

The National Scale-Up And Pilot Experience Of School Activity Clubs In Twenty School Establishments In The Republic Of Congo

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Abstract- Among the civil society organizations working in the field of education in the Republic of Congo is the national branch of the forum of African women educators, fawe -Congo in acronym, the school clubs " tosolola " in Lingala it is to say "let's express ourselves" in French and listening cells are installed today by fawe-congo in twenty general and technical education establishments across three departments of the Republic of Congo (Pointe-Noire, Brazzaville and Ewo in the basin-west department). The united nations children's fund (UNICEF) which supports its partner, fawe - Congo within the framework of a vast project to set up school clubs in collaboration with the ministry of Prescolary, primary, secondary and of Literacy (MEPPSA) carried out a programmatic monitoring mission in the clubs of Brazzaville, for the year 2017-2018, this mission aimed to verify in the field the functioning of the said structures, the activities carried out, the lessons learned, the synergy between the clubs, then to examine the sustainability of these clubs with a view to scaling up at the national level. The conferences, debates and talks organized by these school clubs in the target secondary schools have contributed to improving the school retention of girls because the retention rate for girls in these schools has increased from 78.75% in 2016 to 82.85% in 2017, i.e. an improvement of 4.10 percentage points. The present practical guide is the result of this joint UNICEF-FAWE-Congo mission, as it fills the gap in the absence of an essential framework document for the functioning of the clubs. Intended for those in charge of clubs and cells listening to their members, for administrators of the education system, it will certainly make it possible to substantially improve the field work of these clubs.

Index Terms- restructuring, scaling up, pilot experience, school animation club

I. INTRODUCTION

The environment in which the pupils evolve must favor their dignity, their development and their learning. However, for the past ten years, the school has been plagued by several behaviors that are incompatible with social ethics. The consequences of these deviant behaviors are reflected, among

other things, in school violence, whatever the level of the education system, the scale of which is increasing day by day. Indeed, the results of the study on gender-based and violence on line violence in schools in the Republic of Congo carried out in 2019 show that 73.4% of students are victims of verbal and / or psychological violence, 37, 4% of students are victims of physical violence, 33% are victims of economic violence, 31.1% are victims of sexual violence and 12.4% of students are victims of online violence.

Combating all forms of violence in the school environment is a major challenge for the entire educational community, if we want to create an educational environment that is safe and conducive to the acquisition of knowledge, both for girls and boys in this context and given its presence in all the departments of the country, the african forum of educators (fawe) proposes to carry out interventions in accordance with **the objective4** " ensure the good academic performance of girls with learning difficulties" and **the objective 5** "fostering change in communities and general and technical education establishments" of its 2022 action plan, to help meet this challenge.

The objective of this proposal is to create, in the target schools, an environment conducive to the development of academic achievements in the prevention and fight against violence in the school environment. The specific objectives are :

- create school clubs and listening cells in target schools;
- strengthen the capacities of members of school clubs in the fight against school violence.

II. CONTEXT

Making the school a safe, clean environment free from all forms of violence is a major challenge for the Congo because it helps to improve the quality of the student's academic performance and can only be possible if the student involves effectively and becomes an actor in the management of his school. This involvement can be done through student participation structures, in particular school clubs dedicated to the prevention of school violence, the promotion of learning, reading, hygiene and sanitation, and sports and theatre .

In this context, the country has already had the experience of setting up youth participation structures. These are the government of children in certain primary schools in the Pool department, hygiene and environment clubs (in collaboration with the Association des scouts et guides du Congo) and youth clubs in the Likouala department (in collaboration with Terre sans frontières). However, due to a lack of institutional anchoring, these initiatives were not sustainable and, consequently, none of these structures is functional today.

With the support of UNICEF, 20 school clubs have been created in public secondary schools in Brazzaville (department of Brazzaville), Pointe-Noire (department of Pointe-Noire) and Ewo (department of Cuvette-Ouest), in collaboration with the African Forum for Women Educators (FAWE) Congo and the Ministry of Prescolary, Primary, Secondary Education and Literacy (MEPPSA). The missions to analyze the functioning of these school clubs, carried out by UNICEF in 2018 and 2019 in the schools where the school clubs have been established, generally highlight the following weaknesses:

- Absence of a normative document (framework document) which governs the operation of school clubs and listening cells;
- Absence of activity programs with timetables developed and validated by school clubs;
- Weakness in the drafting of activity reports and minutes of meetings by school clubs;
- Weakness in the animation and supervision of school clubs by the executive offices of school clubs;
- Absence of badges to distinguish members of school clubs from other students;
- Operation of school clubs only because there is support from UNICEF.

These school clubs will also risk disappearing in turn like the other youth participation structures mentioned above if a strategy to overcome these weaknesses and ensure their institutional anchoring is not developed.

Restructure these school clubs by transforming them into "*platforms*" used by students for exchanges, learning, hygiene and sanitation and give them institutional anchoring so that they become permanent structures placed directly under the coordination of the head of the school and that they participate effectively in (i) the fight against school violence, (ii) the improvement of learning, (iii) menstrual hygiene, (iv) comprehensive education at sexuality and, (v) the cleanliness of the school environment by making the school more attractive is the approach that will be adopted.

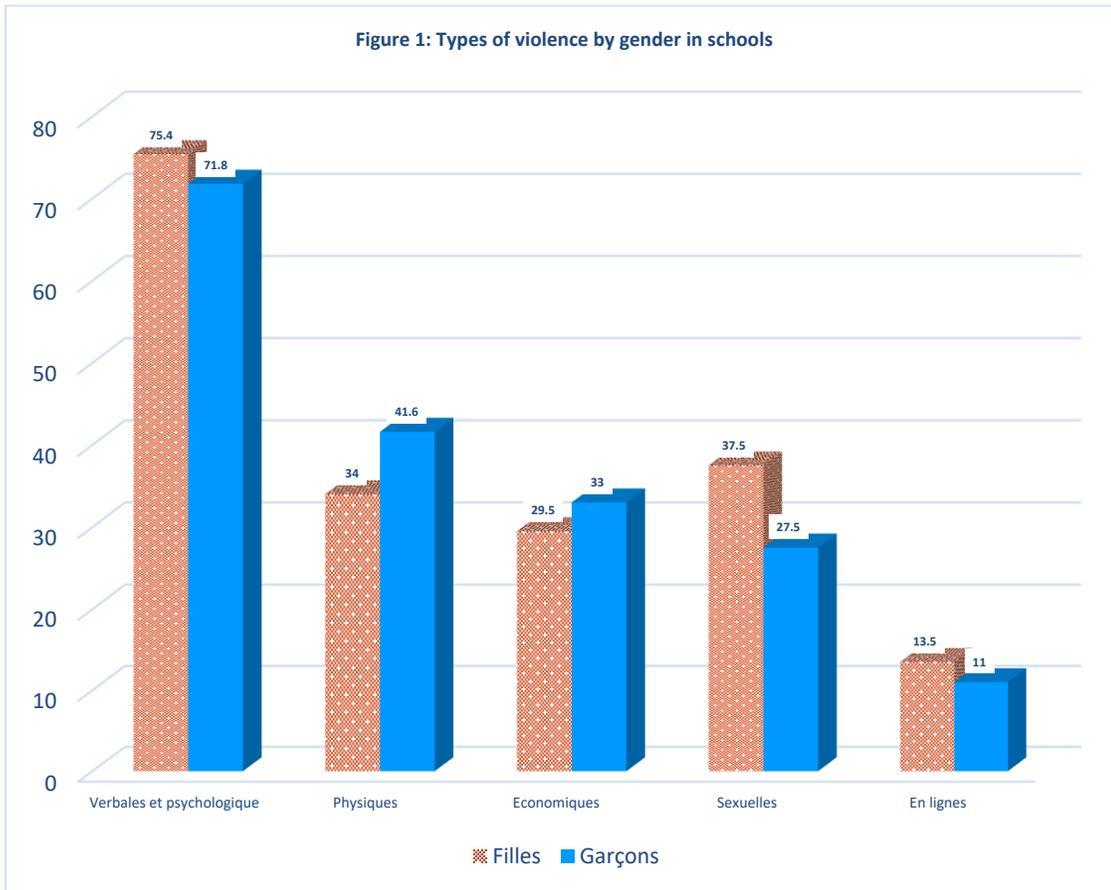
This "*guide*" describes the methodological approach to creating a platform for exchange, learning, hygiene and sanitation in a school. This platform will keep the name of "*Club of school activities and participation of young people*", in acronym "*CASPJ*".

III. JUSTIFICATION

Despite the existence of internal rules applicable in schools, many are those where students are still victims of violence exerted by other students or by teachers and non-teaching staff. Violence in the school environment (in the courtyard or enclosure and around the school or through cyberspace, against pupils, carried out by other pupils or by teachers and non-teaching staff) currently constitutes a concern that challenges the educational community because learning without fear is the ideal to which every child legitimately aspires. Depending on the school cycle, this violence can be corporal punishment and abuse such as unauthorized punishments or exclusions, discrimination, stigmatization and sexual harassment.

The results of the study on gender-based violence in schools, including online violence, carried out in 2019 among girls and boys aged 10 to 18, are shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Types of violence by gender in schools



These different types of violence in the school environment are the major cause of school dropouts and dropping out among girls and boys.

In schools, there are also many schools that do not have satisfactory amenities infrastructure such as water points and separate toilets for boys and girls. Where these amenities infrastructures exist, it is clear that their maintenance as well as that of the school environment is lacking because of the absence in these schools of structures in charge of hygiene and sanitation. This does not create a clean and attractive school environment for students.

In most primary and secondary schools, school libraries (their major role being to promote the individual and/or collective work of pupils, particularly in reading and mathematics, in order to contribute to the improvement of their basic skills in these two disciplines) no longer exist. Where they exist, none have reading and mathematics textbooks. Hence the difficulty for students to continuously strengthen their reading and arithmetic skills.

However, in 2018 in schools where school clubs were established, there was a reduction in the dropout rate, particularly among girls in lower secondary school. Indeed, out of 7,282 girls enrolled and sensitized through these school clubs on gender-based violence at school in 2018, 6,565 completed the school year. The retention rate in these schools was 90.15%, compared to that of 2017 which was 82.85%.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF A TYPICAL SCHOOL ACTIVITY AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION CLUB

The current model of school clubs is structured solely in an executive office of 3 or 4 members depending on the school and in members. Its main mission is to educate students against all forms of violence in schools in order to reduce the dropout rate. In view of the current problem of students in schools, particularly with regard to issues not only of violence, but also and above all those of bodily and menstrual hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, HIV and learning, this type of structuring has its limits and does not allow a school club to fully play its role as a platform for exchange, learning, hygiene and sanitation. Hence the need to propose a new name and a new structure.

3.1. Description and proposed structure of a school animation club

A school activity and youth participation club is a platform for intermediation and remediation in a school, coordinated by the head of the school, set up and run by the students, in consultation with the head and the teachers of the school. Its purpose in a school is to strengthen students' participation in school life in order to help improve their daily life skills, as well as their school retention, completion and success rates. To do this, the school entertainment club must facilitate:

- The prevention of all forms of violence in schools;
- Free expression and support for students who are victims of all forms of school violence by the school establishment's

listening unit, which is composed of the head and certain teachers of the school establishment;

- The property of the school establishment in order to make the school environment attractive;
- The organization of school games
- Supervision of students with learning difficulties;
- Body and menstrual hygiene.
- The promotion of sexual and reproductive health, and the prevention of HIV

Based on the strengths and weaknesses observed in the functioning of school clubs during the analysis missions carried out respectively in 2018 in fifteen school clubs in Brazzaville and 2019 in three school clubs in Pointe-Noire , as well as problems specific to each school establishment , a *“model”* of school animation club structured in executive office and school animation committees is proposed to be popularized in primary and secondary schools. School animation committees must be a maximum of four and their number may vary according to the specific problems with which the school is confronted.

The number of members of a school animation club in a school must be a maximum of 18 whatever the level of the educational system. The executive office must have a maximum of 6 members while each school animation committee must have a maximum of 3 members.

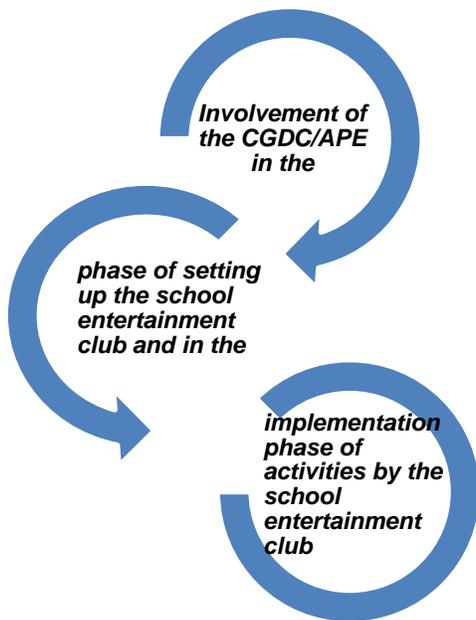
Within the framework of the model adopted as schematized here, the constituent elements of a school animation club are the executive office and the following four school animation committees:

- The committee for the prevention of all forms of violence in schools;
- The learning and reading committee;
- The health, hygiene and sanitation committee;
- The Sport and Dramatic Arts Committee.



3.2. Operation of a school entertainment club

Under the



coordination of the person in charge of the school establishment and under the supervision of the executive office, each school committee draws up its activity program accompanied by a timetable, taking into account the timetable of the school. Once finalized, these programs will be compiled and validated by the executive office, in consultation with the head of the school, who will take into account the school timetable. Under the supervision of the executive office, each school unit carries out the scheduled activities, in consultation with the person in charge of the school establishment.

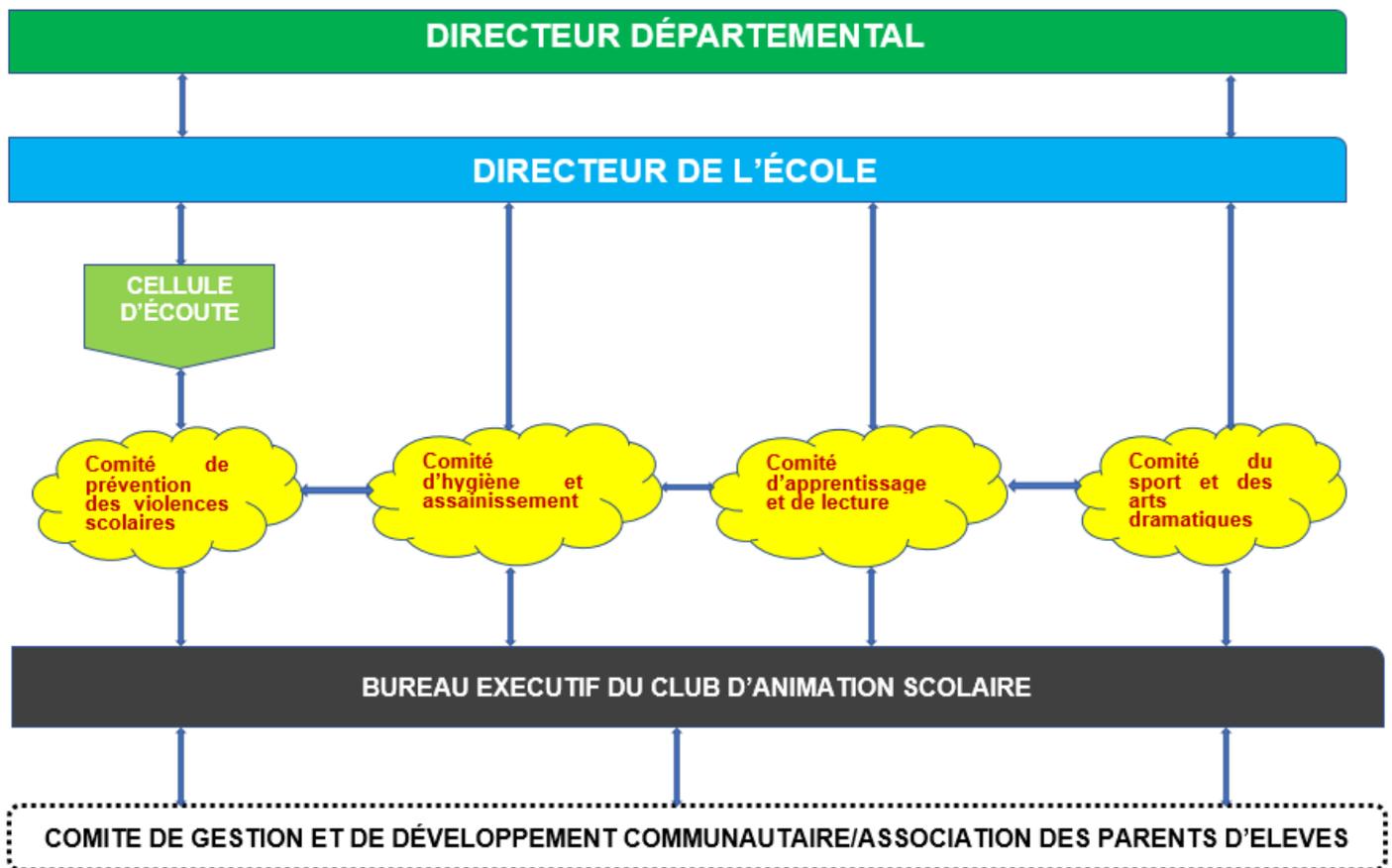
In the process of developing their program of activities and carrying out the validated activities, the school animation committees must interact with each other, under the supervision of the executive office, so that the members of each structure are immersed in the all the interventions that the school activities club must carry out during the school year.

Concerning the very specific case of the prevention of all forms of violence in the school environment, the school violence prevention committee will work in consultation with the listening unit, which is an intermediation structure made up essentially of school teachers whose number of members must be a maximum of four, in order to better ensure the care of pupils who are victims of violence. This listening unit is placed under the authority of the school director who is responsible for taking disciplinary measures against the perpetrators of violence in the school environment. The school director will inform the departmental director of all actions carried out by the school club.

For greater ownership of the results by the educational community and their positive impact on all students, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents of students and the school, the management and community development committee (CGDC) at school/Parents' Association (PTA) must be involved in the whole process, from the establishment of a school club to the implementation of activities by the school club through its school animation committees, as summarized by the following diagram:

For the anchoring of the school activity club in a school to be effective and sustainable, this model must be appropriated by the educational community, in particular the departmental director, the school director, the students and the CGDC, such as as depicted in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Institutional anchoring of a school activity club



3.3. Missions of a school entertainment club

In a primary or secondary school, the missions assigned to school activity clubs are in particular to:

- Create a framework for exchange and free expression between students regardless of gender;
- Strengthen students' capacities in the organization and leadership of their school;
- Contribute to the fight against stigmatization and all forms of violence in schools;
- Promote reading, sports and the dramatic arts at school;
- Popularize the rules of procedure applicable to the school;
- Popularize the rights and duties of the student in the school environment;
- Promote hygiene and sanitation in schools;
- Promote comprehensive sexuality education
- Contribute to raising students' awareness of HIV/AIDS;

- Contribute to the awareness of students on body hygiene and menstrual hygiene.

V. SCALING UP STRATEGY

Here we describe the strategy and the roadmap for the transition from 20 school clubs to the 200 still indicated, a justification of the prioritization criteria and a sustainability plan with government funds.

From January 2020, UNICEF's support is no longer the financing of clubs but the training of departmental executives and school principals, monitoring and evaluation). Training needs and plans should be described.

For monitoring and evaluation, the methods of support for these clubs and performance indicators.

VI. STRATEGY FOR CREATING A SCHOOL ENTERTAINMENT CLUB

The strategy will consist of creating and making functional and sustainable a school activity club in each targeted school, placing it under the coordination of the school principal who is responsible for it, in collaboration with the management and community development committee. and the Departmental Director of Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education (DDEPSA).

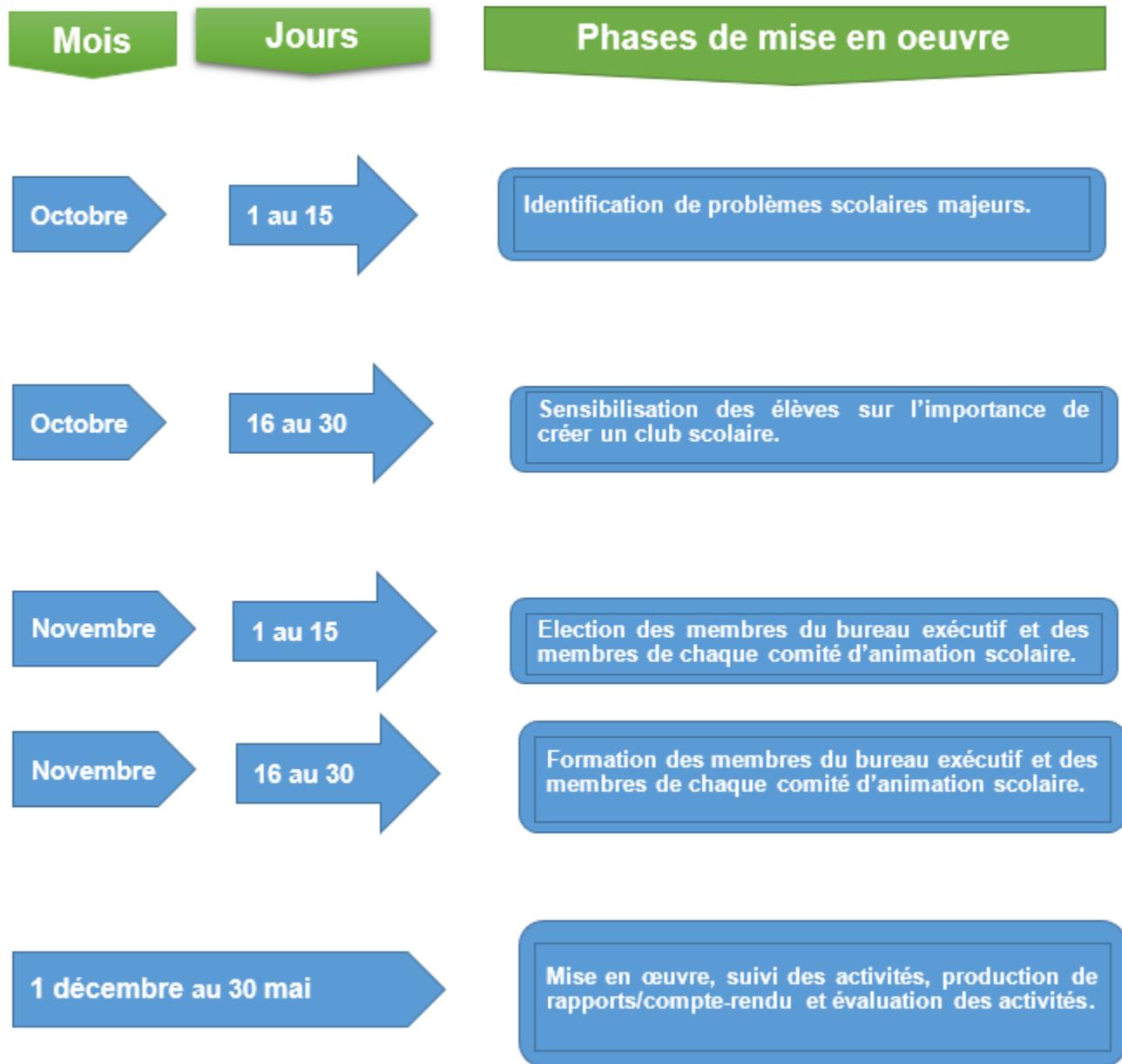
To do this, the strategy will unfold in the following five key steps:

- **Step 1** : Identification by the principal, teachers, non-teaching staff of the school and the CGDC of major problems facing the school and based on these problems, they make the choice on the number of cells that will make up the school entertainment club.
- **Step 2** : Sensitization of the pupils in each class by a team made up of the school director, the representative of the teaching staff, the representative of the non-teaching staff and the representative of the CGDC on the importance of creating a school animation club.
- **Step 3** : Appointment/election by each school class of representatives who will participate in the election of members of the executive committee and members of

each school unit, respecting the rules of transparency indicated in the framework document.

- **Step 4** : Capacity building for members of the executive office and members of each school unit in leading the executive office, supervising school units and producing reports and minutes, and raising awareness among teachers, non-professional staff teacher and the CGDC.
- **Step 5** : Implementation, monitoring of activities and production of reports and minutes by the school animation club, evaluation of activities by the school director and transmission of the report and report to the departmental director, to the CGDC and partners involved in supporting the operation of the school activities club.

Since the duration of the existence of a school entertainment club must correspond to that of the school year (9 months) because of the departure of pupils (for reasons of success in end-of-cycle exams or other reasons such as transfer of their parents) and of teachers and non-teaching staff (for postings or retirements), the different phases of implementation of the strategy for creating a school entertainment club will have to obey the following schedule after the awareness of teachers, non-teaching staff and the CGDC during the administrative start of the teaching and non-teaching staff which takes place each year no later than September 15:



VII. CONCLUSION

For better success in setting up a functional school activities club in a school, the following three conditions must be met:

- Signature by the MEPPSA of an order/memorandum on the creation and operation of a school entertainment club in a school in order to make the presence of school clubs in schools legal.
- Production by the MEPPSA of a framework document (normative document) for the operation of a school entertainment club and distribution of this document in the schools where the school entertainment clubs have been or will be established by the director of school. The support of

education partners may be requested in the development of this document.

- Technical support for the establishment and monitoring of the operation of the school entertainment club in a school by the head of the school, in collaboration with the partners involved.

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