

## Functional Literacy, Training and Contribution of Women in Ndjamena to Local Development

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### ABSTRACT

This article proposes to study functional literacy and the training of women as a source of local development. The observation in the city of Ndjamena shows that the majority of women received their training in the fields of sewing, ICT (computers), culinary and capillary arts and in the field of embroidery. Admittedly, these women have received this training, but much remains to be done in the area of literacy. From this observation, the problem of functional literacy and training for women arises. How is the literacy and training of women taking place in the city of Ndjamena? Through this study, it is a question of showing that the literacy and training of women constitute a lever for the development of this city because this training contributes to their empowerment. For the realization of this work we consulted the oral, written, electronic sources and a participative observation. We adopted an empirical deductive approach to analyze and understand the contribution of women in local development in the city of Ndjamena, and the summoning of socio-constructivist theory led to the results that functional literacy enabled these women to train in areas such as sewing, computers, culinary arts and hairdressing. Despite the fact that they have undergone training, we can identify constraints related to their training.

**Keywords:** literacy, women, training, empowerment, local development, Ndjamena

### INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the issue of functional literacy and training of women in the city of Ndjamena. Indeed, according to Reme (2008), literacy is a main component of Adult Basic Education (ABE). It is a means that allows those who have passed school age to learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. As a result, it is from traditional and digital literacy that functional literacy derives. This plays a vital role in development.

The proportion of illiterate adults in African countries south of the Sahara in 2008 was estimated at 38%. While this proportion declined from 47% to 38% between 1985 and 2008, the number of illiterate people actually increased during this period, through population growth. Worldwide, 167.2 million could neither read nor write in 2008, compared to 133.8 million in the mid-1980s. This situation is no more satisfactory among young people aged 30 to 50. Their illiteracy rate has certainly fallen from 35% to 29% between 1985 and 2008, but the number of young illiterates has, in fact, increased by 10.2 million. In Africa, the vast majority of African countries spend less than 1% of national education budgets on functional literacy.

A country marked by the resurgence of socio-political instabilities, Chad has experienced a growing rate of illiteracy. According to a study carried out by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2008 the proportion of illiterate adults in these countries was estimated at 38%. While this proportion declined between 1985 and 2008, dropping from 47% to 38%, the number of illiterate individuals actually increased during this period. There were 167.2 million who could neither read nor write in 2008, compared to 133.8 million in the mid-1980s.

Compared to ISU statistics, the estimate of the frequency of illiteracy among people aged 15 to 49 measured on the basis of household surveys is 49.5%, hence the question about the

average of 12 percentage points. Moreover, the studies carried out by Chad under the coordination of UNESCO (2015), the literacy rate in Chad is 34%. More recently, the UNDP (2018) indicates that the national literacy rate is 32% for women and 48% for men. In addition to this rate, which is below the average, it turns out that neo-literates do not demonstrate the skills acquired in terms of reading, writing, arithmetic, local development initiative and change of attitude.

In Chad, although efforts have been made to improve the quality of functional literacy through literacy for women, particularly following the efforts made by the government, through the implementation and realization of literacy, the results are slow to follow and raise the low quality of functional literacy in Chad. The conception of the values transmitted by functional literacy are not those expected.

To breathe new life into the education system in Chad, the country has taken action and initiated innovative actions. In this case, it is important to note Decree No. 0621 / PCMT / PMT / MENPC / 2021 on the organization and functioning of the Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion. In its Paragraph 1, the Directorate of Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages (DAPLAN) is responsible for the organization, animation, monitoring and control of the implementation of the Government's policy in terms of literacy for the Promotion of National Languages.

In addition, the State, in agreement with the technical, financial and private partners, adopted the "faire-faire" strategy in 2000. Indeed, it is an innovative strategy which highlights the synergy between three actors, namely the State, the Funding Agency and the operators closest to the communities for the execution of literacy programs. Also, the budget allocated to the literacy sector in Chad, although it did not follow the same evolution as that of National Education, experienced a slight increase of 1.52% in 2003 and 1.77% in 2012.

From this observation, the problem of the fight against illiteracy and for the training of women in the city of Ndjamena arises today. That said, what are the mechanisms and strategies put in place for functional literacy and training of women in the city of Ndjamena? In other words, it is for us in this work, to give the mechanisms put in place to fight against illiteracy in the city of Ndjamena. Based on an empirical-deductive approach, this study used oral, written, electronic sources and participatory observation. To analyze this empirical data collected in the field, we used content analysis by theme. Through this approach, we were able to understand that traditional literacy and digital literacy have contributed to functional literacy, even if women still face certain constraints. These data allowed us to structure the work in three parts. First, we talk about literacy as a constraint in women's lives, then we are going to approach functional literacy and the training of women in their opportunities and constraints, finally we are going to identify their contribution to development before to propose the necessary perspectives for a better literacy of women.

### **LITERACY FOR WOMEN: A CONSTRAINT FOR LIFE**

In most of our African societies, there are communities that have not been touched by schooling. Ways and means must be found not only to educate them, but to provide a prerequisite for some Income Generating Activities (IGA). Speaking of literacy in this work, the woman is this social stratum that interests us because if she has received classical and digital literacy, she is a guarantee of development.

#### **Classical or Traditional Literacy**

Traditional literacy is learning to read, write and calculate in any language. Indeed, this literacy appeared in the first International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA I) in Elsinore. Its objective is the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic in a language in order to allow neo-illiterates to access the printed communication of this language. The methods

resemble those of the formal system, the themes are general, and the programs are common and unique to illiterate groups. In short, it is learning to “read for the sake of reading”.

Access to education is a fundamental right which strengthens the individual freedom of women and helps them to combat the discrimination of which they are victims. Indeed, making these young women literate can develop their talents and skills, build or strengthen their economic independence.

According to a study conducted by the NGO Care International, the literacy of women and young women remains a global challenge. Indeed, in the report of this study, more than 500 million women are illiterate. Yet education is one of the most powerful tools not only for changing the world; but also and above all to combat poverty.

Today, in the world if we realize that illiteracy has affected women more than men, this is due to several reasons such as poverty, discrimination, non-schooling and under-schooling as well as marriages early. Especially within the family already, girls have to take on a large part of the housework, they devote 40% more time to it than boys. It is linked to their social status: in many parts of the world, the norm considers that only men should benefit from an education, because they are the ones who support the family. Especially since with early marriages, the girl leaves her family for that of her husband. And poverty is also a crucial element: if they are poor, parents will not have the means to spend on girls' education.

Worldwide, women are the first to be affected by discrimination and illiteracy. So to speak, according to Care, two-thirds of the world's 758 million illiterate people are women. 76 million of these women are under 25. Unfortunately, there are few programs for illiterate young women aged 15 to 24, those who have left the system.

In Chad, specifically in the city of Ndjamen, the study area, more than 40% of women are illiterate. These are the great overlooked educational actions. Literacy is therefore an essential factor in defending the equality and rights of women. It allows them to make their contribution to the local development process. Learning to read and write the official language of a country when you speak a dialect is also the possibility of knowing your rights and defending them. Education is therefore the first step in the fight against poverty as well as against social inequalities. In short, it must be understood that the education of women is also an asset for their family: a child, whose mother can read, has a 50% greater chance of surviving after the age of five. Literacy changes lives and saves millions.

In the end, it is an entire community that benefits: per capita income could increase by 23% over the next 40 years in countries where all children go to school and where women have the same access to education than men.

### **Digital Literacy**

Considered as a new literacy, digital literacy can be subdivided into several sub-literacies. However, one of these compositions perceives digital culture as a part that includes computer culture, network culture, information culture and social media.

As a tool for technological and scientific development, Information and Communication Technologies have transformed the world of knowledge by offering new opportunities in the process of training people to access and understand new forms communication technology Digital technology thus aims to modify human and social activities by promoting simpler and faster communication for the performance of activities in the various sectors. We must also seek to fight against female illiteracy through digital technology.

With regard to illiteracy, women represent a large part of the population. If they are digitally literate, they can play an important role in the process of transforming society in general, by participating in the socio-economic development of the city of Ndjamen in particular. Today, these women use digital technology to facilitate the way they communicate, produce, organize and take charge of themselves. As a result, digital literacy influences their

daily lives by transforming their way of life. This is how they become aware and act in another type of literacy which is conscientizing literacy.

Digital literacy is the process of training an individual to access and understand the content and symbolic forms through which knowledge and culture are transmitted. Indeed, it aims to master the tools and codes that allow the individual to express themselves and communicate socially. This literacy in digital culture aims to learn how to manage software and to develop cognitive skills or abilities relating to the understanding and processing of information, for communication and digital social interaction. To these training areas we must add the development of attitudes and values that give meaning and moral, ideological and political significance to the actions developed with technology.

The report titled Digital Literacy and Information Skills emphasizes that access to technology is not a phenomenon of privileged minorities as in 2011 a total of two billion people had access to the Internet. Although the object of study that is the digital literacy of women is recent, we can appreciate the great interest it arouses in the field of research in Chad, especially in Ndjamena. This is how women by accessing digital literacy become aware and act in another type of literacy which is conscientizing literacy.

Conscientious literacy, on the other hand, is the sum of different types of literacy. In 1961, the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire conceived this form of literacy, the objective of which was the struggle for the liberation of oppressed and exploited illiterate strata. This method is based on the socio-economic system of the environment to which it must apply because it allows the target groups to become aware of their living conditions as exploited masses. This literacy is considered as a weapon of liberation in order to allow them to move towards another form of literacy which is called functional.

### **Functional Literacy: From Training to Boosting the Local Development Process**

Functional literacy is literacy which, after having read, written and calculated, directs us towards an income-generating activity for our own development and that of the community. According to the French pedagogue Gaston Mialaret "it is a selective literacy campaign in relation to economic development". Born in 1965 at the Congress of Ministries of Education in Tehran, functional literacy was given at least two objectives. The first objective is that of functional literacy inked by an Income Generating Activity (IGA) and the second objective is the communication of knowledge that suggests a new behavior so that the literate can act on himself.

In this logic, the themes selected are special according to the concerns of the learners. According to the UNESCO definition in the guide for the African, it is a question of making functional the ability to read, write and calculate in a given language, a very specific and immediate utility in the life of all days to make it relevant. Functional literacy appears as a selective and intense method whose goal is to provide improved work tools to producers. Generally, the actions of functional literacy are addressed to specific groups and not to the masses. This is how, in the context of development projects, we have functional literacy for the women concerned.

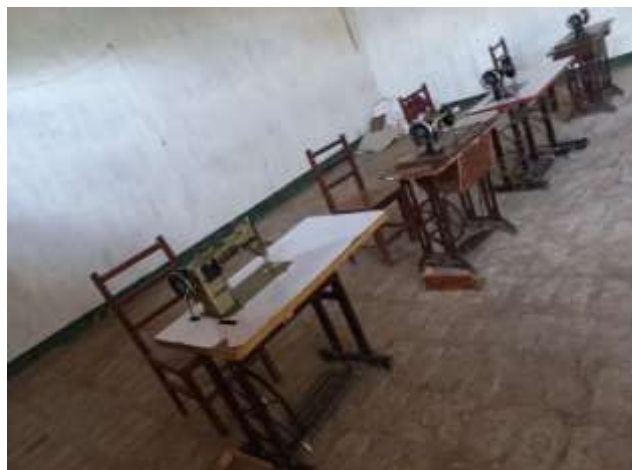
In Chad, several development programs support the latter by creating income-generating activities for them in order to empower them. Obviously, these programs are carried out in the form of training in various fields of activity allowing women in the city of N'Djamena/Chad to acquire skills of their choice. By creating income-generating activities, functional literacy empowers women in several areas. This also corroborates one of the SDG4 strategies consisting in empowering women through the practice of income-generating activities. In this sense Pradhan indicates that the concept of women's empowerment "describes women making independent choices, enabling them to emerge from a subordinate position and to claim their

share of the benefits of development interventions as their right , rather than being passive recipients of welfare distributions”.

In concrete terms, it is worth noting the girls' education and women's literacy project (PEPAF) and the project to strengthen education and literacy in Chad (PREAT), which not only aim for equality and equity of access to education for girls, but also functional literacy for women with the aim of improving their living conditions. For this, the areas of training for women in N'Djamena are, among others: sewing, computers, culinary and capillary arts.

### ***Sewing training***

Sewing is a contemporary art that allows the assembly of several fabrics using sewing thread from a needle or using a sewing machine. Thus, to learn to sew, learners must go through two phases. The first phase of learning is the beginner one which allows learners to take stock of the said activity. These steps include: - Identify and use sewing devices properly, name the main parts of a sewing machine and an overlocker and explain what they are used for; - Know how to thread the thread correctly and know the basic sewing techniques; - Identify, use and maintain ironing equipment; - Distinguish between pressing and ironing; - Explain the importance of pressing in sewing; - Identify the various pressing devices; - Know how to correctly apply pressing techniques using pressing equipment; - Identify, use and maintain cutting tools and sewing accessories; - Know how to apply cutting techniques using various tools; - Knowing how to use sewing accessories properly; - Identify and define the terminology attached to the weft of the fabric; - Know how to classify fibres, especially natural fibers and synthetic fibres; - Distinguish between woven, non-woven and knitted fabrics. After all these elements, the learner can move on to the next step. The second phase of sewing training is Pre-Learning. Indeed, this phase is aimed at learners who have acquired certain basic notions mentioned above in order to be able to take their destiny into their own hands. In addition, several aspects caught our attention. It is : - Hand stitches; - Assemblies and realizations; - Study of textiles; - Cast ; - Patronage; - Manufacturing; - Skirt ; - Pants ; - Bodice; - Jacket ; - Dress ; - Inlays; - Finishes. To do this, you must first have a training center equipped with the necessary materials that can accommodate these women. The photo below illustrates a sewing training center in this city of N'Djamena.



**Photo 1: Sewing machines for learners**

*Cliché: Hamidé Abras Rahma, Ndjamen, May 2023*

In this image, we see the sewing machines for sewing training. There are 4 machines in the room to accommodate more than 20 learners. With regard to sewing, the project organizations have created training centers equipped with sewing and embroidery machines. They also trained and provided material support to women in this area. But then there is the



problem of the availability of equipment for the formation of these. It should be remembered that to take sewing training, you have to go to a sewing center and learn the two steps described above. These are complementary. There is a time required to be a practitioner in the field. In addition to training in sewing, the women of N'Djamena were able to qualify in other fields of activity.

### ***Culinary art***

Culinary art is a difficult activity to approach and define. It brings together in artistic form, the principles applied to cooking. The choice of food and the selection of all the ingredients define the art of cooking. Cooking is thus considered as a science or a body of knowledge that an individual possesses or can acquire through study, reflection or experience of the rules and techniques specific to an activity. It is for these reasons that, until the 19th century, cooking was recognized as an art, that is to say a knowledge reduced to practice, a skill and a method of doing something well. In a practical way, it is for learners to learn to prepare food and to learn more about food safety according to a well-defined program, to cook, to prepare in branded restaurants. This allows these learners to take charge of themselves.

The training of these women in the field of culinary art allows them to be specialists in the field to work beyond their locality. Indeed, the culinary art can bring together and identify different nations. There is no doubt that food and the way different ingredients are combined and cooked greatly contribute to the cultural identity of a country. Catherine Palmer has shown how culinary practices participate in peacefully raising the flag of the nation, functioning as a kind of "ordinary nationalism", in the words of Michael Billig, an everyday nationalism that no one notices.

Women have received training in sewing and culinary arts to contribute to local development. These trainings have enabled them to integrate into working life through income-generating activities. To this end, the participation of women in economic activities not only allows them to meet their basic needs, but also gives them the opportunity to take charge of themselves and to take on certain family responsibilities and to create their economic capital. Apart from these two activities, we have the manipulation of the computer tool which is essential for the training of these women.

### ***Computer training***

Computing is an activity related to technology and science. As an information processing theory, it is a real knowledge carrier that implements several programs through certain media and software. Nowadays, it is a booming sector of activity given its importance in the professional life of communities in general and women in particular. It has several impacts on all modern societies.

Computer training requires several parameters, including the availability of machines and the availability of qualified personnel. Indeed, for computer training you need a multi-media room capable of accommodating even five to ten learners. The head of the center develops a follow-up training program for these women learners. By way of example, the computer center of Markas al Nour in Ndjama is one of the most recognized in terms of training in this field.

This center has trained several women who are now able to handle computer devices allowing them to carry out income-generating activities. Computer training centers have a program with several objectives. Indeed, we have on the one hand the general objectives and on the other hand the specific objectives.

These general objectives aim to give students the tools to understand and master computer science, to also allow the student to use computer science as a support for studies and actuarial sciences. From these general objectives derive the specific objectives that will allow learners to know the foundations of computer science; to master the basic concepts of computing and the computer; to know and become familiar with the T environment (hardware and software). In short, it was a question in this part of talking about the training of women and

their contribution to development in the city of Ndjamena. According to empirical data, after literacy, women embark on training in sewing, culinary arts and the manipulation of New Information and Communication Technologies (NTIC). At the end of the training, these women can practice in IGAs to enable them to finance themselves in other activities such as entrepreneurship. They have this desire to do sewing, IT and even the culinary arts, these women encounter several difficulties.

### CONSTRAINTS

Several constraints can be observed during the training and literacy of women in the city of Ndjamena. These constraints are material, human, that is to say the absence of qualified personnel for training, but also and above all these constraints are temporal.

#### Inadequate Materials

The lack of materials is the main obstacle that hinders the proper functioning of training centers and does not allow the achievement of the objectives initially set by promoters and trainers. Indeed, there are several training centers in sewing, culinary arts and even computer science. In most training centers, there is a lack of training materials which hinders their operation. In the field of sewing, there is a training center which trains women in sewing and embroidery. Certainly these women are regular in training, but there is a real lack of sewing machines and sewing tools. For example, in the sewing training center at "Diguel Couture" located in the Diguel center district, there are two embroidery machines and four sewing machines. Per quarter, this center receives more than 30 women, but the real problem is the lack of equipment. Since those present want to participate in the practical session and this lasts only 4 hours of time per day.

Since it is impossible for each person to do the practice on the same day, the trainers are forced to divide the learners into two or four groups. But with a very high amount for the cost of training. Not only does this not allow them to properly acquire the training, but also and above all some women find it better to find elsewhere, even a center far from their locality. It is in this sense that Fatime Yacoub affirms:

*In 2019, I enrolled in the "Diguel Couture" training center, at first it was good, but with the number of other women who came, I realized that I leave 3 times to pedal only once. one time. The problem is that there are not enough machines in this training center. I finished my 6 months of successive training so 2 quarters; I only learned cutting, in the standards I was supposed to learn both, even embroidery too. So if there is a possibility, the center should find a large room and machines to continue training women there.*

In addition to this lack of equipment which affects the field of sewing, we note a real challenge to overcome, in particular the lack of computer equipment. Indeed, in the field of New Information and Communication Technology (NICT), there are computer learning centers, but there is concern about the availability of machines, the cost of the Internet and also the poor quality of the network. For example, in the "Alpha de Diguel" center, there are a good number of learners, but there is a shortage of machines, because this center really only has five computers for several learners.

Those who have had to train in this center know better. In order not to remain on the same shortcomings, we must not lose sight of the fact that the catering sector suffers from them. Indeed, there are several training centers in the culinary arts, but unfortunately this sector has its limits. There are people who want to specialize in the field of pastry, but to their surprise the companies are only involved in manufacturing and not in training. Here, it is much more the practical aspect that is valued than the aspect of the composition to achieve the realization of the bread or the cake. For example, in the Pain-doré pastry shop, in June 2019, around twenty women learned how to make chocolate cakes, butter cakes and also how to make galettes.

These women have certainly learned to make the cakes but they face a problem of employment after their training.

It should be remembered in the context of this work, that there is a lack of materials, qualified human resources and above all energy in the field of training in the culinary arts, in the field of sewing and in the sector New Information and Communication Technology (NTIC). The lack of materials in these training centers does not allow these women to specialize well in the chosen fields. If the necessary materials are already available, can we hope to have the personnel capable of training these women?

### **Absence of Qualified Personnel for Training**

If previously we mentioned the problem of insufficient material for learning sewing, computer science and the culinary arts, we must not forget that even if these necessary materials exist, there is the problem of qualification of personnel for training. Indeed, rare are the people who start or who have started in these fields. Most trainers are volunteers. For example, an unqualified person can never pass from one training to another, especially even to illiterate layers.

After addressing the aspect of traditional and digital literacy, the thorny issue of functional literacy was raised by Hassan Djimé, because it is not enough to say that women must be trained in different fields, but think of a competent human resource. By way of illustration, in the context of IT, even if these women have tablets, computers and many other materials capable of helping them, if there is not a competent trainer, they will not be able to meeting training expectations. In addition to this problem of lack of qualified personnel to train women, there is another problem which is of a temporal nature.

During training, time constraints are clearly visible. Indeed, for the majority of the women we met, they want to do the training but the time they spend in these centers is insufficient compared to their expectations. Sometimes they go to a training center, because of the size of the group, they don't even do the 2 hours a day.

In summary, it was a question in this part of addressing the constraints related to the training of women in the city of Ndjamen. According to data collected in the field, women learners face difficulties including the lack of training materials such as sewing machines, computers and many others. Moreover, one can note the lack of qualified personnel which is illustrated in the majority of the training centers. This pushes us to be more interested in how to overcome this problem.

### **CONCLUSION**

At the end of this work, it is a question for us of talking about the problem of functional literacy and the training of women in the city of Ndjamen. According to the empirical data collected in the field and a participatory observation in the city of Ndjamen, we realized that there are two forms of literacy. Classical or traditional literacy, which consists of learning to read, write and calculate in any language. In short, it is learning to read for the sake of reading. As for the so-called digital one, it makes it possible to accelerate the process of development and thanks to this literacy, man can have a critical mind and be able to learn more in activities such as sewing, culinary art and computer science.

The mobilization of these different forms of literacy and training contributes to local development. The training received enables these women to develop their personal economic and social skills. With new skills, they manage to flourish in everyday life. Despite their emancipatory dynamics, women are still faced with certain constraints that hinder the effectiveness of their training and their economic empowerment.



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APPENDIX

List of interviewees

N°	Name	Social status	Age	Gender	Place of interview
1	Abakar Mahamat Abakar	SCO member	52 years	M	N'Djamena, 10 December 2022
2	Fatime Yacoub	Animator	32 years	F	N'Djamena, 15 December 2022
3	Hassan Djimé	Manager of a training center	38 years	M	N'Djamena, 13 March 2023
4	Issa Golo Damgoto	Teacher	57 years	M	N'Djamena, le 11 December 2022
5	Moussa Mahamat	Teacher	49 years	M	N'Djamena, 16 December 2022
6	Oumar Abdguim	Animator	38 years	M	N'Djamena, 13 March 2023