



SUCCESS STORY

A Drop-Out Becomes First in Her Class

A community mobilizes to create a better learning environment



Photo: Sue Upton, World Education

Kadiatou Coulibaly is now first in her class at Bambougouwere Elementary School in the Ségou region of Mali.

The education assessment served as a wakeup call for Bambougouwere, and the Parent-Teacher Association began changing the face of local schooling.

Kadiatou Coulibaly dropped out of elementary school last year. The 13-year-old girl from Mali's rural Ségou region was sent away by her mother to a neighboring village to care for her older sister's children. Kadiatou's mother just didn't see the point in sending her to school. Bambougouwere Elementary was understaffed with poorly qualified teachers, the roof was falling in, there were no learning materials or drinking water. There were not even enough school benches for all the students to sit on. "Who could learn under such circumstances?" said Mrs. Coulibaly. "Kadiatou would be able to help the family better by taking care of children."

The year Kadiatou abandoned school, USAID came to Bambougouwere to help the community improve local education. The community found that Kadiatou's situation was not unique. Many children were being kept out of school — particularly girls — because they were needed to help out with chores at home and because the school was so dilapidated.

This assessment served as a wakeup call for Bambougouwere, and with support from USAID, the parent-teacher association (PTA) began changing the face of local schooling. The PTA is currently constructing three new classrooms. It repaired the roof of the school using locally donated materials and funds, and it furnished the classrooms with enough dried mud benches for all students. The PTA also mobilized groups of parents to urge other parents to reduce the amount of work children do at home so they can attend school and study.

But the PTA members didn't stop there. They brought their concerns to the local Department of Education and the mayor. As a result, two new, better qualified teachers came to work at the school, and the mayor's office supplied chalk and notebooks, as well as new source of potable water.

Enrolment in Bambougouwere increased in 2005. Among the students entering the school yard was Kadiatou Coulibaly, who now ranks first in her class.

Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>