

**School is advantageous for
all:**

**Children, parents and the
community**

**The experience of
Foyer Don Bosco Bénin**

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The importance of education

« Every child we educate is a person we win » as said Victor Hugo.

Indeed, education enlightens every step taken towards a better life, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable.

School offers several advantages not only to those who receive education but also to their families and community, because school provides the tools to create a better personal development and to contribute to the development of others.

Advantages of education

- instruction
- development
- emancipation
- contributing to growth
- tolerance and respect
- maturity of mind
- improving chances of employment
- strengthening of life skills
- reduction of vulnerability of children and adults
- Protection of the environment, etc.

Legal instruments underpinning education

Art 28 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child: States recognize the right to education on the basis of equal opportunities

Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: Every child has the right to education (different paragraphs focus on the benefits of education and the commitments of the State)

Art 12 of Benin's constitution of 11 December 1990 : The State and public authorities guarantee the education of children and create favorable conditions for it

Art 12 of Benin's constitution of 11 December 1990 : The State provides for the education of youth in public schools. Primary education is compulsory. The State shall progressively provide free public education.

The Benin reality concerning education

As shown in the various texts, the child is highly valued in the Beninese society and education is a priority for many parents and authorities. This education aims to provide both the physical, intellectual and emotional needs of the child.



In spite of this, children in Benin are still an immediate source of income and are therefore considered producers, instead of people that need to be taken care of and receive proper education. Several reasons explain this state of affairs but can not justify it.

Causes for non-compliance to the right of the child

Economic causes: poverty, seeking easy money by trafficking networks, lack of income-generating activities for rural households

Demographic causes: high fertility (5,2%) leading to a strong annual growth (2,5%) of the population

Socio cultural causes: the resignation of the parents, polygamy, illiteracy, tradition involving children in labor at an early age, forced marriage especially for girls, limited access to quality education, deviation of the cultural practice to foster children to other families for education needs



Institutional causes: the lack of childcare structures, weak public institutions and weak appliance of existing laws.

Figures

For guidance,

- ❑ attendance rate in primary school for the period 2007-2011 is 65% for boys and 58% for girls
- ❑ More than 664 537 girls and boys in the age of 5-17 years, that is 34% of children in this age range, des enfants de cette tranche d'âge, are economically active in Benin, 31% of these underage workers are active in jobs that are classified as dangerous and to abolish
- ❑ Child trafficking concerns mainly girls (86%) and children outside the school system
- ❑ 7 children on 10 involved in trafficking never went to school
- ❑ 29% of child victims dropped out of school.

Answers to these problems

To help address this situation, since 1995, Foyer Don Bosco takes care of children and their education by offering basic social services to children, reintegration in school and monitoring.



However, these actions were not sufficient to address the problem. Hence a change in strategy: a holistic approach to the access to education of children, that involves several partners.

The holistic answer to the situation of the children

The answer is to intervene in the network. This network includes both state and non-state actors and communities.

Foyer Don Bosco participates in several meetings of:

- The National Commission on the Rights of the Child
- The National Monitoring and Coordination Unit for the Protection of the Child
- The National Committee for the Fight against Child Labour
- Technical committees on trafficking and exploitation, juvenile justice, violence and harmful practices, participation of children; Network for Protective Structures for children in difficult circumstances
- The communal unit for child protection, etc.



Foyer Don Bosco intervenes in society by:

actions on prevention and awareness through campaigns, radio broadcasts and a mobile outreach booth, focus groups, awareness campaigns for youth, leisure and sports activities for sensitisation and life skills education



Strengthening of the capacities of families

Since family is the basic cell for child development and education, Foyer Don Bosco works in collaboration with local actors and social workers to strengthen the capacity of families through:

- Material and financial support to families
- Training on responsible parenthood
- Family economics



Accompanying children

The children enjoy professional and school support, guidance to the discovery of life, etc..

For those excluded from formal education systems, Foyer Don Bosco offers an alternative education programme « Fast track Programme » that gives them the opportunity to learn to read and write. Through this program, the most diligent can obtain a certificate of primary schooling in only three years, instead of six.



Thank you