

# FRATERNITE NOTRE DAME

## 2017 ACTIVITY REPORT - NIGER, AFRICA

**For 21 years**, Fraternite Notre Dame has been working in Niger. Its establishment in this Sahelian country, was born from the impetus of His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, Superior of Fraternite Notre Dame, with the goal of improving the living conditions of this country's population ranking 187th out of 188, in other words, one before last in the 2017 HDI (*Human Development Index*).

In keeping with Nigerien legislation, Fraternite Notre Dame was approved as an NGO (*non-governmental organization*) on March 20, 1998 by decree 119/MI/SA/DAPJ from the Nigerien Interior Ministry.

**Since 2012**, Fraternite Notre Dame has been a founding member of the CONIDE (*Coalition of Nigerien NGOs for the Rights of Children*), in which it fills the position of secretary general for communication.

Known for the commitment of our Superior His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik in favor of Human Rights, in Niger, Fraternite Notre Dame is more specifically engaged in the defense of the rights of children; that is why it regularly takes part in various gatherings and meetings organized by our various partners:

- The Guardianship Ministry in charge of Promoting Women and Protecting Children;

- The Justice Ministry, and in particular the Office for the Judiciary Protection of Children, - and UNICEF.

**During the Year 2017**, Fraternite Notre Dame took part in various meetings of which the theme essentially centered on fighting against child marriage which remains a real curse for Nigerien children.



**On February 11th, 2017:** Fraternite Notre Dame took part in a CONIDE meeting on child marriage. It must be mentioned here that in Niger, 77% of 20-24 year-old women were married before the age of 18; Thus placing Niger among the six countries with the highest rates of premature marriages.

A real scourge, child marriages severely hinder the country's social and economical growth and impede the improvement of living conditions for both women and children.

Besides these factors, we must also speak of the psychological consequences of these marriages and their repercussions on the woman's health; here is a brief summary of those repercussions:

Premature marriage= premature, therefore high risk pregnancies= high maternal death rate, high infantile death rate= obstetric fistula with all the consequences that this brings about in the life of these young women.

A victim of obstetric fistula, the young woman finds herself rejected by her community and family as she is considered to be under a curse.

Numerous are the young women who find

took part in a debate organized by CONIDE on the education of young girls and the prevention of premature marriage. It was clearly demonstrated that still in our day in age, the schooling of young girls is a problem in Niger due to the fact that the withdrawal rate for girls is much higher than for boys.



themselves thus isolated in welcome centers or in hospitals with no support from their family or husband.

The main goal of that meeting was to designate and train young girls as leaders whose role will be to educate people about the negative consequences of premature marriage. Five young girls from Fraternite Notre Dame were chosen to be part of that group.

To that effect, a petition was initiated for the elimination of premature marriage by raising the minimum age of marriage for young women to 18.

**On March 12th, 2017:** Fraternite Notre Dame took part at a meeting on premature marriage. This meeting was lead by Cheick Moustapha who demonstrated the importance of a young girl's education for the future of family and society.

**On March 18th, 2017:** Fraternite Notre Dame

During this debate, it was recalled that in 2012, a bill focusing on the protection of young girls was rejected because of the influence of certain religious leaders. Nevertheless, it was recommended to make a plea so that this bill on the protection of young girls be adopted, and that a clause raising the minimum age for marriage to 18 be integrated.

**On June 16th, 2017:** on the occasion of the JEA (*African Youth Day*)

under the theme of: accelerating the protection of children, achieving autonomy for young girls, and equal opportunities before 2030 in Niger, Fraternite Notre Dame took part in a conference and debate on that theme.

**On October 1st, 2017:** Fraternite Notre Dame took part in the elaboration of a Civil Society Alternative Report which will be presented to the African Union's Committee of experts on children's rights. The goal of this report was to assess the state of children's rights: improvements, flaws and the State's initiatives; in other words, what has been achieved and what remains to be done.

**On October 4th, 2017:** Fraternite Notre Dame took part in the validation of the Alternative Report.

**On October 11th, 2017:** On the occasion of the International Day for Young Girls, Fraternite Notre Dame attended a CONIDE conference

which was attended by around 50 young girls. The goal of this conference and debate was to demonstrate the importance of education and to invite these young girls to fight against premature marriage.

**November 10th through 12th, 2017:** within the framework of the CONIDE, Fraternite Notre Dame took part in a workshop on the path to be taken concerning the texts protecting children.

**November 21st, 2017:** Participation in the opening ceremony of a week of mobilization to fight against domestic violence targeting women and girls, organized by the Ministry of Women's Promotion and Children's Protection.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Fraternite Notre Dame is a member of a sub-cluster on the protection of children, supervised by institutions of the United Nations such as OCHA, UNICEF, and WFP, in relation with the NGOs and State technical services.

Thus, we took part in the various meetings of the sub-cluster during the year 2017. These meetings were mainly centered on the cases of children who, with their family or on their own, fled the threat of Boko Haram and found refuge in the regions of Tillaberi, Niamey but also in the region of Diffa, in Eastern Niger.

It must be noted that for a few months now, not only are the populations of these regions bordering Mali, Nigeria and Chad, victim of the violent acts and raids perpetrated by radical groups, but these populations have also experienced an increase due to the numerous Malian and Nigerian refugees who have come to find refuge in Niger.

**During the year 2017,** Fraternite Notre Dame performed charitable and social activities which are worth mentioning.

Niger lives in an environment of worsening impoverishment due to sluggish economic conditions, where all indicators seem to stagnate. In keeping with the example of their Founder, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, the religious friars and nuns of Fraternite Notre Dame are willing to be at the service of all without distinction of race, class, gender, age, belief or religion.



For that reason, their activities at the service of the Nigerien population have the following goals:

- restoring hope, confidence, and dignity to all vulnerable human beings;
- welcoming all people in vulnerable situations in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect.

In this country which ranks one before last in the HDI index, the activities of Fraternite Notre Dame have the goal of fighting against poverty and improving the future of the most vulnerable, namely:

children and women who, as we know, are the first victims of prevailing poverty. Therefore, Fraternite Notre Dame's main fields of action are the following :



- 1- coming to the help of vulnerable children, protecting and promoting the rights of children.
- 2- Implementing quality education accessible to all.
- 3- Promoting quality local health care.

### **1- Helping vulnerable children; protecting and promoting Children's Rights**

**Since 1997**, within the framework of coming to the help of vulnerable children, Fraternite Notre Dame has been operating a center where are welcomed orphaned or abandoned children, as well as children in difficult family situations. These mainly include the newborn or babies which are premature, under-developed or in need of urgent and immediate care; whose mothers are either deceased, mentally ill, under age or rejected by their family.

**In 2017**, the number of children living at Fraternite Notre Dame's center was close to 45. Three newborn infants were welcomed, including two who had been abandoned in the street.

Apart from this internal care, Fraternite Notre Dame has set up an outpatient care system allowing children to benefit from Fraternite Notre Dame's support as regards health, food, clothing and education, all the while keeping them within their family. During the year 2017, approximately 165 children have benefited from food, clothing, health, education or psychological support.

**In Niger, Fraternite Notre Dame** works in close cooperation with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children, Justice for Minors and the Brigade for Minors. This leads Fraternite Notre Dame to manage cases which these authorities have referred to us. The most common cases are those of single under age mothers, rejected by their families. At the request of the above-listed authorities, these young girls are welcomed for some time, until they can be re-integrated in their families.

### **Among the 2017 cases, to name a few:**

- the case of Fati, a 16-year-old girl, mother of a 2-year-old child, she gave birth to a little girl who was not allowed in the family home. Sheltered for a few weeks by Fraternite Notre Dame, she was finally able to return home and found a job in a restaurant.
- The case of Khadidja, a young Togolese woman, married early under duress, whose husband refused the child.
- The case of Rachida, a young student girl who, under age, gave birth to a little boy. She had concealed her pregnancy and therefore could not return home.
- The case of Françoise, a young refugee from Central Africa and a single mother, who became HIV positive after being raped repeatedly in refugee camps.
- The case of Mariama, a HIV positive young

woman and single mother, abandoned to herself.

Overall, 20 young single mothers were able to benefit from the multi-faceted support of our institution, in order to be reintegrated in society.

## 2- Developing quality Education Accessible to All

Knowing that the development of a country depends on access to quality education for the greater majority, ever since 2002, Fraternite Notre Dame has been running a school complex called "Myriam de Nazareth", which has gradually welcomed students from Kindergarten through primary, secondary and high school grades.

The goal of this school complex is to allow access to quality education for all children in Niger. That is why the Myriam de Nazareth school welcomes many poor children who cannot afford to go to school.



In Niger, even though the percentage of children who attend full-time education is increasing, the expectation for quality education remains a crucial problem for families, teachers and for public officials. The school system faces numerous challenges, including:

- the numerous untimely strikes of teachers in public institutions and of students who are now spreading to private institutions in order to disrupt this sector.

- The low standards of certain teachers recruited at random.

- the excessive number of students in the classroom, which prevents students with difficulties from improving.

- A high number of students still dropping out of school, even though school attendance is on the rise.

Such factors lead to very poor education standards for the greater majority. There are a few quality school institutions, but these are reserved for a certain social elite that can afford it.

**His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie's** principle of offering quality education available to all, without any discrimination, was implemented in Niger by Fraternite Notre Dame.

One goal for the Myriam de Nazareth school, is to develop the intellectual, manual or artistic qualities of each child: so as to turn him or her into a wholly fulfilled citizen at the service of his/her community.

Special care is given to children with difficulties in order to help

them improve their performances and acquire a certain self trust. The school complex Myriam de Nazareth, also welcomes children with disabilities, namely: locomotive conditions, the mild mentally deficient, Down's syndrome, the hearing impaired, or those suffering from a genetically disabling illness. Welcoming such children with disabilities is consistent with the "inclusive education" promoted by the Ministry of National Education.

Here are some figures for students in attendance at the Myriam de Nazareth School for the 2017-2018 school year; numbers may

vary slightly, due to possible admissions or dismissals during the year:

- Kindergarten: about 115
- Primary: about 430
- Secondary: about 250
- High School: about 100



**Figure 1:  
Breakdown  
by Section.**

Number of girls, all grades combined: about 475



Number of boys, all grades combined: about 420



have a choice between a saturated and deficient public health service, or private institutions with expensive charges, thus not accessible to the "middle class" Nigerien; despite a few efforts made by the local authorities such as:

- free treatment for children under 5.
- Free Caesarean section.

**access to medical care** remains a luxury for a certain social class in Niger. Even the two efforts listed above are no longer applied and the sick have to buy the medicine.

Therefore, the outcome is:

- a high juvenile mortality rate
- a high infanto-juvenile mortality rate
- a high maternal mortality rate

**In 2001, Fraternite Notre Dame** opened a clinic which has evolved over the years into a humanitarian clinic; thus allowing the inhabitants of the Banifandou II area, where Fraternite Notre Dame's NGO is located, but also people from the surroundings to benefit from the following:

- access to quality health treatment, regardless their social status;
- medical treatment with respect for people's human dignity.

**Fraternite Notre Dame's clinic offers the following benefits:**

- general medicine;
- specialized medicine in: gynecology, pediatrics & audiometry;



**Figure 2:  
Breakdown  
by Gender.**

**Number of girls by section:**

- Kindergarten: about 60
- Primary: about 220
- Secondary: about 140
- High School: about 60



**Figure 3:  
Breakdown  
of Girls  
by Section.**

### 3- Promoting Quality Local Health Care:

For the majority of the Nigerien population, access to health care or health treatment remains a challenge to this day. Nigeriens

- minor surgery, and
- obstetrical treatments & ultrasound scans.

**Since 2015**, hearing-impaired students from the deaf school of Niamey, underprivileged students for the most part, can now get a hearing test and receive a free electronic or analog hearing aid, depending on their case.

**In 2017**, about 35 children were able to benefit from this type of donation from our institution.

In the same way, poor patients, lepers, refugees and orphaned children receive free treatment.

With its benefits available to all, Fraternite Notre Dame has proven that it is possible to set up local, quality health care. This is proven by the fact that people from very remote areas or villages come to benefit from treatments at the Fraternite Notre Dame clinic.

This initiative has restored hope for many underprivileged and/or sick persons from the capital city's outskirts, in this country where access to quality health care is still an issue for the low-income population.

#### 4- Additional Humanitarian Activities of Fraternite Notre Dame:



Besides the activities listed above, Fraternite Notre Dame provides occasional relief in food supplies, treatment and clothing to isolated and poor populations. These include the lepers who live in an outlying Niamey district.

New cases are screened every year, including in the younger population. About 70 households benefit from this support, that is to say, indirectly, approximately 350 people.

Similar support is provided to widows and abandoned women who under some particular circumstances, became the head of their family.

**During the year 2017**, 47.56% of the sick who attended the facility received free treatment and the number of patients who attended Fraternite Notre Dame's clinic in 2017 totals about 15,600 distributed as follows:

- Infant Consultations: about 5,600
- General medicine: about 5,400
- Specialized medicine: about 3,650
- Prenatal consultations: about 950



On the occasion of the feast of Ramadan, 2 tons of millet, 1 ton of rice, as well as oil and sugar were distributed to about 100 vulnerable families.



**Figure 4:**  
**Breakdown of Consultations.**

For the past feast of Tabaski, around 350 people enjoyed meat donations through our institution.

In the same way, people referred to us by the Parishes of Niamey, for the most part economic refugees, also benefit from our multifaceted assistance.

That is a brief outline of what Fraternite Notre Dame has accomplished in Niger.

As we conclude this report, we want to reiterate our most sincere gratitude to His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik Founder of Fraternite Notre Dame, for his support, his advice and his example at the service of the most destitute in the world and more especially in Niger.

We also want to thank our partners and the guardianship institutions, the United Nations Agencies and the non-governmental-organization members of the CONIDE, for their partnership and collaboration.



**Fraternite Notre Dame**  
502 N Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60644-1501 - USA  
2290 First Ave, New York, NY 10035-1713 - USA

Tel. (1) 815-923-4350 - [info@FraterniteNotreDame.org](mailto:info@FraterniteNotreDame.org) - Fax. (1) 815-923-4519