



Behind the Scenes: Mali Rising's Girls Project

October-December, 2016

MALI RISING'S NEW PILOT PROJECT TO KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL IS FOCUSED ON RECRUITING MORE GIRLS TO OUR SCHOOLS, RETAINING THOSE GIRLS, AND GENERATING RESULTS BY HELPING THE GIRLS THRIVE IN SCHOOL AND LIFE.

Since the Girls Project launched in August, our Girls Coordinator -- Hindaty -- has been very busy indeed. In this update, we share project news from October through December. Please see the previous Behind the Scenes for news of the Project's first two months. In this update: girls elect their leaders, collecting baseline information, discussing girls' education, and helping our girls understand their bodies.

Girls' Leadership

A core component of the Girls Project is monthly meetings of our Girls Groups. Each month girls gather to discuss issues of importance to them and to learn new skills. As much as possible, the meetings are led by the girls themselves. As part of that goal, each Girls Group has selected a slate of Ministers and Deputy Ministers to lead work on various topics. For example, there is everything from the Minister for Girls' Rights to the Deputy Minister of Girls' Sports. While Mali Rising's U.S. staff were in Mali in December we had a chance to meet with the girls' leadership in each village. We were impressed with their energy and their confidence with public speaking...one of the skills they have been working on in Girls Group!

Collecting Baseline Information

Mali Rising is very committed to evaluating our work to make sure it is generating results. We have set up several ways to evaluate the Girls Project that go beyond just counting participating girls.

One evaluation system is tracking how the girls view themselves and their future. To provide insight into this, in October the girls filled out short surveys using tested questions that evaluated everything from their confidence in school to their comfort level in dealing with authority figures.

At the end of the school year we'll ask the girls the same questions and evaluate the extent of improvement in these basic measures. These measurements will be combined with a slew of other data to help us adjust and improve the project in future years.



Girls Groups Discuss the Value of Educating Girls



Girls had lively discussions about the value of education....and had some fun doing it.

Girls Group in Beneko. She is now studying at the Bamako University Institute of Management with a scholarship, so was able to talk to the girls about possibilities for their futures they might never have considered.

In November, our monthly Girls Group topic was Girls' Education and Poverty. The girls discussed how education helps girls become leaders and explored examples of female leaders in their village, in Mali, and in the world. The girls also had a great assignment: they were asked to find an educated girl in the village and one who had dropped out of school. They interviewed the women and asked about their lives and their views on education. The girls then presented the stories to the full group.

In addition, a young woman who graduated from Mali Rising's school in Beneko came to talk with the

Helping Girls Understand Their Bodies

In December our Girls Group meetings focused on helping girls understand and manage their menstrual cycle and learn how the reproductive system works. Like any teenage girls anywhere, the subject made our girls a bit nervous, but Hindaty put them at ease and they asked great questions. We provided each girl with a reusable menstrual kit -- made by volunteers in the U.S. -- that will last her entire middle school career. Many girls have no tools to manage their period, so they stay home from school for a week each month. This means each kit will give a girl back 45 days of school each year!

Next steps

Work in each of our pilot villages continues. January's Girls Group meetings will focus on developing leadership skills for our girls. Outreach to 6th grade girls to encourage them to continue into our 7th grade classrooms will also begin soon. Keep up to date on our blog at www.malirisingfdn.org/blog.



A girl shows off her new menstrual kit. The kit will allow her to come to school during her period.



Although the discussions about menstruation begin with some feelings of awkwardness, by the end of the sessions our girls were laughing.