

EDUCATING GIRLS

HELPING BRIGHT GIRLS RETURN TO SCHOOL

After the death of her parents last year, Sinaida Carlos Geremias stopped going to school. Instead, she left her home in Maputo, Mozambique, and went to live and work with her grandparents in a village near Inhambane.

This April, community members and staff from Kulima, a local NGO implementing USAID's AGSP, found Sinaida. A scholarship selection committee was walking house to house to identify girls who needed help to attend the local school, Escola Primaria Completa Marrumwano. They decided that 15-year-old Sinaida needed assistance, because without the program's support, her prospects for continuing her education were grim. Just a few weeks later, Sinaida enrolled in the 5th grade and received a scholarship to pay for school fees, a uniform, and school supplies.

"Oftentimes, in these rural communities, people do not think that a girl can succeed at school," explained Francisco Batista, school director. "It is very difficult

for a young Mozambican girl. In order to prevent things like early marriage or early pregnancy, the whole community needs sensitization," he said. "Even seeing the female workers (Kulima staff) can be inspiration for girls, 'see what can happen if you study?'"

Sinaida is one of 38 girls at her school who receive scholarships and mentoring services that help them address problems, encourage them to stay in school, and counsel them on HIV/AIDS prevention. She enjoys going to school and walks 4 kilometers each way to get there. She hopes to become an engineer to help support her younger brothers and sisters.

This year in Mozambique, 6,000 girls are receiving educational assistance through the AGSP, which targets girls with academic potential who are orphaned, disabled, impacted by AIDS, and economically disadvantaged.

Kulima is one of nearly 30 NGOs that partner with Winrock International in implementing the program that reaches some 20,000 girls in 13 African countries.

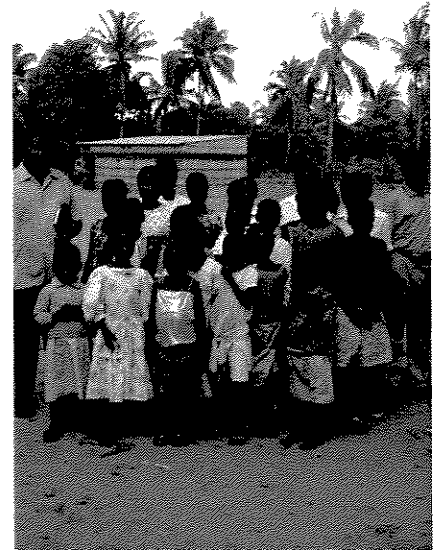


Photo by Winrock International

Francisco Batista, School Director, and pupils of Escola Primaria Completa Marrumwano

By Jaimie Bleck, Winrock International

GIRLS, JOB WELL DONE

AGSP support in Northern Mali led to dramatic amelioration of poor exam results.

Recently, 5,088 primary school girls in the three northernmost regions of Mali completed their first year as beneficiaries of the Ambassadors Girls' Scholarship Program (AGSP). The results were a staggering 24% improvement in primary school completion exam scores.

The scholarships that the girls received from the USAID-administered President's African Education Initiative (AEI) with educational support from World Education, Inc. and local NGOs, helped them significantly increase what they learned this year and improve their test results. In Kidal, 87% of 6th grade

**"The scholarships
have encouraged us
to study!"**

We used to be behind the boys,
now we're ahead!"

13 year-old female student
in Timbuktu

scholarship girls who took the exam obtained their Certificate of Primary Education, making them eligible to move on to secondary school, compared to 58% last year. A 70% pass rate in Gao and a 73% pass rate in Timbuktu are big improvements from the 60% and 44% respective pass rates from the year before. For the region, over 750 girls qualified to continue on to secondary education. This confirms that financial investment and concentrated efforts by both schools and communities can significantly affect girls' education and contribute to changing attitudes and behavior.

By Sue Upton, World Education and Sarah Rasmussen-Tall, USAID/Mali

EQUALITY & OPPORTUNITY

AEI EMPOWERS GIRLS IN SCHOOL AND WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Most of us try not to bring our work home with us in the evenings and on the weekends. Diamilatou Diallo, a World Education, Inc. (WEI) Program Assistant for the USAID Ambassadors Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP) in Guinea makes a point of it—not because she is overworked, but because she wants to apply the program's themes to herself and her family.

which, through WEI, will give more than 80,000 scholarships to girls in 15 West African countries. Winrock International and the Academy for Educational Development are implementing the AGSP and will provide over 250,000 scholarships throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The AGSP works closely with local NGO partners to involve communities in selecting the

and became more conscientious about their education and their development. She talked with her husband about what she learned and set out to make changes in her home, demanding respect for her daughters and changing certain norms. She asked her daughters to write a calendar of activities and chores for each day which empowers them to take responsibility for themselves and helps them balance their household work and their school work. Both girls finish at the top of their classes every year. Diamilatou explained that when she was young, she didn't have the same opportunities as her daughters. She was motivated to go to school, but when she had problems, she had no one to talk to. Today, she enjoys the fact that her children ask her a lot of questions.

Diamilatou has realized she can make a difference for other girls as well. Through her work, she meets girls who lack support to continue their education. Two girls in particular caught Diamilatou's attention: two sisters, ages 6 and 7, who had lost their father and whose mother was unable to send them to school. Diamilatou enrolled the girls in school and has been paying for their fees and materials and following their progress for the past three years.

Diamilatou also mentors a group of teenage mothers (ages 13-15) in the region of Kindia. When she has time, she visits with the girls—most of whom have left their homes to join the babies' fathers' families, an often difficult and unsupportive environment for a young girl. "I saw their difficulty, their innocence and thought that maybe with a little support they could go back to school. These girls are ashamed to even be with their friends, they need someone who will listen to them."

With the little time Diamilatou has to herself, she enjoys watching action films and listens to her favorite music, Zouk. When asked to describe herself in one word, Diamilatou responded, "patient."



Photo by L. Lantique, USAID

The benefits of education are not all achieved in the classroom. Each time a woman is introduced to the ideals of education, equity, and dignity, she gains knowledge that she can share with her family and her community.

Since 2001, Diamilatou has worked for WEI, a nongovernmental organization that is implementing the AGSP in Guinea. For three years, she worked in the office of one of WEI's NGO partners where she trained the NGO in organizational development, financial management, quality of education, and gender equity. She also supervised the training provided by this NGO to other targets, including parents' associations.

More recently, Diamilatou helped implement the AGSP—a key component of the Africa Education Initiative (AEI)

girls and implementing activities such as engaging the girls in mentoring activities and training them on basic information about HIV/AIDS. Diamilatou has been supporting a variety of activities such as overseeing scholarship disbursement to girls in 5th and 6th grades, helping communities identify tutors and mentors for the girls, and facilitating the creation of study groups and other extracurricular activities.

Diamilatou has three children of her own, including two girls. She says that once she was trained by WEI in gender equity, she better understood her children's rights

By Katie Martocci, World Education, Inc