Respecting the Rights and Responding to the Needs of Adolescent Girls in Niger

In cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Zonta International began supporting the Niger project in 2014. Zonta has continued its support for this project with an additional US$1 million in 2016-2018 to build upon the progress already made. Zonta’s contribution will cover the needs 11,000 adolescent girls. This report is for the period of January – June 2017.

GOALS

• Reduce early marriage and early pregnancy in a critical mass of communities and departments in all regions of Niger
• Adolescents will:
  o Develop health, social, and economic assets
  o Know their rights and be in a stronger position to defend them
  o Be safer and have a measure of protection against violence

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The program is designed to provide skills, health knowledge, and economic and social empowerment to teenage girls, as well as creating a favorable local and national environment for girls to exercise their rights, specifically by:

• Improving adolescent girls’ health
• Providing education for adolescent girls
• Protecting adolescent girls against teenage violence and creating safe spaces for girls within their communities
• Encouraging leadership of adolescent girls, providing them access to mentors and women leaders, while giving them the opportunity to build social networks that integrate them in their communities, and encourage their participation as citizens
• Using the data collected for decision-making and advocacy for adolescent girls and to guide investment decisions in regions and communities with the highest concentrations of young populations and where the socio-demographic indicators are the worst
IMPROVEMENTS

Based on the recommendations of the Assessment Workshop held in 2016, the following improvements were made in 2017:

- Review of the mentor’s guide to make it user-friendly. These improvements have increased the exposure time of girls from 33 to 34 hours.
- Development of flip charts to visually support the modules.
- Simplification of program content (making it more visual and interactive) to develop and guide the implementation of the program.
- Development of a handbook to guide the literacy program teachings.
- With a view to the scaling up to reach 32,000 adolescents in 2017, the Ministry of Women’s Promotion and Child Protection, with the support of UNFPA, initiated a recruitment process to expand the implementation capacity with other implementing partners to provide local leadership and cover all eight regions of the country.
- Improvements were made in the area of program monitoring and evaluation to refine the results framework.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Ownership of the initiative by the decentralized structures of the Ministry of Women’s Promotion and Child Protection
- Commitment of the mayors who are engaged to accompany this program through rehabilitating safe spaces and recruiting adolescents
- Involvement of the Ministry of Interior for the involvement of local authorities
- Partnership with other ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Vocational Training and Ministries of the Education sector) for integrated actions

CHALLENGE

As the number of adolescent recruits doubles from one year to the next (from 16,000 in 2016 to 32,000 in 2017 and 64,000 in 2018), the main challenge is to ensure the efficient and high-quality implementation of upcoming cycles through the recruitment of additional implementing partners and/or capacity improvement of existing partners.