

# CAMPAIGN FOR ACCESSIBLE PARKS IN NIGER

The creation of parks that are accessible for people with different backgrounds can contribute to the achievement of several SDGs.

Keywords:  
Public Space, Walking, Health, Culture, Policy

Project Partner:  
Peaceful Roads

Location: Niamey, Niger

Duration: 02/2016 - ongoing

## Target Issue and Target Group

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948). Parks are important areas for physical activity and relaxation, which reduces stress, mental disorders, and health inequities as well as air pollution. Parks also increase social cohesion. They provide space for interaction between people of different backgrounds, which allows neighbors to form relationships with people they might not otherwise meet.

However, in Niger, unlike some countries where parks abound, the political authorities are not interested in this issue. This explains why the capital of Niger has only two operational parks in 2016 and the other cities of the country have not even one park. Thus we decided to conduct a study on the availability and quality of parks in order to implement a political and social mobilization campaign for the creation of accessible parks in Niger.

The project targeted visitors and neighbors of parks, the municipal officials and the officials of the Ministry of Arts and Recreation. More than 400 people were reached as part of this project.



*Despite parks being neglected by government and poorly designed they show high user pressure from various groups.*


## Strategies Employed within Project


The main strategy consisted in the conducting of an original study to assess the situation and gain attention to the issue. We aimed to produce knowledge that could then be used to convince the political authorities, including relevant ministers and mayors, to create parks in all the cities of the country. Also, we wanted to use the report to mobilize the financial and technical partners of Niger to



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support the municipalities in the creation of parks throughout the country.

## Main Activities

The main activities implemented were:

- a policy review identifying parks policies;
- a park mapping and quality study to identify existing parks and their quality;
- a perception survey among park users and non-users.

Those involved consisted of the relevant ministries, the mayors of Niamey and their colleagues, the civil servants of the relevant ministries, the experts of HealthBridge and the officials of Peaceful Roads.

## Preliminary Results

Preliminary results of the study reveal the following reasons that citizens give for not visiting the parks: (i) visiting parks is not part of their habits, (ii) the bad landscaping of the parks characterized by lack of space to walk or play, (iii) the lack of shelter and (iv) the poor conditions of parks facilities.

These initial results suggest that if an awareness campaign on the benefits of visiting parks is conducted and if the landscaping of the parks are improved, the citizens of Niamey will visit the parks.

It is important to note that the managers of the parks were pleased that a study is being conducted on their spaces. They remarked that research is the first step in changing the situation.



*The local parks are important spaces for children to play, be physically active and find opportunities for social interaction.*

### Take-away Messages from the Project:

- Research on public spaces needs to give opportunities to a number of stakeholders to express their opinion.
- Depending on the context of the individual country, it can be useful to have women carry out the survey, as some participants will be more receptive to being approached by a woman than by a man.

### Contact Person:

Ibrahim Maiga Djibo, Peaceful Roads  
ibrahim\_maigature7@yahoo.fr