PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

Programme Title & Project Number	**Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results**
• Programme Title: Generation Unlimited in Niger: Bridging the Digital Divide: Connect My School • MPTF Office Project Reference Number: *00122974*	*Niger: national, with specific interventions in nine targeted schools located in the regions of Diffa, Maradi and Zinder*

Priority area/ strategic results

UNICEF Education Niger Country Programme 2019-2021 Outcome (Education): School-aged girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable, those affected by crises or those living in rural areas, acquire fundamental knowledge and instrumental skills necessary for life in a safe, protective and inclusive school environment.

Girls Education Strategy: Niger has recently finalized a new Girls and Women's Education and Training Strategy (SNAEFFF). Under Priority 2 (Growing the education and training offering), the strategy lists the 'development of ICT competencies', 'the improvement of girls' employability' and the 'prevention and reduction of girls' drop-out from school'.

United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2021 for Niger, Pillar 4: the most vulnerable populations, especially girls and boys, and children in targeted zones, have equitable access to quality education and training services, both formal and non-formal, in a protective environment free from violence, exploitation and child rights violations by 2021.

Niger's Education and Training Sector Plan 2020-2022
Outcome 1: To provide quality education and training in an equitable manner, with attention to the reduction of disparities.

Generation Unlimited Strategic Priorities:
1. Transform the formal school experience to build skills young people need for productive lives and the future of work
2. Provide young people outside formal schooling with opportunities for training, skill development and additional education
6. Promote equitable access to quality education, training, employment, entrepreneurship and civic participation

Participating Organization(s)	**Implementing Partners**
• UNICEF	• Government: Ministry of Primary Education (MEP), Ministry of Secondary Education (MSE), Ministry of Vocational Training, National Agency for the Information Society (ANSI), CAPEG (La Cellule d'Analyse des Politiques publiques) • NGO/CSO: Scouts • World Bank

- Private sector: Airtel

Programme/Project Cost (US$)	**Programme Duration**
Total approved budget as per project document: *USD 332,359* MPTF /JP Contribution: *USD 332,359* Agency Contribution *n/a*	Overall Duration*: 12 months* Start Date[1]*: 24.07 2020*
Government Contribution *n/a* Other Contributions (donors) *n/a*	Original End Date: *31.08 2021* Current End date: *31.08 2021*
TOTAL: USD 332,359	
Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.	**Report Submitted By**
Assessment/Review - if applicable *please attach* ☐Yes No ☐ ■e: *dd.mm.yyyy* Mid-Term Evaluation Report – *if applicable please attach* ☐Yes No ☐ ■e: *dd.mm.yyyy*	o Name: Sarah Huendgen o Title: Resource Mobilization Officer o Participating Organization (Lead): UNICEF o Email address: shuendgen@unicef.org

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[1] The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent to UNICEF Headquarters. However, the start date at country level was 1 September 2020.

Acronyms

ANSI	National Agency for the Information Society
CAPEG	Taskforce for Public Policy Analysis
CFM	Vocational Training Centre
CO	Country Office
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MEP	Ministry of Primary Education
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSE	Ministry of Secondary Education
SNAEFFF	Girls and Women's Education and Training Strategy
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
WCAR	Western and Central Africa Region

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Niger has been ranked last in UNDP's Human Development Index for the past few years. In a context of slow economic development, young Nigeriens are missing out on the opportunities to develop their full potential. 60% of children are out-of-school, less than 10% of children at the end of primary education have proficient literacy and numeracy competencies, and the high dropout rate combined with high youth unemployment demonstrate that the curriculum does not respond to the needs of young people nor of the labor market. Currently less than 5% of schools are connected to the internet, putting digital skills acquisition out of reach for the majority of young people in Niger. In addition, despite an important youth bulge, youth are rarely involved in decision-making processes.

To address this situation, UNICEF Niger joined the Generation Unlimited (GenU) movement, working with national counterparts, partners (including the private sector) and youth-led organizations, to give young Nigeriens a voice, competencies and skills they need for positive changes in their lives, their communities and country. This became even more important in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic – combined with a new scale of conflicts triggered by a highly disputed election process - exacerbated existing inequities in education, skills and access to the labour market. The digital divide was further deepened with millions of Nigerien youth not being able to maintain their education. The funding from The Netherlands through the GenU Trust Fund will support tablet-based (formal and non-formal) learning for 3,600 youth aged 13 to 16 years and is enabling partners to join forces to empower youth in Niger.

This report summarizes progress made between September and December 2020. While the second and more severe wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new escalation of conflicts due to disputed elections, and related uncertainty regarding the restructuring of Ministries in charge of Education delayed project implementation, important advancements were made to strengthen the baseline methodology for the project to better assess students on a core set of competencies in French, Math and life skills aligned with international standards and adapt the technical specifications of the tablets and equipment for the Niger context based on new feedback from beneficiaries (teachers and students) while ensuring complementarity with the Smart Villages Project, which aims to digitally connect all of Niger's 15,000 administrative villages to one another and to digital services. In addition, partnerships were developed on the GenU youth engagement strategy, including with the Scouts, which will support young people's engagement and sustained participation in the project (for both those who are in school and out of school) – especially for girls - and build youth networks in the country. The National Agency for Information Society (ANSI) accepted to host the project and co-chair GenU Niger's Steering Committee together with UNICEF, for greater alignment and coordination of partners' projects. The World Bank is closely engaged in the project especially due to synergies with its LIRE project, and UNICEF has partnered with Ministries of education on curriculum reform, standardization of teacher training and planning for future coverage of the national territory. Partnership discussions are also advancing with AirTel and Orange building on regional partnership agreements with UNICEF.

1. Purpose

The catalytic contribution from The Netherlands, though the GenU Trust Fund, is being used to launch a national tablet-based learning program, that will initially reach 3,600 lower secondary aged youth (aged 13-16) including those who are both in and out of formal school. The project aims to equip classrooms and community centres with tablets (and connectivity with the support of the GIGA project), digitize the curriculum, train teachers and ultimately enable youth to continue their education and improve literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The initial project was designed based on a study led by UNICEF on "Nigerien Youth Aspirations". It provided important insights on young people's demand for and expectations of education and informed GenU's governance structure in Niger, including how to create an enabling

environment for youth engagement and ensure that interventions are designed to meet the differentiated needs and constraints of adolescent girls.

2. Results

Challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the 2020 disputed election process delayed project implementation, but important advancements were made to lay a solid foundation for this project in this critical start-up phase. Given prolonged school closures, UNICEF Niger focused efforts on coordination with partners, especially ANSI, the World Bank and the Scouts, under the auspices of GenU Niger, on national education and skill acquisition policies and strategies, as well as a youth engagement strategy which will support the project. The extra time, adversely brought about by the pandemic, enabled a more coordinated and context-specific approach among partners, driven by Government. This included: (i) integrating lessons learned from the "Connect My School" pilot implemented in nine lower secondary schools; (ii) instilling accountability and social acceptance of the use of tablets and other modern devices in a country where the digital divide is pronounced and where social norms are not inclined to adopt digital learning; (iii) understanding teachers' capacity building needs and community awareness regarding remote learning solutions at large; and (iv) coordinating with partners through the GenU governance in Niger. In this regard, key results to date that lay a solid foundation for implementation include:

- **Development of a shared GenU Niger vision for "innovation for learning" to guide implementation of the project**: Coordination meetings were held to ensure alignment and synergies with Government policies and strategies and partners' ongoing or pipeline education and skills acquisition projects, especially with the World Bank's Learning Improvement for Results in Education project (LIRE), a US$ 140 million project focusing on updating the secondary school curriculum, improving teaching practices, increasing learning, and systems strengthening. This strategic dialogue with partners led to a shared vision and plan with partners on school connectivity through the Smart Villages Initiative and Niger 2.0 (connectivity projects supported by GIGA), remote learning platforms, curriculum design and implementation as well as students' formative assessment.
- **Construction of a GenU strategy for youth as change makers, which will also support meaningful engagement of youth in the project:** Partnerships were developed with the Scouts and other GenU partners to share experiences on mobilizing youth who are in and out of school and connect them with their peers to build youth networks in the country. Given the persistence of harmful social norms that put girls at the margins of the society, UNICEF worked with implementing partners to:
  - Reflect on the status of girls in the community and boys' and men's "status" and biases and underlying causes
  - Define selection criteria aimed at ensuring equitable participation for young boys (or/and men) and young girls (or/and women) in the project
  - Identify young female advocates/film makers and activists/platforms/incubators/champions to share their experiences with other young girls and motivate them to implement solutions aimed at progressively shifting social norms and advancing education in their communities [E-Takara](#) [Takara Senior | Accrual (etakara.ne)](#)
- **Formation of GenU Governance structure, which will support project implementation**: UNICEF and ANSI created GenU Niger's steering committee and are now in the process of inviting all organizations active in the field of education, skills, employment and youth empowerment to join. The World Bank and the Scouts are key partners and Airtel and Orange have been approached to join GenU Niger, building on the existing regional MoU that UNICEF has with them, which will also be the basis for future collaboration in Niger on data management, including real-time monitoring, RapidPro, digital engagement and school mapping. Although these agreements were

drafted in the COVID context, there is an interest to include development-oriented aspects as highlighted in UNICEF's action plan for private sector engagement.

i) Narrative reporting on results:

Outcome
Lower secondary aged young people have improved literacy and numeracy skills through tablet-based learning

- Following discussions with the Ministries in charge of education, the World Bank and ANSI, work has started on improving the methodology to collect baseline data for the project in order to assess students on a core set of competencies in French, Math and life skills and ensure these are aligned with international standards. UNICEF Niger has identified several vendors to make the necessary changes to the methodology.

Outputs
Output 1: 1,800 lower secondary school students have access to quality literacy and numeracy tablet-based learning.

- New feedback from beneficiaries (teachers and students) was collected, highlighting the need to better adapt the technical specifications of the tablets and equipment for the Niger context, while ensuring complementarity with the Smart Villages Project, which aims to digitally connect all of Niger's 15,000 administrative villages to one another and to digital services. These technical specifications were reviewed together with partners and are being revised in line with stakeholders' recommendations.

- UNICEF is working with the World Bank to ensure new digital content and standards are developed reflecting the Nigerien curriculum. Furthermore, a Long-Term Agreement is in place to mobilize technical support for curriculum design and testing. The training of teachers will take place once the curriculum is developed.

Output 2: 1,800 out-of-school young people aged 13-16 have access to quality literacy and numeracy tablet-based learning.

- Activities under this output could not be launched due to COVID-19 second wave restrictions and related difficulties selecting an implementing partner. However, UNICEF consulted with the Scouts to co-create a campaign to enroll and engage adolescents in the project through youth engagement platforms (using an adapted U-Report approach), and the age range has been extended to include adolescents older than age 16 to account for those who may have been excluded from formal school.

- Partners are now being identified to: (i) undertake a mapping of extracurricular clubs and other youth services; (ii) organize youth led activities for communities without connectivity focused on peer support, mentoring and documentation of good practices; and (iii) refine the concept of mentorship with young people and identify students with learning difficulties in core subjects.

- Furthermore, together with ANSI, UNICEF identified an opportunity to implement "centres communautaires numériques" (Community Centres for Digitalization) which would enable a more diverse and larger community of youth to be reached than those reached only through classic

summer camps. This approach will build on the investments already made by UNICEF in Vocational Training Centres (Centres de Formation aux Métiers – CFM).

Output 3: The Ministries of Education have the necessary information and data to inform ICT integration into teaching and learning at the lower secondary level.

- UNICEF signed a partnership with the Prime Minister's Cabinet Cellule analyses et des Politiques publiques d'Evaluation de l'Action Gouvernementale (CAPEG – Public Policy Analysis and Evaluation Cell) to undertake a perception survey for teachers and students on remote learning and ICT integration in teaching and learning, and focus groups are being organized to inform education sector approaches and policies around innovation for learning that will support this project.

3. Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned & best practices

The onset of a second and more severe wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in November, as well as uncertainty regarding the restructuring of Ministries in charge of Education as a consequence of contested election processes that are still ongoing, presented challenges for project implementation. However, this also provided an opportunity to revisit and improve the foundational elements of the programme, including strengthening the methodology to collect baseline data for the project and acquiring new feedback from beneficiaries, including teachers and students, that is improving the technical specifications of the tablets and equipment, as noted above. The changing context also provided opportunities to reinforce national authorities' participation and youth engagement in the program implementation, including through partnership with the Scouts and the delays provided more time for discussions among partners involved in innovation for learning (World Bank, International Telecommunications Union (ITU), USAID, European Investment Bank) to reinforce synergies with: (i) Giga for school connectivity and mapping, (ii) Reimagine Education – a UNICEF initiative to modernize the education system, (iii) Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) to address the learning crisis, and (iv) Reinforcement of monitoring mechanisms in Education (through real-time monitoring) to help address the structural data crisis in Niger. As girls' participation remains a challenge, UNICEF will conduct a study to deepen understanding of social norms and other factors impacting girls' participation in youth-led initiatives, including regional differences.

4. Qualitative assessment

This contribution from the GenU Trust Fund enabled UNICEF Niger to adopt an innovative approach that is usually only sparsely funded by traditional donors, thus helping the programme to generate evidence and document good practices that can be beneficial for the initiative's scale-up in Niger as well as for other countries in the Sahel. The contribution also helped UNICEF leverage resources for mainstreaming innovation in education and reinforce national leadership. Key features include:

- The synergy with key partners such as the World Bank has laid a firm foundation for the leveraging of resources within the "LIRE" programme. Both UNICEF and the World Bank are developing a joint monitoring framework within the Accelerator Programme, which is supported by the Gates Foundation and aims to improve learning quality and outcomes.
- The strategic partnership with ANSI beyond the Ministries of Education guarantees high level political buy-in and alignment with the national digital strategy for Niger (Niger 2.0).
- The discussions with ITU, a key partner on the Giga project, will contribute to the broader school connectivity agenda in Niger, using the first cohort of "smart villages" as the entry point for collaboration to document success factors that will inform national reforms on distance learning programmes, which are currently seen as a sensitive political issue. This is why UNICEF worked

with the Prime Minister's office (CAPEG) as well as the teachers' union to launch the perception survey with the aim of creating a common vision on distance learning and youth empowerment at large.

- The identification and activation of female role models could help break the stereotypes around the role of girls being a wife and mother only and raise awareness on the important roles that girls and young women can have in shaping Niger's future.
- The partnership with the Scouts and other youth platforms has allowed for a better understanding of the dynamics regarding youth engagement in Niger and the skills needed for learning, peer support, active citizenship and employment.

5. Indicator Based Performance Assessment[2]

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Outcome 1 **Indicator:** *Indicator: % of students demonstrating at least 5-point improvement in pre-and post-test scores* **Baseline: 0 (scores to be established)** **Planned Target: December 2020: 45%, March 2021: 60%, June 2021: 75%**		The methodology regarding the baseline has been changed to comply with national guidelines and international standards regarding the evaluation of core competencies (literacy and numeracy)	Evaluation report
Output 1.1 **Indicator 1.1.:** *number of students enrolled in tablet-based learning* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 1,800**		To date the number of students identified for the tablet-based learning programme in primary and lower secondary schools is 2,334 (1,182 girls).	
Indicator 1.1.1 *number of tablets placed in each school* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target:900** **Indicator 1.1.2** *number of teachers and focal points trained* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 27** **Indicator 1.1.3** *Number of weeks the programme has been taught* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 24**	The order is being placed for ANSI for 900 tablets The number of teachers identified for the programme is 136 (including 92 female teachers), thus inducing a change in the capacity building strategy	Number of students reached through mentorship programmes **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 1,800** *The indicator will replace indicator*	

Indicator 1.1.4 *number of students participating in afterschool clubs* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 1,200**	This activity has not started given COVID-19 prevention measures and security threats	*1.1.3 to ensure that the change in children's right to access education is captured rather than focusing exclusively on the programme*	
Output 2 *Indicator 2.1: number of out-of-school students enrolled in tablet-based learning* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 1,800**	Given the high number of out of school children, UNICEF is working with ANSI to undertake an exploratory mission in the targeted regions. To date 4,351 children have been identified (2,263 girls) through Alternative Learning Centres.		
Indicator .2.1.1 number *of campaigns run with the DRES* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target:3**	Given restrictive measures, campaigns have not been implemented and an alternative (e.g. through digital platforms) is being discussed with the Scouts.		
Indicator 2.1.2 *Indicator: number of teachers and focal points trained* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 27**	The number of teachers identified is 86 (including 11 female teachers).		
Indicator .2.1.3 number *of weeks the programme has been taught* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 15**		Number of out of school children attending literacy and numeracy clubs. **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 1800**	
Indicator 2.1.3 number *of camps organized* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 3**	Given restrictive measures, campaigns have not been implemented and an alternative is being discussed with the Scouts. Digital engagement will be	*This indicator will replace indicator 2.1.3 for the same reason as mentioned above*	

	promoted.		
Output 3 **Indicator 3.1** *number of reports produced and shared with the MES* **Baseline:0** **Planned Target:1** **Indicator 3.1.1** *number of tests held* **Baseline:0** **Planned Target: 2** **Indicator 3.1.1** *number of workshops held* **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 1**		Existence of case study on GenU and tablet-based learning in Niger **Baseline: 0** **Planned Target: 2** *This indicator will replace the three indicators listed under output 3.*	

ANNEX 1: Donor Feedback Form

[English version](#)