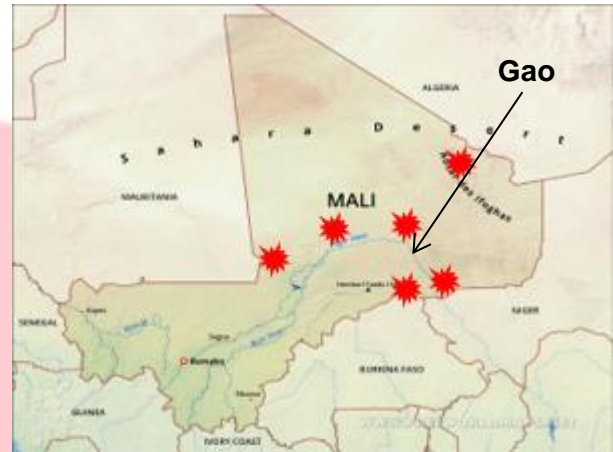


CASE STORY

NAME Ibrahim Abdou
AGE 12
COUNTRY Mali
THEME Humanitarian Project / Child Protection
STORY From the street to resilience workshops – Ibrahim Abdou is now 2nd in his class at Aljanabandja school in Gao.



Context

Since March of 2012, Mali has been marked by conflict and insecurity, particularly in the northern and central regions, which has exacerbated the child protection issues already present in the country. Attacks by armed actors targeted towards the civilian population happens regularly, which results in mass killings, serious injuries, destruction of material, habitat, food stocks etc. Attacks and threats against school staff has led to the closure of 1,113 schools across Mali, leaving 333,900 children without access to education. New challenges have emerged as a result, including the recruitment of children into armed groups, exposure to remnants of war, which in turn leads to trauma, distress and deterioration of psychosocial well-being.

Save the Children has been active in Mali for over 30 years and since 2013, the organization has systematically worked to integrate support for children's resilience into its work.

With funding from DANIDA through SC Denmark, Save the Children has established a four-year program integrating education and protection for children in Mali.

The Story

In 2019, the Gao region, bordering Niger and Burkina Faso, was marked by violent clashes between the army and various non-state armed groups. Due to insecurity, 12-year old Ibrahim Abdou and his family were forced to leave their home in the Ménaka region and relocate to Aljanabandja in Gao. Shortly after their arrival, a member of the local child protection committee (CLPE) discovered that young Ibrahim was not attending school. The committee approached the principal of the local school to request Ibrahim's enrollment.

Since Ibrahim had been out-of-school and internally displaced due to conflict, the principal suggested that Ibrahim participate in resilience workshops initiated by Save the Children (funded by DANIDA Lot HUM). At first, Ibrahim's mother was reluctant, but one of Ibrahim's former teachers Abdoulaye Maiga, now vice principal, was able to convince her to allow him to participate in the workshops. Ibrahim had, after all, become shy and reserved around other children and begun to cling to his mother at home, though prior to the relocation, Ibrahim had been a very outgoing and dynamic child.

Though shy and wary at the start of the resilience workshop, through support from the facilitator, Ibrahim quickly became very interactive with the other children and even gained the confidence to claim the role of the

conductor during the song performed at the end of the workshop. Both Ibrahim's mother and Ibrahim himself were amazed by his progress. Ibrahim explains, "*I never thought that I could be like the other children, but ever since I started participating, I feel happy and supported. Everyone is laughing and playing together*". The once shy and reserved Ibrahim is now determined to find his place among his peers. Overcoming obstacles of his past, Ibrahim was able to achieve the rank of second in his class and has taken on the responsibility of ensuring non-discrimination of children in the Aljanabandja Children's Club.

Factors & Actors

The DANIDA Lot HUM 2018-2021 programme, which conducts school and community activities to improve the resilience of conflict-affected children, is implemented in 20 villages and schools within the Mopti and Gao regions. Although the programme does not have formal implementation partners, the program relies on the community for identifying children in order to recruit participants, local teachers, facilitators and parents. The prompt action that the Protection Committee took in Ibrahim's case was therefore instrumental in securing this positive outcome and a testament to their function and efficiency. The commitment of the community and the effective coordination between school officials with the community protection mechanism (CLPE) is key to delivering timely services for children in need of psychosocial support.

The project is implemented with the support of the school administration (Teaching Academy; Educational Facilitation Centers and School Principals), the Regional Directorate for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family (DRPF) and various actors working in the field of Child Protection.

Evidence

In total, 480 resilience sessions were organized for 1,000 children and youth affected by armed conflict, both in and out of school in 2019, and 2,000 children have been reached since the inception of the project. Evaluations from 2019 demonstrated that the resilience program has significantly contributed to an improvement in the psychosocial well-being of children, has strengthened parents' capacities to meet the needs of their children and successfully supports teachers and supervisors to best facilitate the learning of children affected by conflict. As a result of the resilience workshops, some children have gone on to become considered pioneers and are used in peer education activities in the communities. Similarly, parents have improved their ability to promote the well-being of their children by supporting them in their education and knowing how to respond to a child in distress. Pre- and post-tests show that 78,6% of the children who participated in the resilience workshops showed an improvement in their psychosocial well-being based on several indicators including self-esteem, engagement at home, commitment to school, social relations and problem solving.

Lessons learned

- There is potential in each and every child and we work to support them in reaching this potential.
- A positive and supportive environment is an essential factor in the well-being of children.
- Even when starting from nothing, it is possible to succeed with the support of others.