

Report on awareness raising activity,
“All girls to school” in Koukoulounda,
commune of Ouaké,
Republic of Benin

In August 2022, our association received a request to build a new, friendly building for the Koukoulounda preschool. Attached to the request was a list of students: of the 110 children, only 35 girls were listed. We decided to first discover the reason for the low proportion of girls in the student body.

From August 7th to 20th, 2023, we sent three people, two men and one woman, to Koukoulounda to question the local people why they sent so few girls to preschool. The reasons given were:

1. Parents often lack the minimum amount of 25f = 0.04 euros to provide breakfast for their children. At home, the children eat the warmed-up maize porridge from the night before.
2. Since the parents are mostly farmers, they do not have the time to take their children to school and pick them up again.
3. Some mothers focus more on earning money and go to the market without having the time to look after the children, as they are the sole breadwinners of their children.
4. The lack of a canteen means that parents are not motivated to send their children to school.

Based on these findings, we decided to meet with opinion leaders of the village and discuss the problem that many mothers feel left alone with their children. This meeting took place on August 28, 2023 and was also attended by the mayor of the municipality of Ouaké.



The traditional and religious leaders promised to use their influence with the people of Koukoulounda. Together we reflected on a number of possible solutions to the problems:

1. It was suggested that safe motorcycle taxi drivers should be selected to take the children of parents who do not have time to school and pick them up again.
2. The systematic establishment and supervision of canteens in preschools should be promoted.
3. The construction of a wall around the preschool premises would make the children safer.
4. The employment of a lunchtime supervisor to look after the children during the lunch break would relieve the burden on parents and teachers.
5. Supporting the girls with school materials would motivate the parents to send their daughters to school.

The suggestions were all well-founded. We discussed what our association could contribute and what the community or parents should take care of.

During this time, our association was building the new building holding two classrooms, an office, a storage room and toilets for the Koukoulounda preschool. However, we did not have money to build a wall around the school. We asked the municipality to take care of this. We also asked the municipality to think about the canteen.

We asked the parents to provide crops for the canteen. The fathers were asked to arrange for supervision at lunchtime so that the children were well looked after. The route to school was also discussed. Many fathers agreed to take their children to school. The mothers formed groups to pick up the children together in the afternoon, thus relieving the mothers who did not have time. The day of the Kassua market was declared a school holiday so that the adults would have time for the market.

We decided to organize a big awareness-raising event on September 9, 2023. At this occasion the decisions of this meeting would be made known to the population and we would ask everyone to support these decisions.



On September 29, 2023, we surprised the children and parents of the preschool with our visit. We arrived with heavy bags. Word of our visit quickly spread and many parents and leaders came to greet us. We asked for the student list and began to read out the names of the girls. The first little lady came to us shyly. When we handed her the colorful school bag, her face beamed. Now the other girls could hardly wait to be called.



Towards the end of the school year, we made an unannounced visit to Koukoulounda to check the actual number of girls in the classrooms. We found 34 girls and 35 boys. To ensure that all girls continued to attend school, we distributed T-shirts with the words "ALL GIRLS TO SCHOOL" to all the children present.



