



Peer Tutoring Makes a Difference in Benin

Challenge

Forced marriage, child trafficking and prostitution are persistent problems in Benin—problems that sprang from and endure because of illiteracy, poverty and traditional customs. The economic, cultural and social practices that are imposed on girls limit their potential for school enrollment and educational performance. Often, parents simply do not understand the importance of educating girls. USAID identified the 13 communities in Benin with the lowest girls' enrollment rates as targets needing support to promote girls' education. Of these communities, Gogounou, in northern Benin, had the fifth-lowest girls' enrollment rate.

USAID works with communities to change attitudes and perceptions, an essential step in promoting girls' education and development.



Photo: CARE

At the end of the 2002-03 school year, these 12 girls passed the primary school leaving exam.

Results

As a result of the program, 12 girls in grade six made history in Gounarou, one of Gogounou's 33 villages: at the end of the 2002-03 school year, they took the primary school leaving exam, and all passed. Not only was it the first time that girls in the primary school had reached grade six, but the girls taking the primary school leaving exam had a 100-percent success rate. Even the weakest student in the group received high grades, earning her a secondary school government scholarship. The success of the Gounarou grade six class became a subject of interest in the village and neighboring communities—ensuring the continuation of the program into the 2003-04 academic year.

Initiative

In 13 communities across Benin, USAID has sponsored community sensitization programs that include village meetings to make parents, teachers and local authorities aware of the importance of education—in particular, girls' education. USAID worked with the communities to change attitudes and perceptions, an essential step in promoting girls' education and development, and established local monitoring committees to help increase the enrollment and educational performance of school-age girls.

Teachers were encouraged to offer students, on a voluntary basis, daily one-hour reinforcement sessions after classes and girls' peer tutoring activities. With these activities, girls would gather in groups of four after school each day to revise lessons, complete homework, and study. Two community workers were recruited in each targeted community to supervise the peer tutoring groups twice a month.

