several C.P.COGEs officers. This is a fact that applies to other departments in MEN too.

Whereas education officers at the regional and district levels contact each other and take care of COGES-related activities on top of their routine work. Directors of IEB attend meetings, monthly, convened by Directors of a Regional Office of Education and COGES officers attend meetings convened by a COGES supervisor at a Regional Office of Education.

There is only one COGES officer assigned to each district, as there are many schools which are located far and wide within each district the officer cannot visit a vast number of schools; so it is inspectors who actually visit the schools. Each inspector is usually in charge of two or three

⁵⁰ In Niger a school year begins in October and ends in September.

communes including the one commune where they are living. To be an inspector the official examination must be passed, while there is no examination to be a COGES supervisor (at the regional level) or a COGES officer (at the district level). In actual fact those who are in the two COGES-related positions are among many other education officers, so between them there are often huge gaps in working capabilities.

3.5.3 Technical Sustainability

The capacity of central government counterparts has remained at a low level as described below, counterparts' capacity at the sub-national level is not adequate either but it is expected to improve gradually as they continue visiting COGESs and FCCs for monitoring and supervision.

From the early stages of this project it fully utilized a local NGO – the Organisation Nigerienne des Educateurs Novateurs (ONEN) – with four of ONEN's staff members even at the time of this report working full-time for Phase 2 of the project. ONEN's staff members are familiar with not only French but also the local language of Hausa, so their support was indispensable when conducting the training series – in Hausa – for government officers and stakeholders around schools. The use of this NGO was understandable because the project was required to produce a certain visible outputs within the limited period of three years.

It is however considered that ONEN staff members in particular took charge of the tasks which government officials (in C.P.COGEs, Regional Office of Education and IEB) should have assumed i.e., it is undeniable that ONEN staff members played a role of quasi-counterparts while receiving fees several times higher than the salaries of government officials. When the Japanese experts for Phase 2 of the project first met the Coordinator of C.P.COGEs, he told them that this project “belonged to JICA and ONEN, not to MEN”; this comment simply indicates to what extent MEN's sense of ownership towards the project was.

At the sub-national, especially the district level, COGES officers and inspectors regularly visited COGESs and FCCs for monitoring and supervision under the sound guidance of IEB, and their capacity was enhanced through this continuous effort. The Japanese experts working in Niger at the time of this report came up with the idea that it is essential to develop the capacity of government officials at the sub-national level as they will gradually reduce the degree of dependence on, or collaboration with, ONEN staff members.

3.5.4 Financial Sustainability

MEN's COGES-related budget was insufficient, and unstable financial sustainability is a concern as described below. COGESs have, in contrast to MEN, been able to collect money or flexibly select some activities to be implemented in the cases where the amount of money collected was not enough. FCCs however have been struggling to collect contributions from COGESs and its financial circumstances need to be continually and closely watched.

C.P.COGE has authority over a COGES policy but no budget to provide financial support for COGES activities. MEN allocates from its ministerial budget the operational expenses including monitoring of schools to the Director of IEB and inspectors, and they receive respectively 250,000 FCFA and 150,000 FCFA quarterly, however these expenses were suspended from October 2009; so inspectors who were visiting schools were being forced to pay their own motorcycle fuel costs.

In contrast, COGES officers, COGES supervisors and Directors of Regional Office of Education reliably received operational expenses, which originated from the counterpart fund of the Japanese grant aid program⁵¹. Every month COGES officers receive 40,000 FCFA, which they utilize exclusively for fuel for getting to COGESs and FCCs so they can monitor and supervise them⁵². However, the counterpart fund is not an eternal financial resource so this payment will come to an end in the foreseeable future. The counterpart fund is controlled by a fund management committee composed of MEN, JICA Niger Office and Phase 2 of the project, and they are all aware that the fund is not eternal.

The COGESs collect money (annually 500-1,000 FCFA per student) from parents and villagers, and FCCs collect contributions (annually around 3,000 FCFA) from each COGES in a commune. In simple terms, a COGES makes a school activity plan every year and decides the amount of money required from an individual or a family by dividing the total activity costs by the number of students, but the total amount of revenue collected usually remains between 60-70 percent of that required. Instead of, or on top of, the cash contributions these stakeholders also contribute building materials such as thatch and wood, but if all these are insufficient a COGES has to exclude the activities that have relatively low priority.

While some FCCs consider the municipal government (commune) to be part of their fund source when they make an activity plan, others do not consider it that way and only ask for assistance from a commune, private companies and benefactors when they cannot collect their targeted amount from the COGESs contributions. The Ex-Post Evaluation team found that, in seven FCCs out of 14 FCCs (six in Tahoua and eight in Zinder) which they visited, FCC members made private contributions to compensate for shortfalls; they also found that four FCCs (two in Tahoua and two in Zinder) had difficulty collecting contributions from COGESs.

⁵¹ The counterpart fund is a compulsorily accumulated reserve fund established in recipient countries of Japan's food aid, grant aid for increased food production, and non-project grant aid. A recipient country's government holds the fund in a local bank account (in its own national currency) and the interest accumulated from this fund is equivalent to the amount needed to purchase goods and materials. A recipient country in consultation with Japan utilizes the fund for the implementation of projects, and the purchasing of goods and materials, which are projected to contribute to its economic and social development.

⁵² The details of monitoring fees per month are as follows: 100,000 FCFA is allocated to the monitoring activities conducted by the Regional Office of Education, 100,000 FCFA to a COGES supervisor (90,000 FCFA for fuel and 10,000 FCFA for motorbike maintenance); and 50,000 FCFA to a COGES officer (40,000 FCFA for fuel and 10,000 FCFA for motorbike maintenance). Besides, 26,400 FCFA is allocated to COGES officers for the preparation of monthly meetings.

Thus 11 (79%) out of 14 FCCs have been struggling to collect contributions to implement their activities. As FCCs are still young (three or four years old), their financial foundations have yet to be firmly established.

3.5.5 Continued Effects of the Project

COGESs are far from omnipotent but they have been more effective in two of the target regions, rather than in the others, in that they keep school based management with community participation in a sustainable manner as described below.

The same team visited 19 schools (12 in Dosso and seven in Tahoua) for another objective (the Project's Ex-Post Evaluation of Classroom Construction in the Departments of Dosso and Tahoua [Grant Aid]). Three schools (one in Dosso and two in Tahoua) out of 19 were found to be almost paralyzed due to the interpersonal problems, such as antagonism between teachers and villagers, and conflicts among villagers. Regardless of the views that this number would be large or small, this fact implies that a COGES system is not self-contained and that incessant support and supervision from outsiders, especially the government officials, are indispensable in keeping it functioning.

Out of 67 schools which the team visited, reliable data on the number of school activities occurring was obtained from 48 schools (27 in Tahoua and 21 in Zinder). The average number of school activities was 4.8 in Tahoua and 4.0 in Zinder, whereas it was 3.8 in Dosso which was a non-target region and despite the small sample size, the two target regions turned out to have more school activities. The team also looked at real documentation of schools' activity plans, and found that schools in the two regions had more minutely elaborate plans compared to schools in Dosso where the documents looked more like shopping lists than school activity plans.

Making a school activity plan and its implementation are placed at the center of a COGES's activities. Actually the construction and maintenance of the buildings and the purchase of materials took up the largest percentage of the total budget. It was revealed by the terminal evaluation team for Phase 2 of the project that these accounted for 50-60% of the entire budget. Therefore, even if there are a certain or relatively high number of activities, they will not always be linked with improving the quality of education in the school.

In light of these, the counterpart organization (MEN) has concerns about its financial circumstances; therefore the sustainability of the project is fair.

4 Conclusion, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

4.1 Conclusion

The relevance of the project has been evaluated as high because it was consistent with Niger's development policy and needs as well as Japan's aid policy. The effectiveness coupled with the impact of the project has been evaluated as high; this was because the project purpose was in the majority achieved, but a new output added at the mid-term review was not achieved, although positive changes in quantitative and qualitative terms after the implementation of the project were observed in and around the schools. The efficiency of the project has been evaluated as fair because a newly-added output seemed quite challenging and was not achieved, even after a seven-month extension. The sustainability of the project has been evaluated as fair because MEN and FCCs' financial foundations for strengthening and monitoring COGESs still have plenty of room for improvement. In light of the above, this project is evaluated to be satisfactory.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Recommendations to the Executing Agency

(1) Monitoring of COGESs follow-the-rule orderliness

Some of COGESs had not implemented a democratic election or even if they had they kept the same members re-elected for years, which is a violation of the COGES rules. MEN needs to manage the actual situation of how to apply the ministerial decrees so that they are obeyed by the COGESs, through monitoring sub-national government officials (COGES officers and inspectors). If an annual election is too frequent and burdensome for COGESs then MEN can amend its rules, for instance by making an interval every two years or more. In this case it would be necessary to include a provision that prohibits members' re-election in a COGES, to prevent the lengthening of the same members' tenure and the resulting immobilization of the COGES.

(2) Document control and storage

In all the schools that the Ex-Post Evaluation team visited, it was observed that documents went missing after a principal had been transferred to another school. It is expected that with the correct control and storage of documents – which enable a COGES to check the transition of the students enrolled and the school's past activity plans – will help a COGES make better plans and implement its activities more smoothly. Since the proper management of documents does not cost anything and can be implemented without extra effort, it will be beneficial for all COGESs to be informed and instructed to do so under a MEN initiative.

4.2.2 Recommendations to JICA

(1) Strengthening of FCCs' financial capacity and checkup of FCCs' function

FCCs are financially dependent on COGESs to a great extent and have difficulty collecting contributions from COGESs (as mentioned in “3.5 Sustainability”). It is as a result necessary to reinforce the financial foundation of FCCs and specifically, that JICA provide, under current and future technical cooperation, assistance to increase the collection rate of contributions from COGESs and diversify funding resources, other than that of a COGESs, in a commune. If it turns out to be difficult for FCCs to be financially viable there may be an option for the government organization to assume as their own tasks, a part of FCCs' roles, such as the organization of general COGES meetings and monitoring of the implementation of school activity plans. In order to understand this option, MEN needs to obtain a better understanding of the situation at the localities and it is also expected that JICA would help them strengthen a smooth and consistent reporting system, through which they would relay information from schools to sub-national governments at the commune, district and regional level to central government.

(2) Strengthening of collaboration among COGESs, FCCs and government bodies

In order for COGESs and FCCs to develop themselves in a sustainable manner it is important for them to have a collaborative relationship with government bodies, achieving this through exchanges of opinions and information sharing. One vital point is to strengthen relationships with their IEB (Director, inspectors, and COGES officers) because they are physically close to them. It is also important for FCCs to have a close association with its commune (municipal government) because they need to receive financial support from it continually. So JICA can still assist by linking the stakeholders of COGESs, FCCs, IEB and a commune at the district or lower level, also involving MEN and the Regional Offices of Education.

4.3 Lessons Learned

(1) Significance of modeling and areal and quantitative expansion

This project developed a simplified COGES model and disseminated it not only to the original target of 60 schools in Tahoua Region, but also to all the nearly 2,800 primary schools in the two Regions (1,300 in Tahoua and 1,500 in Zinder) as a result of the modification of the PDM at the mid-term review. As the areal and quantitative expansion was so great – such was the appeal of the project to the Nigerien Government and other donors – the significance of the project implementation was greatly enhanced and as a direct result even the presence of JICA/Japan was greatly increased. A technical cooperation project like this, which develops a model of a certain system or institution, should desirably be designed to accommodate more

factors in broader areas rather than fewer in smaller areas. If it seems to be too risky to set such a lofty goals or targets, a project can be initiated on a modest scale and then expand itself gradually depending on its progress.

In the case of this project there was the Nigerien Government's policy change (from increasing COGESs by one thousand every year to making COGES compulsory in all schools nationwide) in April 2005, which JICA strongly supported and the dissemination of the projects COGES model was propelled by other donors' assistance including a World Bank's loan. Several manuals on a COGES set-up and management developed by the project were explained to, and shared among, participants in monthly donor meetings. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and European Union (EU) started utilizing them for their activities. It should be noted that the model was disseminated through a complicated but collaborative process.

(2) Necessity for review of project period and inputs, and correct target setting

In this project the new output added at the mid-term review turned out to be too challenging and was not achieved even after a seven month extension of the cooperation period, after which this challenge was seamlessly taken over by the Phase 2 of the project starting from August 2007. To summarize – if not taking into account the level of difficulty – the period set for this project was too short to produce this output. The rating of the efficiency of the project therefore was reduced to “b”, meaning that evaluation results vary depending on the levels set for the project in its purpose and outputs. When the contents, levels and indicators are reviewed in the course of the project it is imperative to pay utmost attention to their levels that should be newly targeted, while taking into consideration the remaining cooperation period and the volume of inputs.

Some modifications were made in the PDM at the time of the mid-term review as mentioned earlier. However, little evidence was found in the report that a study was completed as to: whether the inputs should have been augmented to achieve the project purpose and outputs for the remaining period, and whether the cooperation period should have been extended in line with these augmented inputs. Consequently, regardless of cases where the PDM is modified or not, it is necessary to examine whether the originally fixed period of cooperation and inputs were appropriate to achieve the project purpose and outputs. And if inappropriate (inadequate) it should be a requirement that, as early as possible, it is decided how long the period should be extended and/or how much the volume of inputs should be increased by.

(3) Utilization of local NGOs

This project made effective and efficient use of a local NGO that was familiar with the local language and geography, however, the more local NGOs are utilized the greater the risk of lowering the counterpart organization's sense of ownership. So when utilizing a local NGO, a

project can take maximum advantage of it during the early stages but the project should gradually reduce its use or dependence on the NGO as the counterpart organization builds up its capacity. To do this practically, it is possible to lessen the workload of an NGO and/or reduce the number of NGO staff members working for the project.

(4) Institution building with capacity development

Institution building is a difficult task, still what is fundamentally important is the capacity development of counterpart personnel who continuously scrutinize and amend it in response to changes in the needs of the society at the locality. Model development and institution building do not terminate with the project's completion, so counterpart personnel should be equipped with the necessary skills to complete regular reviews. There are no shortcuts in capacity development; the only way is to have sensitization and transfer of expertise to them through daily activities. In addition to these it would be advantageous to incorporate a device or condition in a system that facilitates its own regulation, specifically one can put into a ministerial decree e.g., a provision that a thorough examination must be conducted every three years in order to obligate a periodical review of the matter in question.