

NIGER'S SCHOOL AGAINST AIDS

The goal of the « Vaincre le SIDA avec l'école » project is to amplify the effects of the « Combattre le VIH/SIDA par l'école » project underway in Niger's teacher training colleges where its future teachers learn the skills they will need to instruct their country's children. The reference project allowed the Syndicat national des enseignants du Niger (SNEN) to set up a group of 25 people capable of conducting AIDS prevention training sessions. These people ran the training sessions for 165 teachers from eight schools, who in turn used the knowledge and pedagogical tools from this project to teach over 2,500 students, including some 650 young girls. In March 2007, the assessment conducted by our partners noted the following points: 1) Because young girls and even their female teachers find it difficult to speak freely in mixed-gender groups, the pedagogical strategies used with the women and young girls must be reconsidered so as to facilitate their interaction with the resource people. 2) Because the financial resources of the reference project were limited, only one activity was tried out in class. This was not sufficient enough to measure how well the teachers and students had integrated the use of the pedagogical tools. 3) It was observed that the teachers from the teacher training colleges were more open to the pedagogical methods and the pertinence of the didactic tools, their level of academic training being higher than that of most of the other teachers.

There are currently four women and 121 men who are training the country's future teachers (3,135 students, including 1,675 young women) in five teacher training colleges. It is not inconceivable that, through their work as the instructors of the future teachers studying in these colleges, these 125 people could play a large role in preventing AIDS in all of Niger's school children. These observations have guided the development of the amplification project since most Nigerien teachers say that they find it difficult to discuss questions concerning STI/HIV/AIDS with their students. As a continuation of the reference project, the « Vaincre le SIDA avec l'école » project aims to increase the competency of the teachers and students at the teacher training colleges with regard to AIDS prevention. It is worth noting that, in 2005, close to 47% of young Nigeriens went to primary school whereas only 9% went to secondary school. Those who will be in charge of basic education in Niger thus have a determining role to play in AIDS prevention in a country where 50% of the 14 million inhabitants are under 15 years of age.

The proposed methodology is the same as in the reference project and is based on three principles that have produced long-lasting results, namely an andragogical approach, a holistic approach to health education, and a ripple-effect training approach. With the help of the targeted regions' four instructor teams, the project aims to improve the training of the teachers at the training colleges, to examine female-related questions so that women can help young girls, and to encourage the young adults' participation so that they will develop their own pedagogical skills. The managers of the four training colleges will be asked to set up a central point in each institution that will provide prevention services to those who study and work there and that will ensure the continuity of the project and the amplification of its results. A total of eight managers, 106 instructors (including 4 women) and 2,838 future teachers (including 1,546 young women) from four of the teacher training colleges will benefit from the various activities of the « Vaincre le SIDA avec l'école » project, as will 11,000 CCI members and 20,000 SNEN members.

