I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Niger is a large, totally landlocked country with a territory of 1.27 million km2, of which three-quarters are desert land. It is situated in the West-Central part of the African continent, and located between Mali, Algeria, Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin and Burkina Faso. It has a population of about 16 million, with the vast majority (about 90%) concentrated on a third of the territory, mainly in the southern and western regions of the country. The population density is 12.5 inhabitants per square kilometer and is growing rapidly (3.3 % per annum) with 47% under the age of 15. At this current growth rate, the population is estimated to reach about 54 million by 2050. Women make up 50.1% of the total population. According to official projections (National Institute of Statistics, INS, 2010), the number of youths aged 7 to 12 rose from 1.84 million in 2001 to 2.35 million in 2008, and is expected to rise to 3.37 million in 2020. In view of this increase of 1.02 million children between 2008 and 2020 (+43% in 12 years) the potential demand for social services in general, including education and the related increasing demand for education inputs will put significant pressure on the Niger educational system by 2020.

2. Niger is a poor country with a limited natural and human resource base. It ranks 186th out of 187 countries on UNDP’s Human Development Index, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US$720 in 2010 in Parity Purchasing Power terms- one of the lowest in the world. The
country remains relatively fragile and continues to be affected by several adverse weather conditions and other factors, which represent real obstacles to its harmonious development (59.5% of its population lives below the poverty threshold): (a) adverse weather conditions lead to recurrent drought in the northwestern and western areas where for several years there have been successive famines and an increase in vulnerability. This insecurity is a major hindrance to schooling and learning achievement; (b) instability in countries of the sub-region and in the Sudano-Sahelian strip affects the border areas (exposure to violent incidents: conflicts and terrorism) and undermines the government development efforts. Nonetheless, the exploitation of Niger's significant mineral and oil resources could provide important economic opportunities, if well managed.

3. Macro-economic management remains sound in 2012 but severe external shocks have resulted in unanticipated financing needs. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) substantially increased over the considered period (from 2007 to 2011), in nominal terms from FCFA 2052 billion to FCFA 3.0 billion in 2010 (an average growth of about 8% per year). However, when this growth is evaluated in real terms (CFA Francs of the year 2006), the performance is lower, increasing from FCFA 1.97 billion in 2007 to FCFA 2.4 billion in 2011. Based on growth in real terms, the average economic growth rate from 2007 to 2011 would be brought to 4.2% per year. Agriculture and mining sectors' performance remain the main drivers of growth. The GDP from mining activities experienced an annual increase estimated at about 9% over the 2007-2011 period. Uranium, gold and coal were the main mineral products extracted. In January 2007, a new oil code was adopted to make oil exploration and production conditions in Niger more attractive. In June 2008, the Government of Niger signed a production sharing contract with Chinese Company, China National Oil and Gas Exploration and Development (CNODC), for the Agadem block, developing important infrastructure as part of the contract. Exploration started in November 2011 and in 2012/2013, large scale investments in uranium mining and the oil sector are expected to start production and lead to double digit growth.

4. At present short term economic development efforts might be threatened by three parallel severe external shocks – the Libyan crisis, the security crisis in Mali and the European debt crisis. These external shocks are diverting attention and resources from long term development to crisis management. The insecurity crisis is also contributing to raising levels of insecurity due to the proliferation of heavy weapons in the sub region. This would further augment existing threats from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) activities, criminal activities such as an expanding drug trade through the Sahara, and recurrent insurgencies by rebel groups in the north of the country.

5. International Aid finances about 40% of Niger's budget while much of the Government's revenues come from trade (especially uranium and starting in 2012/2013 oil), investment (especially in the mining and petroleum sector), and remittances. With the political stabilization and a new Government in place since 2011, Niger is hoping to mobilize a significant amount of concessional finance to help fund its ambitious development plans. The European Union (EU) and France are among Niger's principal donors, providing about 33% of annual development assistance. Current events in the developed world and especially in Europe significantly dampen the outlook for significant aid increases.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. The recent (2010) assessment of Niger education system – RESEN highlights many challenges the system will have to overcome including: (i) the demographic pressure which remains
extremely high, 3.3% growth per year for the school-age population; (ii) the coverage for basic education, which, despite the significant progress made during the past 10 years, remains low and with very high dropout rates that could jeopardize the chances of attaining the objective of universal primary education by 2015; (iii) the persisting inequalities in access to education, where vulnerable groups (girls in poor rural areas, children in nomadic areas and those living with disabilities) still remain uneducated; (iv) the poor access and poor retention of young girls in the education system; (v) the lack of and fragility of schools available - classrooms in straw huts make up about 46% of classrooms in the system; (vi) the poor teaching quality (poor qualification level of teachers, lack of training and teaching aids, outdated pedagogical practices, etc.), which in turn leads to low levels of student learning achievement; (vii) the increasing pressure caused by the number of students who transition from the basic cycle 1 onto basic cycle 2. The number of those in this educational sub-cycle went from 85,328 students in 2000 to 253,643 in 2010, i.e., tripling the number of students in 10 years; and (viii) the poor educational system management.

7. Remarkable progress, albeit from a low level, was achieved in access to education, but completion poses a major challenge at all levels. Primary gross enrolment almost doubled from 2001-2011, from 35 to 76%, thanks to extensive government reform and financial efforts; as well as donor support. But Niger still has the lowest school enrollment rate in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), with the exception of Central African Republic. In addition, despite this increase, there are still disparities among regions, socioeconomic backgrounds and gender. In 2011, the GER for boys was 84.9% compared to 67.3% for girls at the national level. On the other hand, the GER in the urban areas was 99.1% compared to 70% in the rural areas. The challenge of further expanding access is exacerbated by future demand-side pressures: Niger’s school age population will increase by 43% from its current level by 2020. Less than half of the primary school-age population, only 41%, completes a full primary cycle of six years, and dropout rates are high (31%), due to low quality, and high indirect costs. In 2000, the primary completion rate distribution according to gender showed a strong disparity between boys and girls (18% for girls compared to 29% for boys). However disparities did not decrease in 2011, due to higher school dropout among girls compared to boys of the same age (primary completion rate of 43% for girls, 60% for boys in 2011).

8. A third of children who have access to primary education do not complete the cycle. Compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, Niger is ranked below the African average. Given the current performance of the system, about 482,000 children out of the 1.55 million in school are at risk of dropping out before the end of primary school. Finally, just over 75,000 12-year old children reach the end of primary education but leave without a diploma, and due in part to supply related weaknesses (unavailability of classrooms in middle school); of the 85,000 children who obtain the primary school-leaving certificate (Certificat de Fin d’Etudes du Premier Degré, CFEPD), 30,000 cannot continue their education in public schools. In terms of qualitative performance, the results of an evaluation conducted at the national level in 2007 show that the minimum reading, writing and mathematics skills are not acquired by the majority of students who complete primary education. This situation suggests that the priority given to universal primary education (UPE) must be maintained and the efforts made up to this point continued.

9. At the secondary level (cycle 2), despite significant growth in enrolment, especially in lower secondary education, access remains very low compared to regional averages. The GER is lower than that of basic 1, especially for girls (around 18% in 2010) due to dropouts recorded between both basic cycles. There are interregional disparities: Niamey had the highest GER (46.2%) in 2009-2010 and that of Tillabéry was the lowest (9.9%). This rate is very low compared to the
average in the West African sub-region, which was 34.4% in 2006. From 2001 to 2008, total secondary enrollment more than doubled, from 109,297 to 230,108 students. But the secondary gross enrollment ratio is still only 13% compared to the Sub-Saharan African average of 36% and thus constitutes one of the lowest in the region. Although access to primary grade 6 increased from 17% in 2000 to 24% in 2008, only one child in four of the relevant age group enters lower secondary school. The lower secondary gross enrollment ratio increased from 11% in 2000 to about 19% in 2010, but the completion rate barely improved over the same period, from 7% to 9%. This is due to the frequent grade repetition, 19% in 2010, but also to particularly low retention of only 34% during the cycle, part of which is due to long distance to school, eventually leading to dropout. The coverage of upper secondary education grew only slightly, from 17,000 in 2001 to 28,000 students in 2008. The upper secondary GER is only 4%, compared to 14% for the sub region. In addition, dropout is high, 37% in 2010. At 39%, private provision of upper secondary education plays an important role. Demand-side pressures on secondary education are expected to grow substantially in the next few years, due to further expected improvements in primary enrolment and completion.

Following the drought that affected the country since 2011, Niger is now experiencing flooding since late August in the west of the country, including the capital, Niamey, which compounds the access issue. Entire communities have been forced to move to higher ground and thousands of families who have lost their homes have sought shelter in schools. While an in-depth assessment of the impact of the flood has not been completed yet, there is already some initial evidence which points to serious disruptions and damages in education services and infrastructure following the flooding. Hundreds of schools, some of which were already in poor conditions prior to the floods, have been converted into shelters for the local population. This growing pressure on schools combined with the displaced population is creating huge challenges for the timely continuation of school year for thousands of children. A large number of local teachers have also been directly affected and displaced and teacher absenteeism is expected to be an issue. Occupation of schools by homeless families will necessitate rehabilitation of schools, new equipment and hygiene infrastructure.

10. Compounding the problem of low coverage is the low quality of education at all levels of the education system. A larger number of children are attending school, but the learning level of the pupils remains low and retention worsens as the child advances in the system. In primary education, average student test scores for Math and French combined on the latest available regional standardized achievement test, PASEC, are only 25, compared to e.g. Burkina Faso’s 46, Togo’s 43 and Guinea’s 42; making Niger the lowest performer in the sub-region, due to low teacher qualifications, lack of learning materials (about 20% of primary schools do not have any textbooks), lack of sufficient instructional time and poor pedagogical practices. Student assessments confirm the low student learning achievement among lower secondary school students. The MLA25 test shows that less than 1% of students earn a score that puts them above the desired threshold in math and reading ability. The majority of students are ill prepared because of the low quality of primary education. In upper secondary, the student success rate at the baccalaureate was only 29% in 2010. Grade repetition is high, especially in the final year, at almost 23%. As in the lower cycles, availability of learning materials and textbooks is a problem, as well as lack of sufficient qualified teachers, especially for math and sciences. To an important extent related to insufficient quality at lower levels, the qualifications and competences of the graduates from universities and technical schools do not respond to the needs of the labor market.

11. Overall, the education sector, which is financed by the Government, parents and foreign aid,
absorbs 17% of the country’s fiscal revenue (in 2011) and 4% of the GDP while the school-age population is growing at 3.3% per year, suggesting that more and smarter investment is needed for the sector. The current budgetary focus is on primary education, which absorbed 67% of the total education budget in 2008, clearly highlighting the priority given to the sub-sector. About 20% goes to secondary, 11% to tertiary and 2% to formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Despite the relatively large education budget, investments are inadequate to sustain a dynamic and equitable quality education system. In terms of the expenditure category, nearly 73% of the operating expenditure goes to staff salaries, crowding out non-salary recurrent expenditures such as supplies, learning materials, training and pedagogical support; 17% goes to means of transport and 10% goes into subsidies and various supports. The Ministries’ budgets, as programmed in the MTEF, are insufficient to finance the new teacher positions necessary to increase access to primary and secondary education and maintain the teacher student ratio at a level compatible with quality. The budget priority for education and primary education is clear but only a very small proportion of the expenditure is decentralized to the school level. Since public spending on education is already relatively high, however, not much fiscal space remains to increase financial allocations to the sector to expand access and improve quality (including of post-primary education). Investment therefore needs to be smarter and in fact there is substantial room for enhancing internal efficiency and the cost-effectiveness of service delivery at all levels of the system, through e.g. (i) reduction of repetition and dropout rates; (ii) redeployment of teachers assigned to administrative duties to active teaching; (iii) better utilization of existing teachers by increasing effective weekly teaching loads more in line with other countries; and (iv) encouragement of private sector providers at the secondary, higher and technical levels, especially in urban areas.

12. The overall management efficiency of the education system must be improved significantly. Despite progress in tackling institutional weaknesses during the last 10 years, there is still room to improve the sector’s ability to efficiently respond to the educational needs. Three main constraints stand out: (i) the management of funds and human resources is highly centralized, in a context of deconcentrated structures with very limited capacity; (ii) the allocation of human and material resources to schools is very random, suggesting a lack of instruments and systems for decision-making; and (iii) notwithstanding the existence of School Management Committees (COGES), the central level is resisting to have resources managed by these structures, leading to lack of efficiency in the sector management and decentralization. Teacher and personnel management is a big challenge for the education system, as is the weak capacity at all levels of the civil service but particularly at the middle management level.

13. As part of the drafting process of the Educational Policy Letter, the need for new school constructions was estimated at over 2,500 classrooms for primary education per year and 1,500 classrooms in secondary 1 to meet the expansion needs of both educational cycles. These estimates will be updated in order to take into account the fact that over the past years construction programs have not been implemented as planned. This adjustment will lead to an increase in the annual construction needs for the subsequent years. Most of the estimated needs are in rural areas and stem from three distinctive needs: (i) provisional shelters (made of straw), (ii) the distance between school and home; and (iii) primary educational cycle discontinuity (i.e schools with incomplete cycles). The most important need is linked with the replacement of provisional shelters built by communities inside public schools especially community schools with standard classes. Replacing these shelters with standard classes will not only increase their capacity but also their longevity during the rainy season, which will have a significant impact on time at school and thus the quality
of instruction. These provisional shelters represent 46% of classrooms.

14. In view of all identified constraints, there is an urgent challenge of boosting the access among vulnerable groups (girls, rural areas, etc.) and of promoting the quality of teaching especially through proper training/retraining/recruitment and management in general of human resources, curricula adaptation policies and better pedagogical practices, and the progressive implementation of adequate educational infrastructure. This challenge is exacerbated by the need to implement gender-sensitive actions in terms of budgeting, policy and schooling choices to reduce gender disparity, which is particularly significant in Niger.

Institutional Context

15. Niger’s education system consists of six-years of primary, four years of junior secondary, and three years of senior secondary, and two to four years of tertiary education. The first six years are compulsory, and the mandatory school enrolment age is seven. The Ministry for Education and Literacy (MEN) is responsible for preschool, Basic Cycle 1 (public and private), literacy and non-formal education (literacy, Koranic schools), while the Ministry of Secondary and Tertiary Education, Research and Technology (MESSRT) oversees general secondary, technical, vocational (public and private) and university education, as well as national and international training and research centers located in Niger. Other ministries supervise schools and institutes dispensing various kinds of training. Each of the two ministries has a regional departmental headquarters located in each of the eight regions of the country that manage issues related to the sector under their jurisdiction.

16. The limited institutional capacity is reflected by visible flaws in sector governance. The education sector employs the largest group of civil servants, but the ability of the Ministry of Education to use these human resources in a cost-effective way is weak. The primary consequence is the reduced capacity for personnel planning and management, supervision of teachers, and monitoring and evaluation. The roles, functions, and responsibilities are not well-balanced among the central, regional, and local levels. The sector does not have strong managerial and technical leadership. It lacks strong managers and high-level technical specialists to provide a clear strategic and operational direction in a sustained manner. Finally, human resources are not adequately deployed. The number of people working in the sector’s organizations, their skills mix, and the way they are deployed require improvements. The system lacks clear and good incentives to motivate people. There is a serious lack of material resources, from buildings and facilities, to furniture, office equipment and communication equipment.

17. A key issue is the move towards “decentralization”. The success of this move depends critically on strengthening the capacity in all key areas along with the definition of clear and reasonable functional division of labor among the center, the regions, and the local authorities, as well as the establishment of working procedures and processes that will ensure good performance and accountability at all levels. Despite some improvement in management capacity and a positive move towards “deconcentration” of some functions to the regions, the deployment and allocation of staff and transfer of resources to schools remain key points on the reform agenda. The budgeting process is weakly linked to output and outcome objectives, and the monitoring and evaluation activities tracking progress in education is fragmented and ineffective.

Knowledge base

18. The government prepared a Country Education Status Report (CSR) in 2010, RESEN, with
financial support from IDA, based on which it is currently preparing a new national Education Sector Plan for 2013-2020. In order to better inform policy in the post-basic sub-sector, a more recent and detailed study was undertaken, “Improving Education and Developing Skills for Economic Growth in Niger” (June 2012), also with World Bank support.

Government Strategy
19. The government’s economic diversification strategy revolves around creating incentives for the private sector to enter into the development of economic niches, with the government taking specific actions to facilitate value chain development. Besides actions designed to improve the business climate, the government has planned investments in infrastructure and education/training to make the relevant skills available. Thus, education and skills development constitute one of the pillars of the government economic diversification strategy.

20. In order to mitigate the principal constraints of the sector, the Government is currently finalizing a Sector Education and Training Program/Strategy (PSEF) for the 2013-2020 period. This program/strategy is consistent with the Educational Policy Letter (2013-2020), the Economic and Social Development Plan (ESDP, 2013-2016) as well as the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) objectives and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It will also act as a foundation for the preparation and implementation of the 2013-2016 triennial Education and Training Development Plan to improve performance in the sector in the long run.

21. In his inauguration speech in April 2011, the new President highlighted the importance of investment in access to education and made the commitment to dedicate 25% of the government budget to education for the next 5 years and to expand access to post-basic education. In higher education, the government pledged to raise enrollment from 13,000 students in 2010 to 50,000 by 2015. In line with these strategic priorities and based on the findings of the Country Education Status Report and the Skills for Growth Study, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education are currently finalizing a new, comprehensive Education Sector Plan for the 2013-2020 as a follow up to the 10-year Education Sector Development Program (PDDE) 2003-2013. In contrast to the PDDE, the new sector plan not only includes basic education (pre-school, primary and non-formal education) but all levels of post-basic education (secondary, TVET/skills development and higher education). IDA, as part of the local education group, led by UNICEF, has been supporting this process.

22. The government has launched or is planning to launch several major reforms in the various education sub-sectors through the plans and strategies mentioned above, notably: (i) the extension of primary education from 6 to 9 years, which will have an impact on the way the secondary education system is structured and make lower secondary part of basic education; (ii) introduction of alternative lower secondary schools in remote rural areas, collèges rurales; (iii) teacher management reforms in primary and secondary; and (iv) introduction of the competency-based curriculum and teaching methodology in secondary schools. Teacher management reforms include changes in teacher status. The recruitment of contractual teachers would be maintained, but the percentage of civil servant teachers would be raised from the current 11% to 36% by 2020 to improve and provide career perspectives/incentives for teachers. The government also plans to implement measures to make teacher allocation more transparent and equitable; increase the teaching load from 16.5 hours/week to 21 hours in lower secondary and from 13.5h to 18h in upper secondary to improve instruction time and ultimately enhance learning and to reduce the share of
non-teacher salary out of the total salary mass to 25% by 2020 (from 44% in 2008).

Donor Collaboration

23. In support of Government’s effort, Niger’s education system has received considerable assistance from technical and financial partners (TFPs). With the lessons learned from the execution of the PDDE and the advent of the PSEF, various operations proposed are better coordinated than in the past, thus avoiding duplication and enhancing synergies that maximize investments made. All bilateral and multilateral donors are committed to the successful implementation of the PSEF. Nonetheless, while operating within the general program framework, each partner targets those aspects that fit its strategic priorities. The in-country education sector donor group is led by the UNICEF and meets regularly. The main development partners active in the sector are the French Development Agency (AFD); the Japanese Development Agency (JICA); the Belgium Cooperation, the African Development Bank (ADB), and the Luxemburg Cooperation (LuxDev). Most of the development partners provide support to basic education, including the World Bank. Several small donor-supported projects exist in secondary and tertiary education. The OPEC Fund supports tertiary education, while the WFP throws its weight behind school canteens and girls in Basic Cycle 2 with a view to increasing girls’ enrolment.

24. This program has been prepared in close collaboration with the in country donor team, including UNICEF (lead in-country donor) and the French Development Agency (AFD), with contributions from the UN Funds and Programmes (especially World Food Program) and several non-governmental institutions.

25. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government and the Development Partners has been prepared and is under process of validation by all parties. The MOU includes the organization of annual joint reviews of the education sector plan and the goal of converging towards a common supervision and resources management system in line with GPE guidelines and World Bank rules.

Relationship to CAS

26. The proposed operation is completely aligned with the Bank’s CAS. The proposed operation builds on the efforts of the 2008-2011 CAS, particularly those that (i) sustain growth; and (ii) develop human capital. In line with the goal of improving human capital to lay the foundations for medium- and long-term economic growth, the Government has continued to request Global Partnership For Education (GPE) support in its efforts to reach the education MDGs. In addition, the proposed program is fully aligned with both the new Africa Region Strategy (Africa’s Future and the World Bank Support to It) and the new World Bank Strategy for Education (Learning for All - Investing in People’s Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development). Beyond the provision of inputs (school buildings, textbooks and trained teachers) the project promotes actions and activities that contribute to increasing the efficiency and accountability of the educations system (low-cost strategy in school construction, decentralization of the decision-making process on a number of matters related to the environment of the schools, etc). It also focuses on equitable and higher quality service delivery and on strengthening governance and public sector capacity.

27. Preparation of a new CAS is being carried out in FY13, building on the Government’s Plan for Economic and Social Development (ESDP). The draft CAS completion report prepared in FY12 confirms the strategic relevance of the current CAS. Based on preliminary discussions with the authorities, it is expected that the new CAS will retain the focus on promoting human capital, giving
a high priority to education as one of the engines for promoting growth and reducing poverty. Strong focus will also be put on gender issues and building resilience to shocks through social sectors.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)
Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)
The project development objective is to expand access to education and enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process in targeted areas.

Key Results (From PCN)
30. The proposed operation will use the overall indicators of the ESP to track progress on the seven year sector program and will use the specific indicators mentioned below (which are a sub-set of the ESP indicators) to track the attainment of the objectives for the grant.

Indicators
31. The following indicators are envisaged, pending validation with the Government and the local donors. The pre-identified indicators are a sub-set of the ESP indicators.

Outcome indicators
• Primary GER in target areas compared to national level (closing the gap) or number of newly enrolled students
• Gender Parity Index (Ratio of girls to boys) in primary (GPE and IDA 16) in target areas
• Student:classroom ratio in target areas
• Repetition rate in target areas
• % of teachers rated satisfactory each year after classroom observations by inspectors and educational advisers
• % of schools with pedagogical projects in target areas

Output indicators
• Number of classrooms constructed (IDA 16) in target areas
• Number of classrooms rehabilitated (IDA 16) in target areas
• Number of grants received by schools in target areas
• Number of textbooks delivered to schools in target areas
• % of teachers trained in target areas
• A national learning assessment team trained and a pilot assessment exercise completed.
• % of COGES strengthened in target areas

A more detailed results framework with intermediate indicators will be included in the project document.

III. Preliminary Description
Concept Description
32. The proposed project is based on the Seven-Year Education Sector Plan (ESP) and informed by the 2010 Niger Country Education Status Report “Le Système Educatif Nigerien”, the July 2012 National Education Sector Joint Annual Review and the lessons learned from the EFA/FTI Basic Education Project which closed May 31, 2012. It will be under the umbrella of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which has informed the Government of its intention to support the implementation of the sector policies as embedded in the ESP through a notional allocation of US
$84.2 million.

33. The project is being developed as part of a larger program of donor support to the Niger education sector. As a source of financing, the project supports areas that complement the government’s expenditures as well as other sources of financing to the sector. Despite the large education budget, investments are inadequate to sustain a dynamic and equitable quality education system. Salary expenditures crowd out investment in learning materials, infrastructure and pedagogical support.

34. Detailed project components will be finalized during the preparation phase, based on additional project preparation analysis, other donor activities and the results from the negotiated 2013 budget. The GPE program components have so far been developed around the following components:

Component 1: Expanding equitable access to education.

35. Inadequate infrastructure (schools, CEGs and laboratories) particularly in the rural area underlies difficulties regarding access to Basic Cycles 1 and 2 education and adult literacy. Despite significant investments over the last five years, the need to build and to rehabilitate classrooms remain important. It is estimated that 46% of the schools are provisional shelters (made of straw) or built in mud and need to be reconstructed every year. Replacing these shelters with standard classes will not only strengthen their capacity but also the duration of use during the rainy season, which will have a significant impact on time at school and thus also on the quality of instruction. Also, numerous schools lack the basic furniture as well as basic facilities (latrines and water); only 15% of the schools are equipped with latrines. The ESP estimates that approximately 2,500 new primary schools are needed per year, including up to 1,500 classrooms to be rehabilitated during the ESP period, i.e 2013-2020.

36. Furthermore, specific constraints often militate against girls’ schooling – long distance separating the family home from the school, absence of school monitoring, emulation of program and textbook stereotypes as well as teachers’ attitudes and behavior usually detrimental to girls, preference given to boys in schooling material, etc. Most of these constraints are detrimental to girls’ attendance by decreasing household demand for their schooling.

37. The problem of access and equity in basic education has captured the Government’s attention to the point of becoming the ESP priority. The Government’s aim is to do its best not only to extend access in physical terms but also to improve accessibility (i.e. the institutional and sociological conditions that promote social demand for educational services), including paying special attention to girls’ needs and introducing complementary school services such as feeding programs known to increase student retention.

38. In this context, Component 1 aims to increase access to primary education and reduce gender and regional disparities by increasing the capacity of existing primary education schools and promoting enrollments of girls and children in vulnerable areas. Component 1 is divided in 3 subcomponents as follows:

• Subcomponent 1 (a): Education infrastructure. This sub-component will support higher access through construction and rehabilitation of classrooms; construction of latrines for public
primary schools; construction of wells for primary schools; provision of furniture to classrooms in public primary education;

- **Subcomponent 1(b): Girls’ enrollment.** This sub-component will reduce gender disparities in access to education by supporting, incentives to promote girls’ enrollment in both primary and lower secondary education in targeted areas, including payment of teachers' overtime for girls' tutoring and Girls’ Education Grants;

- **Subcomponent 1(c): School feeding and health programs.** This sub-component will support higher access and retention of vulnerable groups by supporting school feeding and health programs in targeted areas;

39. The component will target the locations of Niger where: (i) the enrolment ratios are the lowest (mainly in the poorest regions and in rural areas, which coincides with where girls’ attendance is the lowest); (ii) the pupil-classroom ratios are the highest; (iii) schools are incomplete and/or were affected by flood damages. Consequently the new constructions will support strongly the reduction of disparities in school access between urban and rural areas, richest and poorest and boys and girls.

40. To finalize the preparation of this component, especially the construction activities, a committee in charge of the school building strategy will be set-up. This committee and the related working group will, in the coming weeks and months: (i) define the norms and standards of the school buildings; (ii) define modalities and prepare implementation of the various approaches; (iii) prepare the documents types (including contracts, execution manual and inspection/community convention); and (iv) set-up the monitoring system. In addition, the merits and feasibility of various incentives to promote girls schooling such as school supplies, uniforms, take home rations or cash transfer for girls of primary education, girls' graduation ceremonies and distribution of awards, and teachers’ overtime for girls’ tutoring will be analyzed.

Component 2: Improving the quality of teaching and learning

41. Pedagogical evaluations conducted in recent years have shown that the education system in general and the basic education sub-sector in particular suffer from certain weaknesses, principally: (i) the excessive focus on content and subjects without taking into consideration society’s concerns and the skills acquisition expected of learners; (ii) the inadequate programs and teaching methods, combined with the shortage of teaching aids (text books especially in natural sciences, history and geography for Basic Cycle 2) and teaching infrastructure (laboratories and libraries); (iii) the compartmentalization of various education levels; (iv) the inadequate consideration of education needs induced by such current crosscutting issues as the environment, HIV/AIDS, population and development; and (v) the poor education system management and planning.

42. Low quality results in low internal efficiency. The inefficient education system resulting from these negative factors is reflected in the repeater and dropout rates (indicated above) compared to averages for the sub-region. The overall survival rate at the end of the Basic Cycle 1 level was estimated at 56% in 2010, while the repeater rate for the same cycle and the same year stood at 5%. Performance at the Basic Cycle 2 level is no better: the overall survival rate was 53% in 2010, the repeater rate 19% and the average BEPC success rate 28%. Under the ESP, the Government foresees a net qualitative improvement in basic education performance. Following quality
improvements, the Basic Cycle 1 survival rate would increase to 93% by 2015, the repeater rate would fall to 6% and the cycle completion rate would rise to 93% over the same period. For Basic Cycle 2, the survival rate would rise to 71% by 2015, the repeater rate would fall to 12% and the BEPC success rate would increase to 70% over the period under consideration. In order to attain these goals, the Government plans to take the following measures: (i) provide pupils and teachers with enough quality text books and teaching aids; (ii) improve the initial and continuous training of teachers, educators, school principals and supervisors; (iii) set up a permanent quality control mechanism (with the use of student learning assessments and the strengthening of the capacity of school inspection); and (iv) experiment with pedagogic innovations.

43. In this context, Component 2 aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and therefore the internal efficiency of primary education, by increasing the availability and quality of pedagogical and didactic materials, introducing pedagogical innovations and supporting more and better teacher training in targeted areas. Component 2 is divided in 2 subcomponents as follows:

- **Subcomponent 2(a): Pedagogical inputs.** This sub-component will support higher quality teaching and learning by providing textbooks, pedagogic and didactic materials at both the primary and lower secondary levels in core subjects and grades where there are deficits in learning materials, as well as school grants for pedagogical innovations, in targeted districts;

- **Subcomponent 2(b): Teacher training.** This sub-component will support higher quality teaching through in-service and pre-service training for teachers, school directors, teacher advisers, inspectors of basic education in targeted districts;

During the preparation, special emphasis will be put on the content and process of teacher and principal training (the “what” and the “how”) and of the suggested pedagogical innovations. These innovations will build on successful cases of pedagogical projects developed in other countries (Latin America offers several examples). If well designed and implemented school pedagogical projects can enhance community participation, reading and writing skills, practical skills, and cross-cutting topics such as environmental protection, population and development so important to build resilience in the Niger context, while triggering pedagogical change in the classroom.

School grants will depend on the school-size (number of classrooms), on the human and material resources the school has already, on the context in which the school is and on the progress the school is making in terms of performance (with performance indicators in line with the overall objectives of the education sector plan). Criteria of context, resources and performance progress will be identified during the preparation mission, by a working group including the Secrétaire-General and a sample of regional directors, inspectors and school heads. It is noteworthy teaching time and gender parity have already been proposed among the performance progress indicators. Consequently it is expected the school grant system will influence the effective teaching time and gender disparity.

Component 3: Strengthening management and implementation capacity

44. Component 3 will support higher quality of teaching and learning and more efficient use of resources through the development of management and institutional capacity at the central, district
and, school and project levels in several critical areas. It will include two sub-components:

• Subcomponent 3(a): System management. This sub-component will support the Government’s initiatives to strengthen the planning, management, and monitoring capacity of the central administration, the deconcentrated agencies and the communities to implement system-wide primary and secondary education programs effectively and efficiently. More specifically, it will support capacity development for: (i) education sector planning and management; (ii) school planning and management; and (iii) Education Management Information System (EMIS) at all levels. Better school planning and management will entail strengthening of the COGES which will have an important role in managing school feeding programs and school grants and pedagogical projects. Sector planning will include support to more effective teacher deployment policies. As part of sector planning and EMIS support, the project will also help design a national learning assessment system, including the design and implementation learning assessments instruments as a monitoring tool for reading and math performance. The first year’s main activity will be a detailed analytical and design study, to be followed by a more comprehensive implementation program during the second year.

Subcomponent 3(b): Project management and coordination. This sub-component will support program coordination and monitoring and evaluation. It will aim at ensuring effective implementation of the proposed project through efficient coordination mechanisms, proper financial management and procurement practices, and effective monitoring and evaluation of project outcomes at the national and sub-national levels. Specifically, support will be given to the strategic committee in charge of the education sector plan, to the central level staff (in Finance, Procurement, Human Resources Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, Statistics), to the regional level staff and to the communities. This sub-component will notably train communities on procurement and M&E aspects for the implementation and supervision of school buildings.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01</td>
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<td>Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04</td>
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<td>Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50</td>
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<td>Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60</td>
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V. Tentative financing

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<td>EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund</td>
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</table>
VI. Contact point

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Title:  
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