

Training and employment of young people in Niger

Country/Region: Niger / Africa

Timeframe/Status: Current project phase II: 2009 – 2012
(phase I: 2005 –2008)



Needs: Young people in Niger live in alarming circumstances.

For the most part, young people have neither a profession nor job prospects. No real 'job market' exists and lack of skills, information and access to finance hinders young people from benefiting from the opportunities which do exist. For the above reasons, the SC project is concerned with the reinforcement of three types of services which are still poorly developed in Niger: ongoing professional training, access to finance and economic support, professional guidance and advice for young people. The strategy concerns putting in place a sustainable and decentralized service for young people who wish to improve their situation, notably:

- Making existing services accessible thanks to a network of public and private players. This allows requests from young people to be gathered so that they can then be guided towards current offers.
- Setting up services, which are lacking in the existing structures (i.e. training centers, State services, etc.)

The above should encourage the emergence of new projects, enable the creation of jobs and access to self-employment and encourage young people to get training in order to have a profession.

Objectives: The project objective is to provide employment and access to a stable income for young men and women in insecure situations or whose work is under-exploited. The project contributes to the fight against poverty by supporting the growth of the private sector and by encouraging economic autonomy amongst young people. With over 60% of beneficiaries being illiterate or in a situation of poverty (i.e. living on less than \$1/day), the project aims to make a central impact on the growth and improvement of the social status of the poorest people. The project objectives are assumed to be achieved if,

Short term:

- The training organized is effective in terms of its application, the growth of revenue and/or the improvement of the professional status of beneficiaries ('useful training').
- Jobs are created for young people thanks to the support of the project.
- The project targets economic sectors which are bringing about growth and/or reducing the country's vulnerability.

Mid term:

- Training offered in Niger has improved.
- Young people have access to a service which gives them information on jobs, training possibilities, economic support, credit access, etc.
- Public and private partners form a network in which to co-ordinate their offers.
- The project contributes to the implementation of national policies.
- The project's activity is durable.

Target groups: The target group is young people between the ages of 15 and 35 (according to the definition of the Ministry of youth training and employment): unemployed young people, apprentices, micro-businesses, co-operatives, etc. The indirect participants and beneficiaries are the public and private partners: state technical services, training centers, local radio, companies creating jobs for young people, the grouping together of young people, etc.

Focus / Activities:

A. Information and access to information: Identification, production and strategies to make 'useful and useable' information available (for use in the professional guidance of young people within the project, but also adaptable to the needs of businesses).

B. Raising Awareness: Setting up a network of local radio stations and applying a strategy of 'social communication' with the goal of raising awareness (applied to the promotion of youth employment but also adaptable to all types of awareness-raising). Ongoing training Organizing 'useful' (i.e. directly useable) short-term training in collaboration with training centers and vocational organizations (initial professional training, further training, complimentary training and teacher training): analysis of needs,

adapting training to the needs of local opportunities, transferring of skills amongst partners (implementation).

C. Formulating training: Creation of training modules and modular programmes through the method of 'training by skills' in close collaboration with those in professional circles.

D. Economic support: Putting together finance documents, intermediary financing with finance institutions, support for access to job opportunities, marketing support, etc. In addition, the project has access to analyses of the work market and local economies in its areas of involvement and is developing skills in the field of supplying urban markets with food products.

Human and Financial Resources: 8 staff employed (1 international, 7 nationals)

Budget phase II: CHF 2'000'000, half financed by LED and half by Swisscontact's Development Programme

Results: The project currently enables 200 families to increase their income and 30 new businesses to start up, including 18 in regions with very poor economic vitality (Gaya, Téra, Loga). Thousands of young people are also affected by the communication strategy of the project involving 8 radios and through the collaboration with a farming federation comprising 35,000 members. The project's monitoring system focuses on the following results and indicators.

- Amongst the 500 young people trained by the project, more than 50% are young women and 65% of the young people trained have a job and/or see an increase in their income after training. More than 50% are illiterate and/or live on less than \$1 a day.
- 50 micro-enterprises and family businesses have been directly supported by the project, which accounts for the creation of at least 100 jobs for young people.
- Short-term modular training is now offered in at least 4 of the training centers.
- At least 12 short-term training modules have been developed by the project in sectors which are buoyant and responding to the needs of training centers.
- A modular programme in irrigation and processing agricultural produce is available and has been tried out in 2 training centers.
- A service which supports youth orientation has been put in place with 10 partners in 5 towns and is responding to the needs of target groups.
- Over 50 hours of radio programmes have been produced and broadcast in 5 towns and audience surveys show that young people understand their usefulness.
- Recipients have access to a systematic training in 'life skills' and to support in gaining financial support.
- Public authorities on a regional and national level appropriate and contribute to the autonomous diffusion of the project's components.

Particularities: In contrast to neighboring countries such as Benin, Mali or Burkina Faso, professional training in Niger is at embryonic stage and is supported only timidly by the government and by civil society. Swisscontact's strategy is thus not to support the development of a national system, but to support particular needs coming from Chambers of Commerce, from communities or ministries. Trainings are thus short-term / modular (maximum six months) and based on a context analysis in order to be able to support the needs of the local economy. In addition to trainings, the project has developed information and professional information platforms in order to support young people in their professional projects, be it trainings, studies, employment or self employment. The project is thus conceived in a systemic manner with the aim to favor the economic autonomy of unemployed people in precarious living situations or professionally under exploited.

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Special Challenges, Risks, and Opportunities: Needs assessment studies have shown that young people generally lack ideas related to their professional training or employment. The challenge is thus to provide young people with an information and professional orientation platform, in which information on different professions, outlets, training opportunities etc. are given. More importantly, an individual coaching by a trained tutor is provided to some young people with the aim to support them in the realization of their professional projects. The challenge is thus to multiply the platforms at the national level, involving local partners, in order to increase support and advisory services to young people (set up of dossiers, training, access to credit, etc.). Due to the high number of platforms, the risk exists that

some of them will operate outside of the conceptual framework established by the project or that the services they provide are of poor quality. In order to contrast this, the Ministry of Professional Training, in partnership with the project, is working on the setting up of a legal and regulatory framework, which will give governmental recognition to such platforms, assuring this a qualitatively high system through the creation of a steering and follow-up committee.

Useful Tools, Documents, Resources:

http://www.swisscontact.ch/english/pages/PR_Dn/PR_Dn_058_Img.php