



Impact of the Jam Suka Project

Program Description

The Jam Suka project improved the well-being of vulnerable children in the Kayes, Mopti, and Sikasso regions of Mali from 2016 to 2020. The project aimed to protect children against child labour, female genital mutilation, early marriage, and begging. It accomplished this by raising awareness of the dangers of these practices, educating children on their rights, strengthening local child protection systems through volunteer-run "prevention and alert" committees, and working with parents, local teachers, and other community leaders to support children to return to school and continue their education.

Context

45% of Mali's population lives in extreme poverty. Many children are forced to work to support their families: more than half of all children in Mali are involved in child labour, and one in three children in Mali works instead of going to school. Children are often involved in dangerous and low-paying work, including labour in what are known as "artisanal" gold mines.

Girls face particular challenges. The traditional practices of female genital mutilation and early marriage conspire to keep many girls out of school, and leave them vulnerable to abuse, poverty, and medical complications related to early pregnancy.

The goal of Right To Play's work in Mali is to support children to leave work and go back to school so they create a brighter future for themselves and their families.

KEY RESULTS

- 1 Improved sense of safety**
70% of children felt safe in their communities at the end of the project, compared to 39% at the start.
- 2 Reduced early marriage**
The incidence of early marriage decreased from 49% at the start of the project to 35% at the end.
- 3 Reduced child labour**
The incidence of child labour decreased from 56% at the start of the project to 48% at the end.
- 4 Increased knowledge of children's rights**
26.3% of parents reported knowing of a child protection law in Mali at the end of the project, compared with 21.1% at the mid-term.
- 5 Improved coordination of local action**
90% of plans created locally for the prevention and management of cases of child abuse were implemented, compared to 50% at the mid-term evaluation.

KEY LESSONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Engaging parents in sessions with their children helps them become advocates for child protection.**
- 2 Supporting parents to develop income-generating skills could help keep more children out of work and safe from early marriage, prevent child labour and early marriage.**
- 3 Collaborating with local community and religious leaders and enlisting them as active partners in child protection is necessary for the successful implementation of child protection policies.**
- 4 Offering vocational training to youth who have aged out of school could help them find safer work.**



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Brighter Than Gold: Balla's Story

When she was eight years old, Balla was forced to drop out of school to work in a gold mine to earn money for herself and her siblings. The work was extremely dangerous: she and other workers faced daily risks of falling, poisoning, and injuries. But she kept going because she felt she had no choice.

Sarata, a Right To Play-trained teacher, noticed Balla's absence from school and reached out to her family to see if she could help. Sarata and Filifing, a Jam Suka volunteer, made the case for the importance of education to Balla's future. Their words held weight. Balla was able to quit the mine and return to school – one of the hundreds of children Right To Play was able to pull from child labour over the course of the program.

Today, several years out from working in the mines, Balla is excited by her potential and the possibilities after graduation. She dreams of working as a medical doctor or going to work in the government. She also joined a children's club in her school and speaks about her experiences with her peers so more children know how to resist child labour.

Over five years, the Jam Suka project helped more than 2,700 children like Balla escape child labour and return to school.



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