

Girls' and Women's Education

ENGAGING, LEARNING, SUCCEEDING TOGETHER

COOPERATIVE APPROACHES #9

“The only path offering humanity hope for a better future is one of cooperation and partnership”. Kofi Annan

<https://approchescooperatives.com>

April 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Threats to the education of girls	3
Keeping girls in school during the pandemic	5
Girls' and women's education	9
What is gender?	17
Fighting against gender stereotypes	23
The voice of the girls	33
An educational center for street girls	39
Empowering Out-of-School Girls	47
Strategy for an inclusive school	55
Common courtyard	63
Tassaght	67

Cover photo: Schoolgirls in Kenya. D. Bénard



Cooperative Approaches, a quarterly journal (4 issues per year) has set itself the mission of promoting cooperative approaches in four key areas: youth and adult education, social action, organizational management, economics and citizen participation.

Publishing Director: Larry CHILDS

Editorial Committee : Biorn MAYBURY-LEWIS, James ITO-ADLER, David BULL, Dominique BENARD

Free subscription : <https://approchescooperatives.com/fr/categories/english/annual-subscription>

EDITORIAL

Threats to the education of girls

Roland Daval



Photo D. Bénard

We recently devoted N° 7 of Cooperative Approaches to "Access to Education for All in Africa". In this 10th edition we bring a detailed look at "Girls' and Women's Education". These reflections we share are all that much more important today given the global pandemic.

In a special report on education in Le Monde dated December 5, 2020, the reporter asks, 'But where have the girls gone? Where are the 11 million school girls missing since the beginning of the school year?' In sub-Saharan Africa in particular girls are the first collateral victims of the COVID 19 crisis, according to the United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The need for extra labor to help meet elevated pressures on families has turned millions of girls into household servants, farm labor or small market vendors. Making matters worse, the beginning signs of a recovery do not seem to indicate a return of girls to school anytime soon.

More recently, in the same newspaper dated April 2, 2021, journalist Marie de Verges, in her article entitled, *'The damage to schools caused by COVID-19 in Africa'* emphasized how, *'Above all, there is a risk that school is no longer a priority in times like this when economic survival is at stake. This is a huge challenge facing the entire African continent, which in 2020 experienced its first recession in a quarter of a century. In the most vulnerable households, young people have been called upon to help make ends meet and girls are more at risk. These school dropouts should not be taken lightly. Economic theory clearly demonstrates how education is a powerful engine of growth and development... and the education system requires consistent, long-term investments. While it may be tempting to sacrifice the future to meet immediate demands, today more than ever, education must be the top priority for the world's youngest continent'*.

The following articles form an inventory of the current situation facing girls' and women's education with on the ground experiences and suggestions towards better paths forward.

In this issue, we also re-interrogate the question of *gender*. *"If sex seems to be defined by nature and biology, gender is defined by society. As a social construct gender is perhaps more about the idea a given society assigns to the role of a man and the role of a woman"*.

The inequality in access to education between girls and boys is largely due to dysfunctional gender-based stereotypes which, in this case hold women, i.e. 50% of humanity, as inferior.

Cooperative Approaches, here again, attempts to assume a role in equipping educators with diverse perspectives that can help free boys and girls from stereotypes and towards recognition of one another as equal partners.

Many thanks to all those who contributed to this new, exciting issue of Cooperative Approaches.

AN EMERGENCY

Keeping girls in school during the pandemic

Justine SASS

Section Head of Inclusive Education and Gender Equality, UNESCO

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest educational disruption in history, putting - at its peak - over 90% of the world's student population out of school. UNESCO estimates that by the end of January, on average, schools had been closed or partially closed for 5.5 months (22 weeks), the equivalent of two-thirds of a school year.

Before COVID-19, we were already far from gender equality in and through education. Nearly 260 million primary and secondary school-age children were not in school; three-quarters of school-age children who may never set foot in school are girls. Women still account for nearly two-thirds of all adults unable to read - 515 million lack basic reading skills.

The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, with disruptions and school closures continuing in a number of countries around the world, including high-income countries. Ensuring girls' continued learning and return to school is necessary to protect the fragile gains in education



Photo by **Katerina Holmes** from **Pexels**

made over the past two decades, where the number of out-of-school girls has declined by 81 million. It is more important than ever that governments address persistent discrimination to achieve

equality for current and future generations of girls.

GENDER DIMENSIONS OF COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURES

Experience from past crises shows that girls are particularly vulnerable to prolonged school closures. This pandemic is no different. During the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, online learning platforms were used for primary and secondary education in about 55% of low-income countries, 73% of lower-middle-income countries, and 93% of upper-middle-income countries. This shift to online distance learning could disadvantage girls, who have less access to the internet than boys in many contexts—especially in least developed countries where the gender digital divide is widening.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to school closing down

Girls have also been tasked with more domestic chores and housework, including caring for younger siblings and other family members, which reduces the amount of time spent on distance learning. Recent data from UNICEF, Plan International, and UN Women show that adolescent girls are spending significantly more hours on household chores than boys of the same age since COVID-19.

Increase in gender-based violence

Longer periods of home confinement have also led to an increase in reports of gender-based violence. This increase occurs as services, including those related to rule of law, health, and protection, are diverted to

deal with COVID-19. Beyond the psychosocial and physical impacts, UNESCO reports that experiencing or witnessing violence can have immediate and long-term consequences for learning and well-being, as well as for the continuation of violence and perpetuation of violence.

Child marriage - another violation of children's rights - is almost universally prohibited, yet it occurs 33,000 times a day, every day, around the world. The total effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to result in an additional 13 million child marriages by 2030, with consequent impacts on girls' education and health - including increased teenage pregnancies.

According to UNESCO projections, nearly 24 million children and youth, including 11 million girls, may not return to school. Girls aged 12 to 17 are particularly at risk of dropping out of school in low- and lower-income countries, while boys are more at risk in upper-middle- and high-income countries.

REBUILDING EQUALITY

We must see this as the time to restore equality, to transform education systems to be resilient, gender-responsive, and inclusive. This starts with sustainable funding for girls' education, so that no one is left behind. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report shows that even before the COVID-19 crisis, only one in five countries demonstrated a strong commitment to equity in education

through their funding mechanisms, and there is little evidence of a strong equity angle in the COVID-19 responses. About 40% of low- and lower-middle-income countries took no action to support learners most at risk of exclusion in the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. Of the 29 countries surveyed across all regions, two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have cut their education budgets since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Securing funding for girls' education

These budget cuts are likely to affect girls' enrollment and retention-with broader immediate and longer-term effects on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to poverty reduction, health and well-being, inclusive quality education, and gender equality.

UNESCO established a Global Education Coalition in March 2020 to catalyze joint and collective action to support the education response to COVID-19 worldwide. Today, with over 160 members from the UN family, civil society, academia, and the private sector, the Coalition prioritizes efforts to better understand and address the gender dimensions of COVID-19. The following recommendations emerge from this work:

Global Coalition for Education

- Adopt a systems approach to school reopening that brings a gender and inclusion lens to the analysis of education, and takes steps to remove gender bias and discrimination within and across education systems, from



Photo by **Katerina Holmes** from **Pexels**

teacher recruitment and training to curriculum and materials development, and ensure that school environments are resilient, safe, and free of violence.

- Prioritize the leadership of girls and women and recognize their role as agents of change. Integrate them systematically and meaningfully into consultations and decision-making on the COVID-19 education response and recovery planning, from needs assessments to the design of distance learning opportunities, and other interventions to plan and monitor school reopening and promote lifelong learning.

- Prioritize actions to bring all girls back to school - both returning students and those previously out of school - with targeted measures for the poorest and most marginalized girls. Ensure that school reopening plans are equity-focused and designed to leave no one behind, contextually addressing intersecting and exacerbating inequalities.
- Promote an integrated and coordinated approach that addresses girls' holistic education, health, and protection needs. Catalyze cooperation between teachers, school administration, families, and communities, and support cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure inclusive, gender-sensitive school reopening that preserves rights.

RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT

At this critical time, we must renew our commitment to girls' education. Girls' education has proven benefits not only for girls, but for society as a whole. Educated girls are less likely to marry young, and more likely to be self-sufficient and lead healthy, productive lives. Educated girls are more likely to find decent work when they become women, to participate in public life, and to build a better future for themselves, their families, and the next generation. Educating girls strengthens economies, reduces inequality, and contributes to sustainable education. In short, as we say at UNESCO, girls' education offers not only a better future for them, but also a better world for us.

Girls' education: a plus for the whole society



Photo © Riccardo Lennart Niels Mayer | Dreamstime.com

ANALYSIS

Girls' and women's education

Aïcha BAH DIALLO

Former Minister of Education of Guinea Conakry - Former Deputy Director for Education of UNESCO - President of REPTA - International consultant.

This is a theme that has often been presented to me and one which I am passionate about for a very simple reason. Girls' education benefits everyone in that it promotes:

- Gender equality
- Health for all
- Economic growth
- Environmental protection
- Social cohesion and peace

Following are my reflections on these themes.

GENDER EQUALITY

Women are effective agents of change for the sustainable development of their nation, their continent and the world. They are the backbone. But this is only possible if they have access to knowledge, skills, and the capacity for innovation and creativity to make them economically independent. Hence the importance of their access to quality

Women are effective agents of change when they have access to knowledge

education at all levels, from early childhood to higher education, including secondary, technical and vocational education, with all approaches, formal, non-formal and informal.

Basic education, which includes early childhood, primary and secondary education, will enable girls and women to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as soft skills such as problem solving, initiative, communication, teamwork, creativity, leadership, and entrepreneurship, and information and communication technology.

Vocational and technical education allows girls and women to develop skills that allow them to have technical know-how that many jobs require today (electricity, plumbing, mechanics, garment making, computers, cooking, agriculture, etc.) and where there are very few women.

Higher education is responsible for training for the highly qualified human resources to meet the needs of the market. This is where women should be oriented towards the scientific, technical and



Photo Tassaght Project, Mali.

technological branches where the opportunity to find a job is more plausible. However, the rate of access to higher education is only 11% in Africa where women represent only one third of students.

Skills development is the best way to fight against inequalities, gender discrimination, unemployment and poverty. It is a very profitable investment because it promotes peace and economic growth.

BENEFITS OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

Mahatma Gandhi said that to educate a boy is to educate an individual, to educate a girl is to educate a family and a nation.

To educate a girl is to educate a family and a nation

Each additional year of schooling allows women to earn 10% or even 20%, helping to lift them out of poverty while everyone benefits. Indeed, women reinvest 90% of their assets for their families. More educated, women

know all their rights and how to claim them. They will resist and fight against violence and change attitudes within their community. They acquire a better status and an open-mindedness that encourages them to participate in political life. This is how they gain access to all levels of responsibility, both public and private.

Education gives women access to opportunities for better paid jobs or to create their own businesses, especially if they have access to higher education, the cradle of skills development and where knowledge and production are generated. Women's access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is essential, especially since it is expected that 90% of future jobs will require ICT skills. It is therefore essential that women have training in this area.

Unfortunately, the gender technology gap is detrimental to economic growth and development. According to INTELL, if 600 million women had access to the Internet for three years, this would translate into a GDP growth of between 13 billion and 18 billion dollars, hence the importance of reducing this gender technology gap.



Photo D. Bénard

We must also remember that in ten years, more than 40% of today's jobs will disappear. Girls and women must therefore learn to learn in order to be able to live in a constantly changing world. Thus, education favors women's entry into the labor market, prepares them for democratic citizenship and facilitates their personal development.

Education allows women access to the center of decision, information and power. Knowledge gives them a voice and reveals their potential. As 60% of the illiterate population are women, it is important to recognize the role of non-formal and informal learning. It is a prerequisite for the creation of learning societies.

HEALTH FOR ALL

For women, education is crucial for their own health and that of their children. Education allows for the reduction of maternal mortality because women as they are supported by gynecologists and midwives and better avoid pregnancy-related diseases such as hemorrhage, pre-eclampsia, and unsafe abortions. They know how to protect themselves against STDs including HIV/AIDS and prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV during pregnancy when the woman is HIV positive.

Women's education reduces the birth rate and infant mortality

When women have access to reproductive health services including family planning, they can then decide how many children they want to have, especially if they reach upper secondary school. This results in fewer and healthier children.

Women's education reduces infant mortality. Women who breastfeed their children also have information on disease prevention. They will vaccinate their children against DPTD and avoid diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea, etc. They will ensure that their children's nutritional needs are met. Research has shown that 50% of children survive beyond the age of 5 when mothers are educated.

Education allows women to protect their daughters from early marriage, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. They will ensure that all their children, girls and boys, are well-nourished and

healthy, have the same rights and duties at home, without discrimination, and most importantly, all will attend school and be monitored. Parents will place the same expectations on girls and boys.

SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACE

Women have a primordial role in the socialization of children. They are in the best position to notice the first signs of radicalization in children. They immediately detect any changes in their children's attitudes and behavior. Indeed, radicalization begins at home between the ages of 12 and 20 when personalities and values are being shaped. Research indicates that 86% of 11-25 year olds prefer to talk to their mothers about any problems related to difficult or political issues. They can help calm children down and bring them back on track, explaining the importance of respecting cultural and religious diversity. It is also said that when a country gives all its children access to secondary education, it reduces the risk of war by half. Women therefore play an important role in qualitative change by transforming the way we think and act.

A key role in the socialization of children

Education also enables women to better communicate with their spouses in all areas including emotional and sexual. Together they can choose the number of children they want and in viable conditions.

Formal and non-formal education opens the door to active global citizenship. It promotes values that

Education opens the door to active global citizenship

contribute to peace building. This leads to just, tolerant, inclusive societies, respecting human rights and women's rights, in a word, all the values that promote living together and that should be taught in schools and in all non-formal and informal learning setting.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

While each additional year of schooling allows women to gain 10% or even 20%, access to quality basic education for all children allows for 2% economic growth per year in all developing countries.

In 2004, researchers (PSCHROPOULOS and PATRINOS) found that the economic return for girls in secondary school is 18% and for boys 14%. Already in Beijing, the role of women in the economic life of the formal sector as well as the informal sector had shown that women ensured 80% of food production and provided 95% of energy consumed by the population.

In developing countries, women do 70% of the agricultural work, almost all the processing of basic products and 60 to 90% of their marketing. It is important to note that they have only 10% of the income for themselves and own only a tiny percentage of the assets. Women



Photo D. Bénard

represent an immense driving force. They have a considerable impact on economic growth. They must therefore be given the intellectual tools to improve their performance.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Education allows a better understanding of the causes of environmental degradation and elevates one's concern. It allows for the acquisition of skills and knowledge that promotes a change in attitudes and behaviors that lead to ensuring environmental sustainability. The contribution of women is paramount and more important when they have access to education.

In Kenya, the Nobel Prize winner, Wangari MUTA MAATHAI, an environmental

In developing countries, women do 70% of the agricultural work

The example of Wangari Muta Maathai in Kenya activist, has succeeded in fighting against soil erosion by having 100,000 women plant 20 million trees (the Green Belt Movement). Trees are not cut down without being planted and waterways are protected. This movement demonstrated how women can have a great impact in changing consumption patterns. They can also help make more efficient use of water and energy and encourage the recycling of household waste.



Photo D. Bénard

The Brookings Institution says that secondary education for girls is the most cost-effective and best investment against climate change. Research also indicates that educating girls reduces a country's vulnerability to natural disasters.

Socially determined gender roles have different impacts on vulnerability and capacities to cope with climate change and mitigate its causes. Women environmentalists are the hardest hit by climate change. They are also an essential part of the solution, although their contribution is not always sufficiently recognized. It is therefore important to incorporate a gender approach to climate change studies. Structural inequalities between men and women must be

reduced by giving them the same opportunities to access education, economic resources and information.

THE ISSUE OF MIGRATIONS

It is also important to improve women's access to land, to support the implementation of laws that grant equal property rights to women and men, particularly laws relating to inheritance. It is under this theme of land access that we must address the issue of migration due to natural disasters or armed conflicts. By 2050, the IOM estimates that there will be approximately 200 million people displaced by natural disasters, including those related to climate change. It is estimated that the risk of death from natural disasters is 14 times higher for women. In the case of migration and

Women are the main victims in case of migration displacement, women are subject to gender-based discrimination and violence (sexual violence, abuse, human trafficking, etc.). Unfortunately, there is little reliable data on the subject. More studies should therefore be undertaken in order to adopt measures that address the health and humanitarian needs of women, girls, boys and men.

STRONGEST BARRIERS

The barriers that prevent girls from going to school are also those that prevent them from persevering and succeeding in their studies. Consider the importance of understanding and addressing these underlying issues.

- Household poverty is the most important, followed by place of residence. Girls from poor and rural families are the most vulnerable. Parents prefer to send boys to school because of direct costs (tuition, textbooks, uniforms, etc.) and especially opportunity costs (housework, low wages as domestic workers).
- Harmful cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage, forced marriage, and lower family expectations of girls' education.
- Inappropriate management of sexual maturation, which is the cause of unwanted teenage pregnancies often

followed by expulsion from school, or high-risk abortions.

- Lack of safety in and around school, on the way to and from school, and on transportation. Violence in all its forms (physical, psychological, sexual) is what parents fear the most and what does not encourage them to send their daughters to school. This violence has a direct influence on the schooling of girls, often leading them to abandon their studies.
- Distance and lack of facilities: Even when free parents will often not send their daughter if it is far from their community, not fenced, does not have separate toilets for girls and boys, does not have a water point, or lacks an infirmary (with sanitary towels)
- - Teachers who are not gender-sensitive tend to exclude girls from science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
- - Teaching resources and materials are not gender-sensitive and portray negative images of girls and women.
- Armed conflicts where girls and women pay the highest price.



Photo Projet Tassaght, Mali.

DECIPHERING

What is gender?

Dominique B nard



Photo D. B nard

For the most part unequal access of girls and women to educational opportunities is essentially based on gender stereotypes. In order to combat this problem it is essential to understand the concept of gender. The data in this article are taken from research conducted in n four European countries in 2003 by Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen,

Professor of Women's Research and Gender Studies at the University of Oslo.

SEX

Sex refers to the biological differences between women and men. For many analysts, sex is a biological fact: two biologically differentiated types of children can be born, a girl or a boy. Aspects of sex

do not vary significantly between different human societies. Some examples of sex characteristics:

- Women can menstruate while men cannot.
- Men have testicles while women do not.
- Women have developed breasts that are generally capable of producing milk, while men do not.
- Men generally have larger bones than women.

GENDER

If sex seems to be defined by nature, by biology, gender is defined by society. It is a social construction. Gender, rather, concerns the idea that we have, in a given society, of the role of the man and the role of the woman. What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? What is expected of a man? What is expected of a woman? Aspects of gender can vary greatly from culture to culture. Some examples of gender-related characteristics:

Gender is a social construction

- In most countries, women hold fewer leadership positions and earn much less than men.
- In Vietnam, many more men than women smoke, as female smoking is not considered appropriate.
- In Saudi Arabia, until recently, men were allowed to drive cars while women were not.



Photo Dreamstime

- In most countries of the world, women do more housework than men.
- In the Catholic Church, only men can become priests.

GENDER AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETATION

In almost all cultures, a social hierarchy has been established between men and women. Male power, privilege and dominance have been normalized in both the public and private spheres, often with devastating links to violence.

Differences of unequal value

This subordination of women has been and is still considered to be related to women's nature and value, and these ideas tend to be based on appeals to biological reasoning: women would be "naturally" less able to lead and more able to take care of children and domestic tasks.

Women would be "naturally" less able to lead

Making a difference between masculine and feminine would not be a big deal, but the fact is that this dichotomy is

accompanied by a hierarchy in which the "masculine" side is always superior to the "feminine" side. For example, if we think of usual dichotomies like active/passive, strong/weak, soft/hard, emotional/rational, dependent/independent, we spontaneously associate one of the elements of this dichotomy to the masculine gender and the other to the feminine gender and we can immediately see on which side we place the feminine gender.

The confinement in certain roles

The traditional concepts of gender assign specific roles to women and men that sometimes prevent them from developing their full potential: the home and the family are places assigned to women while the public sphere, outside the home (work, politics, power) is more often assigned to men. Thus, it is more difficult for a woman to become an airplane pilot or a civil engineer than for a man.

Children quickly understand that the differences between men and women are not of equal value. Society places a higher value on being a boy, a man. Little boys say, *"that's good for a girl!"*



Photo Dreamstime

GENDER STEREOTYPES



Photo Dreamstime

There are several stereotypes based on the gender of the individual.

One type of man, one type of woman

Many people believe that men are aggressive, independent, objective, active, competitive, logical, outwardly oriented, business savvy, confident in their abilities and ambitious. They are also said to be brusque, rough, boisterous, careless, not very talkative and unable to express tender feelings. According to these stereotypes, women are the opposite of men, i.e. not aggressive, not independent, not objective, passive, not competitive, illogical, inward-looking, not good at business, not confident about themselves and not ambitious. However, they are said to be delicate, gentle, sweet, talkative, orderly and capable of tender feelings (Cantin et al., 1993).

Source of sexism

Such stereotypes are the source of sexism, that is, a set of beliefs, values and attitudes that, on the basis of stereotyped and

Continuing education would not be important for girls

internalized models, divide roles, skills, interests and behaviours according to gender, which has the effect of limiting the development of the individual at all levels: personal, emotional, professional and social (Cantin et al., 1993, p. 17).

Thus, until recently in Western society and still today in many societies around the world, people think that it is not important for girls to pursue a long education and learn a trade because their role will be "housewife."



Photo by Julia Larson from Pexels

DIFFERENCE AND EQUALITY

We can see that many people rely on the differences that exist between men and women to justify inequality between the two sexes. Others in the name of equality between men and women deny that there are differences between the sexes.

One can be different and equal

While there is a confusion here, what is important, it is not the difference rather the value assigned to this difference.

- In gender, it is not the biological difference that is determining but the value that society gives to being a man or a woman.
- Assigning a value does not mean that X is different from Y but that X is superior or inferior to Y.
- One can be different and have the same value. One can be different and equal. The opposite of difference is not equality, it is similarity, identity. Two identical people can have different statuses and be unequal. Two different people can have the same status this be equal.

MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES

Rather than talking about masculinity and femininity, it is better to talk about masculinities and femininities

in the plural, to indicate that in each culture, there are several ways of being masculine or feminine.

Different ways of being a man or a woman

Different social classes, ages and ethnic groups, for example, will "Real man", often have different ideas of what "real woman" a real man/boy or woman/girl is.

While a decent income, the latest computer model, and a strong position at work may be important elements of successful masculinity in some social circles, physical strength, having a big motorcycle, or being good at sports may be what counts in other circles.

Dominant and marginalized models

In a society, there will be ongoing symbolic struggles between these masculinities to gain hegemony, for example by ridiculing or morally criticizing each other. Some become dominant, while others are subordinated or marginalized.

Tensions between different gender models What is called hegemonic masculinity or femininity within a culture are the most honored or desired forms, and they need not be the most common. In fact, many people live in some tension or distance from the hegemonic gender models of their own culture. For example, men may reject the "macho" male model based on the cult of physical strength and virility, while women may reject the female model emphasizing charm and seduction. The fact that several models of masculinity and femininity can exist in the same culture also shows us why not all men have the same status or feel equally superior to women.

PERSONAL AND INTERACTIONAL GENDER

Gender operates through social structures, cultural symbols and explicit norms - but it is also a personal issue and a reality for each of us.

Identify with or reject models

Human beings are not passive bricks in social and cultural structures, we actively shape our lives within these structures, discourses and norms.

Even in traditional societies, it is possible,



Photo by **Marta Wave** from **Pexels**

though difficult, for a woman to become prime minister. Even in modern societies, it is possible for a woman to decide to become a housewife, despite what is considered normal for women in her culture. Going against the grain is not without psychological cost - the prime minister may be judged as an iron lady, the housewife as a woman with a kind of outdated femininity - but it is not impossible to do so. So gender in the world

will be more diverse than the often very dichotomous gender in our heads. Personal gender is about how we adapt (or not) to available cultural models of gender, how we identify with or protest against them.

An interactive approach to gender

Men and women are not only passive objects subject to the influence of society, they are also active contributors to culture. Most of what young people learn, they learn from each other. Just compare the incredibly long time it takes teachers to get things into the heads of schoolchildren with the speed with which they learn from each other in their own informal networks.

Thus, today girls teach each other to achieve in the external sphere, to pursue education, to become strong and independent. Boys, on the other hand, are more encouraged than before to invest in the personal and family sphere, to participate in domestic work and child rearing.

MAKING THE GENDER

If adult leaders are attentive and intervene consciously and thoughtfully, boys and girls, in joint activities, can negotiate gender in the world as well as in their hearts and minds.

Through cooperation, girls and boys can negotiate and discover their "personal gender."

"Doing gender" also includes "being" and "interpreting" gender. Participants bring their gendered

identities to the table where they can be ignored, confirmed, or challenged.

What behaviors are considered positive or negative? How do different participants understand the situation? Gradually, boys and girls will be able to elaborate in interaction and cooperation their own ways of being male or female and their own understandings of gender relations.

METHODOLOGICAL FILE

Fighting against gender stereotypes

Dominique B nard



Photo of Cottonbro from Pexels

This article has three sources. On the one hand, two documents from Quebec, one from the Secretariat of State for the Status of Women, the other from the Ministry of Education, and on the other hand, the research report carried out in 2003 in four European countries by Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen, Professor of Women's Research and Gender Studies at the University of Oslo, at the request of the World Scout

Bureau, to shed light on the objectives and conditions of coeducation in Scouting.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are the result of abusive generalizations and simplifying views of reality. They apply to social categories taken as a whole, in which there are no

Overgeneralizations and simplified views of reality



Photo by **Kevin Bidwell** from **Pexels**

longer any differences between individuals, and about which a series of preconceived ideas are conveyed: "Blacks" are lazy, "civil servants" are inefficient, "Muslims" are fanatics, "politicians" are corrupt, "blondes" are stupid.

The attribution of characteristics

A gender stereotype is the assignment of roles, behaviors, or characteristics to people based on their gender, regardless of their individuality. Attributing to women and men physiological and psychological characteristics, personality traits, intellectual abilities, qualities and defects, as well as behaviors, not only distinct, but often opposed, according to a reductive and

distorted image of reality, they reconstitute a set of myths and beliefs about them.

No room for singularities

Sexual stereotypes leave no room for singularities, since they claim to represent what is typical and common to all women, on the one hand, and to all men, on the other hand.

HOW SEXUAL STEREOTYPES ARE BORN

Sexual stereotypes, in interaction with social inequalities between the sexes, crystallize social expectations of girls and boys. These expectations are specific to each culture and time, and are called gender norms (see the article "Deciphering").

Transmitted during childhood

Stereotypes are transmitted during childhood through the codes of society, conveyed by the environment, through toys, images, books, clothing, even educational material. The behaviors of girls and boys and the physical codes (what a girl and a boy should look like) are progressively internalized by young children and nourish gender inequalities for future generations and unfortunately parents and teachers are not always aware of this.

Adults have specific expectations of boys and girls and encourage them, usually unconsciously, to behave in ways that meet these expectations.

Specific expectations of adults

Expectations of Boys

Boys are expected to :

- be very active and occupy space ;
- be impulsive;
- be interested in sports and competition
- be interested in machines;
- develop an imagination linked to exploration and conquest;
- be respected and know how to fight.

Expectations of girls

Generally, girls are expected to:

- be quiet and unobtrusive;
- be clean and neat in appearance
- be attentive to the needs of others ;
- take care of others;
- develop an imagination around the expectation of a Prince Charming;
- invest in mothering

Appearance and action

"Appearance" becomes a fundamental element in the lives of girls; "action" a fundamental element in the lives of boys. While they are encouraged in girls, mothering games, domestic activities and preoccupations with appearance are more disapproved of in boys. Conversely, being adventurous, physically fighting and competitive are generally more accepted

behaviors for boys and more frowned upon for girls.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

Because of their normative nature, gender stereotypes inhibit the development and creativity of all individuals. They imprison children's imagination, spontaneity and behavior by imposing patterns of behavior. **Gender stereotypes reinforce inequalities** They reinforce the persistence of inequalities between women and men, for example, in educational achievement, training, employment, career advancement and income.

In addition, gender stereotypes have a strong influence on body image, learning to consent, self-confidence and assertiveness, and attitudes towards sharing responsibilities in the family and towards emotional and love life.

Gender stereotypes and academic achievement

Research in several countries shows that the chances of academic success improve when young people's reference to gender stereotypes is reduced. In fact, students who adhere the most to social gender roles are the ones who drop out the most. (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation du Québec, 1999).

Students who adhere the most to social gender roles are the ones who drop out the most

In Quebec, research has shown that boys adhere more widely to gender stereotypes than girls, who, for their part, question

them more often because they confine them to limiting roles, whereas they are more rewarding for boys. Among boys, the weaker adherence to gender stereotypes is found especially among those whose parents are highly educated; these boys are the most successful. Among girls, lower adherence to gender stereotypes is found among those with highly educated parents, but also among those with moderately and poorly educated parents.



Photo Tassaght Project, Mali.

Boys are also victims of stereotypes

Male norms - the strong culture of play, the perceived masculine transgression, the strong preoccupation with asserting oneself in relation to peers and girls - lead boys to be less engaged in school. Recent research shows that boys are caught

The values associated with masculinity run counter to the school's values

between two models, either the school that promotes calmness, wisdom, hard work, obedience (values associated with femininity), or life outside of school that encourages boys to behave in very different ways: breaking the rules, being insolent, using physical force, being the center of attention (values associated with masculinity conveyed by peers and society). We can also note that boys who succeed at school have

developed an autonomy with respect to certain conceptions of masculine identity.

Co-education does not exclude stereotypes

Research shows that play and work spaces are often divided, but co-education should also be considered as a tool and an educational practice to reduce the weight of gender stereotypes and advance equality.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes, in interaction with inequalities between women and men, have important consequences on the future of young people, to the detriment of girls and women:

- The schooling of girls is often considered less important than that of boys;
- The sharing of family responsibilities is unequal within couples;
- Women are the main victims of violence and men the main perpetrators of violence;
- Women are the main victims of violence and men are the main perpetrators of violence; Women's employment rate is lower and their income is lower.
- Women are underrepresented in decision-making positions.

Stereotypes hinder the free development of individuals. An education that frees people from the constraints of gender stereotypes can give young people more choice and freedom. After all, why shouldn't a boy have the right to choose cooperation over competition and artistic expression over physical struggle? Why shouldn't a girl have the opportunity to assert herself in front of others and enjoy competition?

Stereotypes hinder the free development of individuals

FIGHTING GENDER STEREOTYPES

A good way to combat gender stereotypes is to practice what social philosopher Nancy Fraser has called parity in participation.

Practicing parity in participation

Social justice means that everyone has equal access to social interaction and to being heard and recognized. This is what Nancy Fraser calls parity in participation. There are two types of barriers to parity in participation: unequal distribution of material resources and unequal status. Fraser calls them maldistribution and misrecognition:

- Maldistribution refers to the economic and structural inequality of society that systematically deprives some of its members of the means and opportunities they need to participate in social life on an equal footing with others.
- Misrecognition refers to symbolic patterns of cultural value that give some members a lower status than others, thus hindering their chance to be full partners in social interaction.

To improve parity in participation, redistribution as well as recognition must be considered.

Redistribution is about the right to equality. It means that everyone should receive equal opportunities, means and possibilities to develop and participate in social life.

Recognition is about the right to be different. It means that everyone should be allowed to participate in social interaction on an equal basis, regardless of their group membership. This implies both respect for

the gender group to which one belongs and respect for each person's choice about how to express their gender and sexuality.

The key is not to substitute one for the other:

- redistribution without recognition can lead to stigmatization of the recipients - for example, if girls are given "disabilities" and privileges simply because they are girls;
- Recognition without redistribution, on the other hand, becomes an empty gesture or cements the situation - it puts women on a pedestal, but does nothing to improve their actual opportunities. An example would be praising girls for being willing to serve boys, without seeking a more reciprocal state of affairs. There is a need to address inequalities.

Turning a blind eye to real gender differences and simply declaring that everyone is equal is as bad as pretending that these differences are static or universal.

In practice, justice involves both the principle of equal rights for all participants and the recognition that different participants have different needs to be met. Some of these needs are related to the participant's membership in social groups, others to his or her individual situation.

RAISING EDUCATORS' AWARENESS

In research carried out in Scouting in four European countries with different cultures (Denmark, Russia, Portugal and Slovakia), Dr. Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen notes that young people face gender issues that adult leaders often do not recognize.

In relation to redistribution

In all the countries studied, girls do more repetitive or "fixed" tasks in Scouting than boys. This is not a division of labor that they have chosen themselves, nor do most of them approve of it. Girls in Slovakia, Portugal and Denmark find that their access to tasks defined as most appropriate for boys is restricted. They want to test their strengths in activities such as woodcutting and pioneer work, and they also protest against the "protective" undervaluation of their skills.

Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen makes the following observation: *"When scouting was single-sex, the boys cooked their own meals and washed the dishes, and the girls had no problem chopping wood and building a fire. When girls and boys are in the same arena, gender suddenly becomes important as an interpretive framework, turning washing dishes into a female task and chopping wood into a male task. Thus, the result of coeducation may, in fact, be a reinforcement of traditional gender roles. ... In a single-sex troupe, washing dishes would just be a task to be done, whereas in a mixed-gender troupe, it becomes a female activity. It is a real paradox*

Coeducation can reinforce traditional gender roles

if traditional gender divisions of labor are reinstated in the name of coeducation and modern gender equality! This problem is not taken seriously by those in charge, either because they find the division of labor natural or because they only address equality on a formal level and leave the follow-up to the youth themselves."



Photo World Scout Bureau

"Female" tasks are devalued

Some might say: okay, but ultimately these are two ways to contribute to the community. Boys chop and carry wood, girls wash dishes. What's the problem? There are several reasons for concern, notes Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen.

- First, the two types of work do not have the same value or social prestige. While boys are admired for their strong, dramatic contributions, girls do invisible, unglamorous work, reproducing their status as servant girls. "Cooking and washing dishes" should not be understood only in the literal sense, but also in a broader sense: the tasks that no one wants to do.
- Second, the division of labor has consequences for later participation: doing one task may increase your qualifications in that area, but it also contributes to decreasing your qualifications in others.

- Finally, the gendered division of labor is not a symmetrical choice. Girls cook and wash dishes because boys prefer other tasks. Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen has seen boys playing or doing interesting exploratory tasks while girls prepare the meal and wash the dishes. She states, *"In this way, the image of energetic boys and sedentary girls becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."*

Boys do what they want to do, girls learn to do boring tasks

Thus, the idea that everyone can do what they want is gender blind. Boys are taught not to do what they don't want to do and believe that this applies to everyone. As a result, they think that if girls do the dishes, it's probably because they enjoy it. Girls learn that sometimes you have to do boring tasks to make the group work. Thus, the idea of responsible girls also becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

According to Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen, *"Girls need to be supported in other ways so*



Photo World Scout Bureau

that they can defend themselves against being expected to be the service and care agents of the team. They need to be educated about the mechanics of this division of labor and learn to better distinguish between personal preferences and being nice girls who adapt to the needs and expectations of others..."

At the same time, it is also important to find ways to change the gendered status of different tasks. If cooking received as much attention and training as orienteering and pioneering, perhaps its prestige would increase to the point that even boys would want to do it. This may be difficult with an activity such as dishwashing. A reasonable solution, then, would be to apply the "do what you want" principle more to high-level tasks (whatever they may be) and to be strict about requiring everyone to take their

Apply "free choice" status to high-level tasks only

share of low-level tasks (whatever they may be).

In relation to recognition

Both boys and girls may have problems with recognition, but there is a gender asymmetry - because the lack of recognition for both comes primarily from boys and men.

While girls' recognition problems come from boys and even leaders, boys' recognition problems rarely come from girls. In all four countries, girls experience being looked down upon by boys and reduced to their gender by boys and leaders.

Boys' recognition problems rarely come from girls

Being reduced to one's gender

Being reduced to your gender means that the standards of what you should be or do are based solely on the category of gender,

while your individuality is ignored. This can be expressed, for example, in expectations that girls should, or should not, or cannot do certain things - or it can be expressed in double standards.

Boys place more importance on appearance to succeed as a girl

For example, according to the girls, it is boys who place more importance on appearance in order to succeed as a girl. Their developing bodies become the object of interest and scorn from boys, while their bodily functions are either ignored by those in charge (e.g., the fact that girls are menstruating at this age, including when they are at camp, is often not taken into account) or interpreted in stereotypical ways ("weak girls" who should not perform certain physical tasks when 15-year-old girls are generally taller and stronger than boys of the same age).

According to Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen, solving these dilemmas requires action on two fronts: one is to give positive status to "feminine" tasks and values; the other is to try to disconnect these tasks and values from gender and see them as what they really are, namely part of the common human repertoire.

No exclusivity to "male culture"

This would also be helpful for many boys who risk being seen as "feminine" if they are not "tough." Thus, when the hard, competitive culture of boys is equated with "real Scouting," girls and some boys will have recognition problems.

There is nothing inherently wrong with competitive sports, rough physical play, or wild projects, and the appeal of these activities has the same right to recognition as the appeal of any other kind of activity. Wild boys (and girls) and rough men (and women) are fine, as long as they do not occupy space at the expense of everyone else, do not expect special treatment or the right to be more equal than others.

"Male" activities should not take up space at the expense of others

All gender cultures and activities should be recognized, provided:

- That they do not limit the right of others to express themselves. Soccer, fencing and fighting games are good activities as long as they do not force quieter girls and boys to limit their range of activities;
- That they are not considered universal. That they are not considered universal. This means that there is an awareness that not all boys necessarily like fencing, wrestling, and soccer, and that some girls like them too;
- That they are not made the norm for others. This means that they should not be seen as something that members of a certain gender group must do to be a successful member of that group. For example, boys who do not like soccer, fencing or fighting, and girls who do, are not abnormal or deviant.



Photo D. Bénard

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL 2018

The voice of the girls

Martine Lévy

Former representative of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and former President of the "Voice of the Girls" group at UNESCO - Member of the "Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs de France" - Administrator of the "Réseau Education Pour Tous en Afrique" (REPTA)

We wanted to retain this text proposed by Ms. Martine LEVY who represented the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and chaired the group "Voices of Girls" at UNESCO because, even if it relates to an event that dates back to 2018, it is still very relevant. This is what Ms LEVY underlines in the second part, which she has written and which is entitled "And since 2018".

The text proposed by Ms. Justine SASS - Chief of the Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality at UNESCO, which appears in the previous pages, has also emphasized the importance that must be given to girls' and women's education in light of the impacts of the COVID health crisis.

The "Voices of Girls" group, under the current presidency of Mrs. Marie-Christine GRIES (Soroptimist International), even if some NGOs have dropped out of the group's work, has decided to resume its work and in particular to prepare a new International Day of the Girl for 2021 or 2022, even if this one should be held virtually.

Roland DAVAL

"Once you have learned to read, you are free forever," wrote Frederick Douglass, a freed black American slave, in the heart of the 19th century.

"Education is the challenge of this century; if we are not able to meet it, we will not be able to meet others", Mrs. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO.

WHY THE CELEBRATION OF THIS DAY BY UNESCO'S NGO PARTNERS?

Among all the SDGs of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, SDG 4 "Ensure equal access to quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities" called out to a group of UNESCO's NGO partners who committed to contribute to the celebration

of the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2018, with the support of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee, the Division of Gender Equality and the Education Sector of UNESCO.

FACTS AND FIGURES

The facts and figures are in and they are tragic!

Nearly 132 million girls in the world are out of school; a minor girl is married every 28 seconds and a girl is circumcised every second in the world; despite advances in education for all at the primary level, the percentage of girls' attendance continues to drop in secondary school, especially in low-income countries! The pursuit of education for both girls and boys is fundamental to a country's development. Despite the existence of normative and legal instruments, girls are prevented from attending school. Why are they prevented from going to school? Social and traditional norms, early marriages and maternity, domestic chores, lack of water, sanitation or separate toilets and hygiene, geographical distance and insecurity on the way to school, sexual violence and rape considered as weapons of war are the causes. Yes, a girl's life is littered with pitfalls and risks at every stage of her growth, if only she was allowed to be born!

WORKING METHOD

The NGOs wished to bring the word of the young girls on the ground; they collected testimonies, within their national branches, in all the regions of the world,

which all show that it is urgent to tackle as a priority the major challenges that the girls still encounter today to go to school and to continue their studies and whose dramatic impact is often underestimated by the decision-makers: sexual harassment or rape on the way to school, early pregnancy, forced and early marriages, household chores, lack of separate toilets or water, among many others

A girl's life is full of pitfalls and risks

These themes, which were raised in the concept note, are evident in the testimonies.

How will they have access to quality education in 2030 if urgent measures are not taken?

A Manifesto was published, following the celebration, at Unesco, of the International Day of the Girl on October 11, 2018 in order to mobilize the local and regional branches of our NGOs on this crucial issue for the success of the 2030 Agenda.

THE MANIFESTO

- Considering the very many **legal instruments** since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 dealing with education,
- Considering the numerous declarations advocating the importance of girls' education,
- Considering that the girl has the right to be born, to survive and to develop physically and intellectually,
- Considering that the girl has the right to protection (one of the 3 P's of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child) against abuse, violence, incest,
- Considering that the girl has the right to a free primary education,
- Considering that the girl has the right to a technical and professional education chosen by herself in order to allow her to reach a profession and responsibilities,
- Considering that the girl has the right to a civic education which makes her a responsible citizen likely to exercise later on elective political and associative functions in her country,
- Considering that the girl has the right to a physical and sports education,
- Considering that the girl has the right to be protected against the unpaid forced domestic work, against the sexual exploitation, against the prostitution presented as a lucrative job,
- Considering that the girl has the right to health and gynecological care,

In reference to Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030: *"Achieving quality education is the foundation for improving people's lives and sustainable development. In addition to improving their quality of life, access to inclusive and equitable education can help equip local people with the tools to develop innovative solutions to the world's biggest problems."*

Findings

- We see that the girl with a disability is not protected enough when she should be especially protected,
- We note that millions of girls are raped on a daily basis,
- We note that millions of girls are forced to work too hard at a young age,
- We note that 200 million girls are affected by excision,
- We note that 131 million girls in the world are not in school while boys are,
- We note that more than 16 million girls are married by force before the age of 18,
- We note that early pregnancies affect millions of girls.

Testimonies

In reference to the hundreds of testimonies collected by the Non Governmental Organizations partners of UNESCO mentioned below from their national and local branches in the different regions of the world and whose recurring themes are : poverty, gender-based violence, harassment, lack of access to hygiene products, especially during menstruation, rape, prostitution to obtain money to go to school, forced marriages at a very young age, early pregnancies, lack of sanitary facilities and drinking water at school, separate toilets for girls and boys, mines and soldiers on the way to school inequality of access to expensive schooling that pushes parents to send boys to school rather than girls, inaccessibility for children with

disabilities, excessive distance from school and lack of means of transportation, being forced to marry at a very young age, having to work to earn money for the family, excessive participation in housework, etc...

We, NGO partners of UNESCO having prepared the Girl's Day 2018,

- Consider that, in order to be achieved, the SDGs by 2030, and in particular SDG 4, should be accompanied by binding clauses, respected by all States.
- Demand that trafficking, child prostitution, and rape of girls be punished as a crime under national law
- Demand that girls benefit from the entire school curriculum and if possible from pre-school
- Demand that girls and boys, whether educated separately or not, learn to work together as partners to ensure that girls are considered equal to boys.
- Demand that girls be taught from childhood that their sex is in no way inferior to the male sex, that there are humans of different sexes, equal in rights and dignity
- Demand that the protection of the girl child be specifically included in national legislation
- Demand that the quality of the training of all teachers be improved
- Demand that parents, teachers, traditional and religious leaders be informed and trained to involve them in the respect of these rights
- Recommend that girls and boys receive "comprehensive sexuality education" as advocated in 2018 by the United Nations and UNESCO to control fertility and protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases
- Recommend that international, national and local NGOs take up the problem of girls' non-enrolment and work in conjunction with the populations and in cooperation with all actors, in particular their governments
- Are determined to act more strongly in order to put an end to the mistreatment of girls, even to death
- Call on the States to make operational the recognition of the right to education of all girls in their country
- Finally, let us call upon the whole civil society to support effectively this advocacy, to sensitize the local actors and to contribute actively to the realization of these objectives in the service of humanity so that ALL girls, in 2030, receive a quality education, key to their blossoming, which will allow them to find their rightful place in society and to become citizens conscious of their responsibilities and their rights.

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela)

AND SINCE 2018

An in-depth study of the questionnaire responses directed the group to 3 specific themes to reflect on: rights, body and health, and sports.

Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child give rights to young people, boys and girls. And they don't know it. We had to find a way to let them know.

The body and health

The responses show that many girls do not know their bodies; some do not make the connection between pregnancy and sexual relations. As for the care they are entitled to, poverty is always a handicap.

The group thought that sport - one of the most important themes of UNESCO's work

- could help girls in their schooling:

Sport can help girls knowing how to defend themselves (yoga, taekwondo, karate...)

against aggression is important; as for collective sports, they allow young girls to belong to a group where the objectives are the same for all.

For this, the group had to rely on the "O3 Program - "Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future". This program is implemented by UNESCO in thirty-one countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It aims to improve education, health and well-being, promote gender equality and fight poverty through comprehensive sexuality education (CHE)

programs, the promotion of healthy, safe and inclusive school and community environments and the fight against gender-based violence in schools. We thought we would replicate it in other regions.

The "Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future" Program

And we thought we would train young Europeans in these programs and have them converse with young people in developing countries. But the momentum was cut short by the arrival of the pandemic. The group fell asleep a bit but is picking up again with plans to hold webinars in French, English and Spanish in October 2021. The themes are changed and the main theme should be: What has Covid changed in schooling, especially for girls who, studies already show have dropped out of school?



STORY

An educational center for street girls

THE KIMOU N'GUESSAN FAUSTIN CENTER IN AGBOVILLE, IVORY COAST

Martine Lévy

The action described below is a partnership between the Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs de France (French Secular Scouting Association), the Eclaireuses Laïques de Côte d'Ivoire (Secular Girl Guide Association) and the Eclaireurs de Côte d'Ivoire (Secular Boy Scouts Association).

This project, realized thanks to a cooperation between the Ivorian and French youth, brings real benefit to the local population. But the fact that young people from two different continents work together, get to know each other, learn from each other, experience encounters in cultural diversity, also contributes to the fight against racist and sexist prejudices. This is at least as important.

"Living together in peace means accepting differences, listening, showing esteem, respect and appreciation for others and living in a spirit of peace and harmony."

The Kimou N'Guessan Faustin Center is a social center with 3 buildings, one of which is for the training of street girls, another for the Early Childhood Protection Center (created because the family situation of

these young students is difficult; often they have young children and having them around them during classes is detrimental to their schooling), and another for housing for girls who attend school in town.

THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Agboville is the capital of the Agneby-Tiassa region. It is located 88 kilometers from Abidjan, the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire.

The Agboville region covers an area of 5,500 km² and has a population of more than 150,000 inhabitants.

The city has about 80,000 people, more than 60% of whom are young people.

Agboville is one of the most highly educated cities; there are 10 secondary schools and about 15,000 students.

Towards the end of the 1980s, poverty was great in Agboville and the surrounding villages. The cotton factory was not doing very well.

The young girls, generally illiterate or out of school, sought to take charge of their lives and even to help their families; they therefore carried out small income-generating activities in the streets of Agboville, generally small businesses, as we still see them today. They were joined by young girls who already had children, usually very young.

THE HISTORY OF THE CENTER'S CONSTRUCTION

Faced with this situation, in 1985, the ELAICI (Eclaireuses Laïques de Côte d'Ivoire), in order to celebrate the International Year of Youth, wished to "do something concrete"; this is how the idea of building a "training center for young girls who have dropped out of school and accommodation for young girls who are in school" was born in Agboville, where they owned a piece of land that could not be built on!

ELAICI prepared a report and sent it to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. The report was circulated to all member organizations around the world

and in 1989, the Girl Scouts of Japan sent the first financial contribution.

The Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs de France (EEDF) of Boulogne-Billancourt (Lapérouse group), had been partners of the ELAICI and the Eclaireurs de Côte d'Ivoire (EDCI) since 1986. In 1987, they carried out a market gardening project in Zodzi and in 1989, the construction of a health center for primary care in Zanasso (Tengrela in the north of the country) which is still functioning 32 years later as a dispensary. It is therefore quite natural that ELAICI proposed to them to continue the partnership.

Partnership with the Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs de France

A first mission in December 1991 discovered the beginnings of the center: 4 walls in the bush, and the Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs de France decided to get involved in the development of the project.

- 1992 - First construction site with the EEDF Lapérouse group, the ELAICI, the EDCI: construction of the first building (2 dormitories for schoolgirls, their sanitary facilities, and the director's house). The center was named Centre Kimou N'Guessan Faustin (CKNF) after the gentleman who had paid the symbolic 100 FCFA for the purchase of the undevelopable land.
- 1994 - Second construction site with the EEDF Lapérouse group, the EEDF Casati group of Troyes, the ELAICI, and the EDCI: construction of the second building (office of the director of the

Celebrating the International Year of Youth



During a work camp: boys and girls from Ivory Coast and France

future school, 4 classrooms, a large refectory and the kitchen).

- 1995 - Opening of the center.
- 1996 - Third building site with the group EEDF Casati, the ELAICI, the EDCI: construction of the surrounding wall necessary to protect the girls lodged there and the material (sewing machines essentially).
- 1997 - Fourth building site in 1997 with the group EEDF Casati, the ELAICI, the EDCI: construction of the beginning of the 3rd building. The reputation of the CKNF was already such that many parents wanted to enroll their daughters in the school, the ELAICI decided, then, to enlarge the CKNF by constructing a 3rd building located at 200 meters.
- 2014 and 2018 - Fifth and sixth building site. After the serious political events, the EEDF Lapérouse group intervened again to advance the work of the last building, with their friends ELAICI and EDCI.
- 2022 - A seventh construction site is planned with the participation of the EEDF Lapérouse group, the ELAICI, and the EDCI. It will allow the final realization of the last building that will house, in several dormitories equipped with sanitary facilities, about 80 girls



The schoolyard

who attend school in the city. A safe home for a successful schooling. This achievement will allow us to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the project. The accommodation of 80 girls will require an important supervision which will be entrusted to unemployed Girl Scouts of Côte d'Ivoire. The center will thus allow the creation of jobs.

SCHOOLING

Since the opening of the center in 1995, ELAICI has chosen to focus its activities on functional literacy and vocational training to help girls who want to leave the difficult life of the street.

Since the beginning, nearly 500 girls, from 18 to 25 years old, have been taught to read and write (even during the civil war).

**500 young girls
literate**

They have received courses in family life education, sewing, flower arranging, pastry making, cosmetology and hairdressing. At present, sewing and pastry-making predominate.

All the girls who have passed through the center have acquired a trade that they practice in the village or in town.

Currently, economic conditions are still extremely difficult for almost the entire population (lack of running water, lack of electricity), both in the villages and in the cities, even if Côte d'Ivoire is gradually returning to growth.

A social role

The CKNF is still playing its role as a social center and receives about forty students whose parents have financial difficulties.



Children at CPPE

The classes are taught by teachers seconded from the Ministry of Family, Women and Children (a training director, 7 continuing education teachers and 1 education counselor).

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROTECTION CENTER (CPPE)

In 2015, at the request of the neighborhood moms, ELAICI decided to open an early childhood care center and house the young girls in school, usually preparing for a Brevet d'Etudes Professionnelles, in the bottom of the 3rd building. The center currently has about 100 children.

THE FUTURE OUTSIDE OF TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

The computer education project

A computer education project that should have started before the beginning of the pandemic is to be set up; a donation of 4 computers was to be made but for more than twenty students (those who have already done one year of schooling) it is a little short. And anyway they didn't arrive because of the Covid pandemic.

The Laperouse Group EEDFs are looking for used computers that could be donated in 2022. The appeal for donations at the end of this article could be used to purchase a few.

The Ivorian National Commission for UNESCO will provide a trainer. This training will allow the sewing students to find clothing models from around the world and the pastry students to find recipes from around the world. They will be the only ones in Agboville to be able to make these proposals.

Access to the world means Fake News so the UNESCO Office in Abidjan is planning to teach about Fake News.

The environmental protection project

A project to protect the environment by cleaning up the neighborhood has already started, but it must be extended to the neighboring neighborhoods and the equipment must be purchased.



Cleaning the neighborhood

Chicken breeding

In addition, a chicken coop was built in a nearby village by the youth of the 2018 workcamp. The 650 chickens have done their job! Their eggs made the joy of the village women who lined up every morning to get fresh eggs. The hens got old and were sold. And their hen house was left fallow for cleaning, aeration, etc. New chicks will be received within 1 year to 18 months.

A second hen house was finished a few months ago; it received 650 chicks that have grown and are taking over! Always so many eggs!

Part of the money collected from the sale of eggs goes to the Center; the other part is used for the maintenance of the henhouse and the chickens.

Self-financing of the center

FUNDING

For the construction

The French authorities have always financed part of the construction work. But we also have to look elsewhere and in all directions; often private financing. The task is hard! But we always say "we do what we can with what we have".

For several years, Ivorians have been contributing their share of materials. And now the sale of eggs allows the Director of the CKNF to pay the current expenses.

For the camps

The young French and Ivorians (since recently) take care of their camp.

For the studies

In general, studies are paid for by the parents:

- CPPE: for 1 year: 32 000 FCFA (49 euros) of which a part goes to the ministry which delegates the teachers
- School: for 1 year: 35,000 FCFA (53 euros), part of which goes to the ministry, which delegates the teachers.
- The students pay 50,000 FCFA per year for their housing (76 euros)
- The street girls do odd jobs (maids, merchants) to pay the 35,000 CFA francs of their annual tuition.

This Kimou N'Guessan Faustin Center is in the process of becoming a business; an



The chicken coop

independent Board of Directors will soon be established.

TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT

Readers who wish to support this excellent project that meets a pressing social need can do so easily. All they have to do is click on the following link to make a donation to the EEDF group in Boulogne-Billancourt: <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/eedf-boulogne-billancourt/formulaires/1>

Call for donations



Photo Soroptimist International

STORY

Empowering Out-of-School Girls

Marie Christine Gries

Soroptimist Club of Paris-Cité, Official Representative of Soroptimist International to UNESCO

WHO ARE SOROPTIMISTS?

Soroptimist International is celebrating its centenary this year. As a global women's volunteer movement, we work together to transform the lives of women and girls. Our network of approximately 72,000 club members in 121 countries works locally, nationally and internationally to educate, empower and enable opportunities for women and girls to achieve gender equality.

The Soroptimist organization is based on its local clubs and regional branches, which are grouped into five federations: Europe, America(s), Africa, Great Britain-Ireland, Southeast Asia-Pacific

Soroptimist is accredited by ECOSOC¹ to the United Nations and as such is represented in seven UN agencies.

Our slogan: "A universal voice for women" our motto "Understand, defend, undertake".



ORIGIN AND MOTIVATION OF A PROJECT FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

Our motto implies taking advantage of opportunities to implement projects that correspond to our objectives.

Mboro, Senegal

A member of the Soroptimist Club of Paris-Neuilly (France) with personal ties to Senegal settled in Mboro, a small town in the rural region of Niayes, located on the coast, about 100 km north of Dakar in the department of Tivaouane, region of Thies.

¹ The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, created under Chapter X of the UN Charter. It is placed under the aegis of the United Nations General Assembly and has a consultative role in matters of international economic and social cooperation.

With a beautiful beach, but still not very touristic, Mboro, with its traditional fishing village and its fertile market gardening land, is also the headquarters of Industries Chimiques du Sénégal, which is involved in the extraction and processing of phosphates.

The population of the municipality, which covers a fairly large area, is approximately 15,000 inhabitants, divided between a large town with the main community services, the market and shops, and several fishing and farming villages, sometimes several kilometers away. Some of them are still deprived of access by a road and without water supply or electricity. Fortunately, the wells benefit from a generous water table. However, maintenance must be done to avoid silting up and to preserve drinking water.

ASEM

As soon as she settled in, Mrs. F. joined a local association "Alliance pour la Solidarité et l'Entraide de Mboro" (ASEM) founded by Senegalese and French expatriates. This association quickly distinguished itself by its dynamism, its honest management, and the success of its varied activities in favor of the poor. The official status of NGO was recognized by the government in 2006. At that time, the local authorities praised the efficiency of its



Photo Soroptimist International

prevention devices for fishermen and young bathers, reducing to almost zero the number of drownings of great frequency on this shoreline whipped by "the bar" (a dangerous wave to cross in order to swim away from the beach as well as by dugout canoe).

The activities of this association have multiplied over the years and are versatile: awareness campaigns for the inhabitants on the cleanliness of the city and its surroundings, the fight against HIV and malaria, the maintenance of wells, and the creation of public latrines, a dispensary, a nursery school, a library for all, literacy classes and technical training for young people.

ASEM obviously receives public subsidies, but above all it works with volunteers and donations from individuals and other local or French organizations.



Photo Soroptimist International

A partnership

Through the intermediary of the club member who lives in Mboro for part of the year, during their friendly visits, the other club members discovered Mboro and got to know ASEM. The Soroptimist Club of Paris-Neuilly (renamed Paris-Cité in 2018) committed to a partnership, having assessed the quality of this local partner essential for the conduct of a project by remote promoters.

A Soroptimist International - ASEM partnership

In response to needs

For rural families, school is often far away, the need for school equipment is burdensome for the most modest, and the demands of helping out in the home, in the fields, and in fishing take precedence

over the continuation of children's education beyond the compulsory elementary level. The most frequent choice is to keep only some of the children in school, those who are more successful, but especially the boys.

Girls, who often drop out of school as pre-adolescents, are absorbed by household chores and helping to raise their children, and lose much of their basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. This illiteracy weighs on their future as housewives, managers of daily needs and educators of children, and even more so when they need financial autonomy for personal reasons or family distress.

Girls out of school

THE STEPS OF REALIZATION

ASEM, aware of this problem, has found, with the support of the Soroptimist club, a way to offer these young girls a way to become autonomous by giving them, as well as the boys, training in an income-generating activity, in this case, sewing for these girls.



Photo Soroptimiste International

An income generating activity

In Senegal, this activity is supported by the almost total absence of ready-to-wear clothes in rural areas and the attachment to traditional costumes, the making of which is entrusted to local craftsmen, as well as that of household linen.

The workshop started in 2003, as a test, for three years, for a dozen young girls from neighboring fishing families, with bi-monthly classes in a meeting room of the association, some mechanical sewing machines (no electricity), and a volunteer leader. Soroptimist financed the machines, their maintenance, and the necessary sewing supplies for each student.

Normal material difficulties were encountered such as: Unsuitability of rooms located near the beach since exposure to the sea air was very bad for the maintenance of sewing machines scissors and needles; the absence of electricity not allowing the mastery of

more powerful machines; the location not giving easy access to all the applicants whereas this workshop aroused the interest of many families.

Professional training

As far as teaching is concerned, although most of the first students who were trained did indeed develop and make use of their apprenticeship, the system [Accessing the labour market](#) put in place could not be sustained by responding to an increase in the number of female apprentices and, above all, was too informal to target professional outlets.

It quickly became apparent that the training needed to be more sustained and subject to a progressive learning program in order to allow access to the job market, beyond the sideline activities carried out at home. (Without eliminating the possibilities offered by home-based work)

It was necessary to rely on teaching by a professional in an appropriate location.

The current training is a three-year cycle, ending with an exam at the end of which a jury of local professionals awards a diploma. To encourage emulation, the best graduating students are given a sewing machine. Each year, new first-year students replace the graduates who leave the course.



Photo Soroptimist International

The workshop is now located in the downtown area, making it accessible to girls from various neighborhoods in the area. The annual grant from Soroptimist allows for the purchase and maintenance of the electrical machines as well as the tools and raw materials, and the payment of the teacher. Individuals and other associations friendly to ASEM also make donations. Finally, the students now make works that are sold for the benefit of the workshop (bags, kits and purses, household linen, children's clothing).

The population for which this training is intended is that of the most modest families. No registration fee is charged. During these years, about a hundred girls have been able to access the program. With a valid diploma in hand, some are employed by local professionals, or even elsewhere (Thiès or Dakar). Others work on their own account or after their

marriage, use their know-how in their life as mothers.

In recent years, sewing has been complemented by screen printing and dyeing, very complementary diversifications.

Literacy

And above all, since ASEM has developed a program of literacy classes for women, the illiterate girls of the sewing workshop have been integrated into these classes, which they attend simultaneously with their apprenticeship. The **The empowerment issue** question of empowerment is not totally resolved by the acquisition of a skill. If traditional techniques once allowed many artisans to exercise their talents without being educated in the school system, this possibility of autonomy becomes very unlikely with the current evolution requiring a minimum of knowledge to



Photo Soroptimist International

master tools that have become commonplace: a cell phone, a calculator, instructions for using a common appliance, a bus map, basic banking services.

Authentic quote from Ms. X, 40, who learned to read and write in literacy class: "I will be able to take the bus by myself to sell vegetables at the market now that I know how to read the directions on the signs and the bus and timetable on my phone." Edifying, no?

STEERING AND EVOLUTION

The smooth running of the workshop and the progress of the teaching have been monitored since the beginning by the ASEM leaders and the Soroptimist Club, which is regularly informed between its visits.

Follow-up

The Soroptimist Club receives accounts, exam results, and reports from a supervisor who visits the workshop regularly. Each year a delegation of club members visits the workshop (annual visit prevented in 2020 by the COVID). The visit (always very festive) allows for an assessment including a meeting with the girls in training and their instructor, an update on supplies and tools, the financial situation, adjustments and plans for the future.

The success of the program has led to a waiting list of students. Further development of the initiative is under study as it requires additional funding for the local operators, reception space and more teachers.

Impact

The impact of this apprenticeship on the beneficiaries is not only the acquisition of a technical skill. The personality of the girls changes: self-confidence, pride in being able to create and generate financial resources, development of initiative, integration into a social network that they missed by staying at home...

At each visit, we meet new students who are intimidated and almost silent. Yet a year later we find them smiling, cheerful and confident. To celebrate our last visit, a small play was performed by three young girls demonstrating the confidence they had acquired. As for the scenario they

The girls' personalities change

imagined: One girl laments to her parents: "I am good for nothing except some domestic tasks, I don't know how to do anything, not even how to repair my dress, I am ignorant and I am ashamed". She then asks to join the sewing workshop and the play progressed to a happy ending. The visitors experience the play as deeply moving allowing them in a sense to "live" and measure the usefulness of their support.



Photo D. Bénard



Tassaght project, North Mali. Delivery of school kits to students in difficult situation

 EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Strategy for an inclusive school

Aïcha BAH DIALLO

Former Minister of Education of Guinea Conakry, former Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, President of REPTA, international consultant

President Thabo MBEKI declared in 1999: *"No country in the world has ever achieved sustainable development without an effective education system, without solid universal primary education, without efficient higher education and research, without gender equality and equal opportunities in education"*.

Inclusive education, a national priority

Inclusive, lifelong education, open equally to girls and boys in the interests of democratization and individual and community survival, must be declared a national priority. It must be an integral part of development programs so that it has a real impact on the economic and social life of the country.

The gender dimension must be fully integrated into a global vision of education and training problems.

Here are some proposals for developing a strategy capable of achieving this objective.

ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE STEERING SYSTEM

Education policies cannot achieve their goal if they are not conducted on the basis of clear objectives whose achievement must be objectively evaluated. It is therefore important to :

- Conduct ethno-sociological studies and population surveys for better planning of educational programs, based on precise objectives, with coherent implementation and monitoring strategies and all within an integrative framework for fighting against poverty.
- To take into account simultaneously the access of all to education and the quality of educational programs
- To carry out research and evaluation that clearly identify the gaps



Photo of **Rodnae** from **Pexels**

- Launch awareness campaigns to stimulate and facilitate national dialogue and create interest in education. A multimedia campaign will convey appropriate messages: TV spots, songs, dramas, radio programs, interpersonal communication.
- Sensitize and involve religious leaders, opinion leaders (in Africa, griots), go door to door, involve men because they are the ones who usually make decisions at the family level. Women scientists should act as role models in secondary schools to encourage girls to go into science and technology.
- Encourage the private sector to contribute financially to the training of young people based on an analysis of needs and the human resources required..

RAISING AWARENESS AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

To make the education system succeed, mobilization of all available resources is essential. It is therefore important to:

- Establish dialogue at all levels with all stakeholders: Parents and friends of the school, teachers and their unions, research centers, young people (pupils and students), NGOs, ministerial departments (health, youth, cooperation, communication, territorial administration, justice, civil service, finance, etc. the national assembly), the diaspora and the private sector.

Establish a dialogue at all levels

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS AND FACILITATE THE TRANSITION FROM ONE TO THE OTHER

Educational policies cannot be limited to formal education. It is therefore necessary to :

- Take into account the formal education system, non-formal education and literacy by providing bridges between these different learning systems.
- Enable those who have dropped out to return to school or provide alternative approaches to meet their learning needs.

- Pay special attention to girls in this regard. To do so, develop specific programs that meet their needs. Non-formal education (NFE) is often the approach used in partnership with NGOs.



Photo of **Idina Risk** from **Pexels**

- Bridges between alternative education centers for excluded children and formal schools are successful experiences in several countries. The "NAFA" centers in Guinea provide an interesting example of what can be done to care for children excluded from school (see box). Successful innovations need to be scaled up by governments.

MAKING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM MORE INCLUSIVE

No child should be denied the right to education. Education must be inclusive. It is therefore important to:

- Expand access to education by ensuring quality and relevance (this implies higher education costs).
- To pay particular attention to the most vulnerable groups, especially girls, but also children from ethnic minorities, those who have suffered from violence (in Africa, the "little wizards", albinos, etc.), the disabled, those living in shanty towns, children suffering from AIDS or

A special focus on girls

orphans, nomadic children, fisher family children.

- To take into account the specific needs of girls, for example to give them sanitary napkins and explain to them how to use them.
- Reintegrate adolescent mothers into the educational system.
- Create a supportive learning environment: an infirmary, separate toilets for girls and boys, a canteen with one meal a day, electricity, a counseling center, and zero tolerance for violence.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

It is not enough to facilitate access to education, we must also improve its quality. Various measures must be taken in this regard:

- Give more attention to early childhood, as the influence of the early years lasts throughout the child's life.

Introducing mother tongues in education

- Introduce mother tongues in education. Ensure that teachers are trained, that teaching materials are developed, that parents accept the policy with the choice of language(s) and the timing of the introduction of the national or foreign language.

- To give an important place to literacy to satisfy the basic needs of young people and adults. Literacy should be functional and for women, linked to income-generating activities and credit programs. At the same time, provide the means to alleviate household chores (community day care centers, mills, water points, transportation: carts, donkeys).

Revaluing the place of technical and vocational education

- Revalorize the role of technical and vocational education and develop critical professional and technical skills to enhance the potential and assets of development in the formal and informal sectors of each country, going beyond the traditional technical and vocational education system. These skills should target the current and future demands of the economy, society and the labor markets in order to partially solve youth unemployment.

- Take into account the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT), the preservation of natural resources and the environment

throughout the training of young people.

- To have diversified and increasingly professional higher education systems to contribute effectively to the construction of knowledge-based economies and societies. Consider social measures for women "crèches, flexible time jobs ».
- Encourage the development of endogenous skills and the dissemination of knowledge and innovations.
- To have more well-trained, gender-sensitive, motivated teachers with better living and working conditions.
- To have sufficient gender-sensitive teaching resources.
- Put in place precise monitoring mechanisms with clear, measurable indicators. Assessments of children's level of proficiency show whether they are really learning. Regular action research will identify gaps and address them.

AMBITIOUS GOVERNMENTAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL POLICIES

The political will of governments must be demonstrated by prioritizing the education sector and making clear budgetary choices. Governments are responsible for education systems and must coordinate all interventions and aid from multi- and bilateral institutions. This includes:

Priority given to education

- Mobilizing human and financial resources in the long term and seeking new potential resources.
- Involve technical and financial partners (multi- and bilateral institutions), international NGOs for technical and financial support.
- Use external resources efficiently and effectively.
- Establish a clean and decentralized institutional management system, close to the population, to guarantee the proper use of funds allocated to education.
- Establish intergovernmental cooperation that allows countries to learn from each other and to create a partnership at the regional and international levels in order to succeed in bringing about a qualitative change in education policies, a new strategy for a gender-sensitive vision of the future, taking into account the role of knowledge and innovation.

CONCLUSION

It is important that men be involved in the process of developing a more inclusive education based on gender equality, so that they understand that the safeguarding, stability and integrity of the family require shared responsibility.

In this way, relationships between men and women will cease to be based on domination and rather established in a



Photo of **Mary Taylor** from **Pexels**

sustainable way on relationships of equality, respect, listening and caring.

Men and women must educate their children without discrimination and instill in them the values of mutual respect and equality. This will in turn have a positive impact on schools at all levels. Girls and boys will behave respectfully towards each other.

The school will stop reproducing the power relations and domination practices that prevail in the environments where children live. There will be less violence in school.

For Mayra BUVINIC (World Bank), women should not be considered as victims rather as forces of change. By considering them as

economic agents and investing in them, we are opting for a judicious way to rebuild the world's economies.

"Girls' education is the best development tool there is." (Koffi ANNAN).

"Exclude girls and women, and you give up



Photo D. Bénard

50% of your brainpower, 50% of your creative genius, and 50% of your economic strength." (Irina BOKOVA, former Director General of UNESCO).

FOR THE GIRLS OF GUINEA, THE NAFA SCHOOLS: A SECOND CHANCE

The word "Nafa" is not an acronym, it is a noun that means in most Guinean languages, "benefit, obvious interest".

The students at the Nafa centers have one thing in common. They left school at a young age or never went to school as children for a number of reasons, economic or socio-cultural. Until recently, many parents considered that school was only for boys. Girls were expected to stay at home to care for younger family members and help with household chores. In rural areas, girls' education was seen as a worthless investment.

"This mentality is slowly changing through public awareness campaigns on children's rights, gender disparity and the benefits of education to the community as a whole, but it is a slow evolution," explains Michèle Akan Badarou in an article published by UNICEF - [https://www.unicef.org/french/infobycountry/guinea_41281.html].

The creation of the Nafa Centers (or Second Chance Schools) is in line with the implementation of the Guinean government's major strategic orientations in education. These centers bring together out-of-school or out-of-school youth aged 10 to 16. Their general objectives are as follows

- To contribute to ensuring basic education for all
- To help children excluded from the formal system to better participate in the development and promotion of their region and to integrate harmoniously
- To help out-of-school or out-of-school youth acquire basic knowledge (reading, arithmetic, writing) in order to increase their performance in daily activities.
- To develop knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills that will enable these young people to understand, positively transform and safeguard their environment, to integrate harmoniously into the socio-economic activities of their locality and especially to promote the best practices of hygiene, health, security and law.
- To offer the chance to access formal education to those who have the capacity and desire to do so, by allowing them to continue learning and catch up with their peers in 3 years as opposed to an average of 6.
- Eliminate educational disparities between rural and urban areas, and between girls and boys.

The approximate number of learners in the Nafa Centers is estimated at 7,644, out of a capacity of 10,020 (based on 60 learners per center for 167 centers). For the 167 existing centers, there are 6,878 girls, i.e., 90% of the current number. Since their creation in 1993, the Nafa centers have provided training to more than 15,000 learners who aim to enter the workforce with priority given to rural areas and girls. The Nafa centers have the following advantages:

- Compared to the formal system, they have a low learner/facilitator ratio, innovative learning methods and adaptation to the environment.
- In the localities where they have been set up, the Nafa centers contribute progress in basic agricultural endeavors, dramatic increases in other productive activities, and to the improvement of basic hygiene conditions.
- Parents are particularly satisfied with certain aspects of the Nafa Centers, such as local participation, negotiation of learning time, and the school-community relationship.
- The non-formal education provided in the Nafa Centers reinforces the formal system and helps promote it among marginalized populations, who thanks to this initiative rediscover schooling.

(Source UNICEF : https://www.unicef.org/french/infobycountry/guinea_41281.html)



 THE ASSOCIATES OF THE GREAT PLANE TREE

Common courtyard

Michel Seyrat

Since Abel, Boris, Chérif, David, Éric and Farouk were in kindergarten at the Collinettes school they have met every Wednesday and Sunday evening at the foot of a large plane tree that stands in front of the school. They call themselves 'Les Associés du Grand Platane'.

They chose this name because of Mr. Maurice, the janitor of the garden, who had suggested they take part in a photo contest of the municipal youth council. 'Roam the neighborhood with your cell phone', he said. After a lively discussion and consideration of subjects like pigeons drinking from the fountain or the old twisted house on Rue des Potiers, Farouk had said,

- Why not our plane tree?;
- Ah yes, that would be original, and it is really beautiful, Boris had added.
- Great idea, we'll photograph it all six
- ... and may the best one win! added David.
- We could all do the contest under the same name, suggested Chérif, who was definitely inspired, for example Les Associés du Grand Platane, that sounds good, doesn't it?

- Yeah, it sounds serious," remarked Abel.
- And that way, if one wins, we all win," remarked Eric.
- Come on, let's sign up for the contest and charge our cell phones to the max," concluded Abel.

The very next day, they photographed their star tree from every angle and, in the end won three prizes.

It really was a beautiful tree, and now it was the silent witness to their exploits and the emblem of their group.

From this same class, a team of girls who live on the same block at 42 rue des Pins, and come to school together, also became known as Compagnie du 42, because Marie had once said:

- It's like grandma says when she receives her neighbors: we keep each other company...

And they kept this name: Compagnie du 42. With the "Associés du Grand Platane", they form a joyful band well known at the Collinettes school and across the wider neighborhood. To give you an idea, here is their latest exploit.

It was the beginning of March upon their return from winter break and the girls were talking loudly. Alice had just returned from her aunt Nathalie's, a journalist who was writing an article on International Women's Day, March 8, and since then Alice felt that at the Collinettes school there was little concern for girls' rights.

- Well, you know, said a jaded Marie, we make signs, essays, debates, and the next day nothing has changed.

- Too often the boys shout and get agitated and then we just let it happen, Nadia responded even though she is usually a fighter.

- We're not the most unhappy in the world, retorted Aisha, always generous. After all there are girls our age who walk miles to fetch water for the family.

- It's true, Louise resumed, but I have a proposal to make to follow up on Alice's remark, which I approve of, it's an idea that's been on my mind for a long time...

Then their discussion became very passionate.

When they arrived at the Collinettes school, they agreed, if the principal accepted their project, there was going to



be a revolution, on March 8, in this very quiet school.

March 8th arrives

As they entered the schoolyard in the morning, the students were surprised to see it divided into two equal halves by red and white construction ribbons. All along the divide, the Company and the Associates were explaining how the play space should be shared equally between boys and girls.

- The boys usually take up most of the space with their balls, their pushing and shoving, their running and fighting, and meanwhile the girls, to be safe, hide in the corners. Girls now want a fair and equal share of the playground, explained the girls of the Company.

- So for today, the Associates explained, the boys will be on one side and the girls on the other, half and half. Let's see what effect it has and tomorrow will be a surprise for everyone.

So, of course, the usual grumblers grumbled, the soccer boys protested that their training was being interfered with, the boys often ran into the ribbon barrier and the girls got a little lost in their halves, but by the end of the afternoon recess, it was all sorted out.

To the complaints, the Company and the Associates invariably replied: you'll see tomorrow, everything will be better.

What was going to happen the next day was the Director's idea:

- I agree with you on this demonstration, she had said, but equality is not separation, so here is what I propose for March 9 and 10.

The principal's idea was very popular, and on March 9, in fact, at morning recess, the Company and the Associates solemnly removed the separating ribbons while the principal, after asking for silence, declared:

- Both girls and boys have the right to play on the entire surface of the courtyard and I encourage you to develop joint games. To demonstrate this, I have invited players from the city's women's soccer team, who will train both girls and boys in some difficult passes. And tomorrow I have invited basketball players.

Six soccer players came running into the schoolyard dribbling balls and making passes that everyone tried to return as best they could.

The Headmistress watched with satisfaction as the boys took lessons from the women footballers and the girls made successful passes in the middle of the playground, thanks to the advice of their fellow pupils.

As she walked back to her office, she approached Louise and said in her ear:

- You were right, you have to dare and when you do it works.

Then the next day it was the basketball players who ran very fast and zigzagged to reveal their secrets for making baskets, no matter how tall they were, from 1.30 to 2.10 meters! Even the first graders were a little afraid that one of these giants would mistake them for a ball...

Since then, in the school yard, thanks to Compagnie du 42 and Les Associés du Grand Platane, boys and girls play together across the whole surface of the yard, which is not often the case in other schools, as everyone can see. And if the rule is not respected, a group of four judges, two boys and two girls, created by Abel and Louise, reminds them. At the beginning, the judges could not play at recess, because there were always complaints, but now they are all accustomed to this new structure and they can play content.

- Tell me, the headmistress asked Mrs. Champoussin a few days later, am I mistaken or are there mixed teams in the corner of the yard dedicated to soccer?

- Yes, it's new, there are even girls on the teams!

- Let's hope that our boys associated with their plane tree haven't already alerted the Olympic Committee to promote this new sport!

- Ah, you know with them everything is possible!

Note: the Fédération sportive et gymnique du travail (FSGT) has launched in September 2019 a mixed soccer championship by teams of seven: three boys and three girls and a goalkeeper of one gender or the other.



IN NORTHERN MALI, AN OUTSTANDING NGO

Tassaght

<https://tassaght.org/accueil>



Since 1985 the Malian NGO Tassaght has operated across the north and more recently the center of the country providing humanitarian aid and development assistance. For this issue Managing Director, Aboul Aziz Ag Alwaly and Media Specialist, Modibo Sylla provided a collection of photos that help further illustrate the innovative programs directed towards women and girls as presented in this issue. Among its diverse and integrated

humanitarian aid and development programs is significant support to the schooling of girls.

VISION

The vision of TASSAGHT is that of a society of solidarity and responsibility based on foundations of freedom and justice.

MISSION/GOAL

To reduce poverty, precariousness and suffering in all forms in its zones of intervention

To ensure the well-being of partner communities through development actions by putting their participation and empowerment at the forefront.



Photo NGO Tassaght. Development of production units

OBJECTIVES

Humanitarian, non-political and non-profit, TASSAGHT supports Malian rural communities advance sustainable development goals through projects and programs in partnership with governments, international aid agencies and other local organizations.

Its objectives are :

- By diverse forms of assistance provide rural communities assistance to better ensure their social, cultural and economic well-being.
- To encourage and support local and collective initiatives by establishing sustainable interventions and resources.

The key areas of intervention are: Food Security, Education, Good Governance, Pastoralism, Health-Nutrition, Hydraulics, Gender Equity, Climate Change Mitigation, Conflict Prevention and Management, Action Research, Agroecology, Advocacy/ Lobbying.

Since May 2013, TASSAGHT has developed an information monitoring system in pastoral areas based on data collectors at the community level and cell phones in partnership with Orange Mali and SNV. This monitoring has focused pastoralist herders, including women pastoralists, gaining real time data on the conditions of pasture, water sources, and levels of conflict inform their decisions on where and when to relocate with their animals and families.

Tassaght is also a founding member of Reseau Billital Maroobi (West Africa Herders Network <https://www.maroobe.com/>) which has effectively convened NGO's, national level and local governments and private sector leaders to diminish conflict and better integrate herding into West African country economies.

We will come back to this remarkable organization in future editions of Cooperative Approaches