

People
Change
the World

Diakonia

Mali Gender and Resilience Project

Mali

The Project at a glance

The Gender and Resilience project was created as a response to Diakonia's ambition to strengthen its work on disaster risk reduction and to bridge the humanitarian and development work. The vision of the project was to contribute to gender equality and resilient communities through disaster risk reduction innovation projects. Six countries were involved and together they identified and developed gender sensitive tools and methodologies to analyze risks and plan for how to overcome them.

Mali was one of the countries that developed an innovative project working with women's and girl's empowerment strengthening their resilience to respond to climate change by providing them with skills and socio-economic opportunities. Experiences and practices were shared between the various countries and common lessons could be drawn.

By increasing the understanding of risk and its gendered dimensions and develop capacities of communities to prepare for and mitigate risks,

Diakonia and partners contributed to gender informed risk reduction practices and improved resilience.

Mali is exposed to the adverse consequences of climate change such as desertification, droughts, locust invasions, and floods. In this context, education is strongly affected, and many children are dropping out of school, especially girls.

At the same time droughts and the security crisis has resulted in a decline in agricultural production which is the main source of household income. This vulnerability is accentuated by low technical capacity in agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and crafts; leading to reduced capacity to adapt to climate change and alternative means of subsistence.



Women and girls' resilience to disasters in conflict areas

The GARP project in Mali implemented by Diakonia partner AMAPROS targeted 5 villages in the District of Niono Koulikoro with the aim to build the capacity of 20 women's groups and 8 networks to understand their rights and to provide them with skills and opportunities and to participate actively in decision-making.

In each village disaster management committees, with a strong participation of women were created. The committees developed disaster responses to meet their needs to protect children in general and girls in particular. They worked with women's associations in the villages to promote the return of 160 girls to school, that had dropped out either because of conflict or because of economic constraints linked to climate hazards.

Teachers were also involved in the committees and received training on disaster risk reduction and child protection. The parents, teachers and the municipality created a local platform to Influence decision-makers to enforce the laws and conventions that promotes women's rights.

Challenges the project had to overcome were the low knowledge among women on their rights to access land and the fear to address this sensitive issue.

A Holistic response- From Latrines to Advocacy Platforms

Due to the high poverty rate the revitalized women's associations established local saving and loan schemes to provide the women with economic opportunities. The women received support to develop business plans, open bank accounts and apply for loans. The associations were also transformed into cooperatives with official registrations.

For children and parents to feel safe and send their children back to school it was necessary to rehabilitate the school latrines, separate the girl's and boy's latrines and to train teachers in disaster preparedness and child protection.

The holistic response addressing both the direct economic needs and the agricultural skills to respond to climate change, and at the same time the safety of children in school and to and from school, secured the return of children.

The response can be sustained due to effort in linking the associations up with the bank credits and the local platforms to influence decision-makers, advocating for women's rights to access land.



Collective demand is power into action

As a result of the project the women now believe in the own ability and cooping strategy. They enroll their children into school as they have access to credits and alternative livelihoods. But they also felt confident to organize an advocacy campaign, which led to the municipalities allocating agricultural land to the women.

Thanks to the campaigns and increased self-esteem women no longer accept labor at very low cost. The community and women's associations have come to realize collective demands turns power into action.



Women in the forefront

Sustainable development requires strengthening institutional and organizational capacities of rights holders who are aware of their own situation and are ready to act. The project found that the most effective way to establish sustainable change for women in Niono Koulikoro is to include women's access to land into local development plans.

By strengthening the capacity of and empowering women whilst putting them at the forefront we see that long-term sustainable change is possible for everyone in society.





The Story

“Following the awareness meetings that were organized by the project in our village and the exchanges that followed, I was convinced of the need to re-enroll my daughter in school.

The project then organized the mothers of the re-enrolled girls and invited other actors such as members of the mothers’ association, teachers, members of parents’ associations, into a Village Saving and Loan Association.

I was reluctant at first given the failures we had experienced in the past. At the first savings meeting, the approach presented convinced me. I also benefited from information and training on the importance of girls’ enrolment and retention in school, disaster risk reduction and sustainable agriculture techniques.

The project organized us as a cooperative, supported us by providing seeds and fertilizers, and linked us up with agricultural services. By organizing local platforms, we meet with decisionmakers, where we discussed how we could protect our families and reduce the risk of disasters.

I save every week, which gives me the opportunity to take a loan for my small business. This supports my family and our personal expenses. In addition to the increased

income, and the happiness of belonging to a group, we can also decide how to use or share the additional funds for strategic issues the group decide upon.

This year I received an amount of 56680 FCFA which will allow me to finance the school fees of my children and to pay the supplement of agricultural inputs to increase my production and my income.

Other women in the village envy us, and I am really satisfied with the security this has given me, which I could not imagine before the project.”

