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# USAID Girls' Leadership and Empowerment through Education (GLEE)

## CONTEXT

Insecurity in Mali combined with social and economic factors such as school closures due to threats of violence, inadequate numbers and distribution of teachers, early marriage, and economic pressures at the household level limit educational access and outcomes. Mali ranks among the top ten countries in child marriage prevalence and only 49% of learners complete primary school. Preference is generally given to enrolling boys while girls are relied on for caregiving, seeking water for household uses, and other time-consuming domestic tasks that further constrain educational opportunities for girls and increase their vulnerability.

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

In line with USAID's Education Policy, USAID Girls' Leadership and Empowerment through Education (GLEE) decreased barriers to quality education in a safe and supportive learning environment for adolescent girls (10-18 years old) while increasing the adoption of positive, healthy behaviors. USAID GLEE established Accelerated Schooling Centers (ASC) for out-of-school adolescents; trained teachers and school management committees to improve learning, transparency and accountability, and; worked with parents and community members to improve and support girls' access to learning.

The USAID GLEE approach was holistic and collaborative, mobilizing local networks of youth, extended families, community mentors, school management committees, parent-teacher associations, mothers' associations, teachers, school administrators, and local healthcare providers, as well as local, regional, and national governmental authorities.

#### USAID GLEE:

- Increased learning opportunities through Accelerated Schooling Centers with qualified teachers and support from families and communities allowing girls to catch-up on missed years of learning,
- Decreased financial barriers to education and improved the learning environment and community engagement for adolescent girls,
- Established safety, reporting, and referral protocols to safeguard adolescent girls at school and in their communities,
- Reduce barriers to health education and services for girls to adopt healthy behaviors and remain in school.
- Promoted behavior change within communities, families, and local influencers focused on enrolling girls and preventing early marriages.
- Imparted knowledge on reproductive health and other issues, such as gender-based violence, early marriage, reproductive health, and pregnancy, and
- Promoted gender equality and women's leadership,

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Established 726 Accelerated Schooling Centers that enrolled 21,745 girls and 4,407 boys.
- Enabled 18,068 girls and 3,698 boys to transition from ASCs into the formal educational system and enroll in school.
- Ensured retention of an annual average of 26,623 girls in formal primary and secondary schools during each of the past five years in the regions of Kayes, Bandiagara, and Douentza.
- Assisted 7,331 girls to obtain birth certificates legally establishing their age and allowing them to re-enter the formal educational system.
- Trained 255 women on how to train adolescent girls in the production of reusable sanitary pads, allowing girls to miss fewer days of school during menstruation.
- Assisted 289 partner schools to establish codes of conduct and adopt practices that are safer and more conducive for girls' education.
- Trained 797 women from 216 women's groups on income generating activities, allowing them to earn money to contribute towards girls' education in their communities.
- Created a network of 289 community-based mentors who regularly conducted sessions on girls' education, early marriage prevention, leadership, communication, and reproductive health and family planning.

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Winrock International (Prime); IntraHealth; *Groupe d'Animation, Action, au Sahel Mali* (GAAS Mali) ; *Œuvre Malienne d'Aide à L'Enfance du Sahel* (OMAES)