



# Right To Play in Mali

## STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION

Right To Play has been working in Mali since 2002 to improve the quality of education, protect children, and strengthen the culture of peace amongst children and youth. Through the Ministry of National Education, Right To Play began programs inside schools in 2006, training teachers on how to use sport and play-based activities to improve the life skills and healthy practices of children. Right To Play currently has formal partnerships with the five National Directorates of Education as well as with Teaching Academies and Pedagogical Animation Centers to increase enrolment, retention, and learning outcomes for children.

Through its response to the crisis created by armed conflict in northern Mali, Right To Play established itself as a credible actor in child protection and demonstrated that play-based approaches are a relevant response to the psychosocial needs of crisis-affected children. With the support of the Government of Canada, Right To Play leveraged this earlier experience to initiate its flagship child protection initiative, Jam Suka, to address harmful child labor, begging, and gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and child marriage.

In 2019, Right To Play reached over **178,300 vulnerable children** in the District of Bamako, and in Koulikoro, Ségou, Sikasso, Kayes, and Mopti regions.

# The challenges faced by children and youth in Mali

Mali has one of the youngest populations in Sub-Saharan Africa; 47% of its population is under 15 years-old.<sup>1</sup> While the Government of Mali is committed to providing quality services and opportunities for Malian children and youth, it is severely constrained by lack of resources, recurring natural disasters, and a conflict in the north that has been ongoing since 2012.

The Malian education system faces issues of access and quality with approximately one million children out of school.<sup>2</sup> For those children who are in school, learning outcomes are significantly impacted by the shortage of qualified teachers as well as poor quality infrastructure and limited availability of teaching and learning materials.<sup>3</sup>

- Two-thirds of children in grade 2 cannot read.<sup>4</sup>
- Less than 50% of children complete primary education.<sup>5</sup>
- 25% of children aged 5 to 14 are involved in some form of work.<sup>6</sup>
- 377,000 children in Mali are affected by the ongoing crisis and in need of protection services.<sup>7</sup>



Working in Mali's artisanal gold mines is one of the most dangerous jobs on Earth.

## Achievements

### MORE CHILDREN ARE IN SCHOOL

**23,812**

more children are in school

**23,812** out-of-school children in the District of Bamako have enrolled in school since 2018.<sup>8</sup>

### VULNERABLE CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

Year 1 of Jam Suka:



Year 4 of Jam Suka:



Children with access to case management services has increased by **48** percentage-points since 2016.<sup>9</sup>

### CHILDREN HAVE LEFT DANGEROUS WORK

**2,857**

child laborers have returned to school

Out of **4,255** child laborers in Jam Suka supported communities, **2,857** children have left child labor and returned to school.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA, World Population Dashboard, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> GPE, 'Prospective Evaluations: First Annual Report', 2019.

<sup>3</sup> GPE, 'Prospective Evaluations: First Annual Report', 2019.

<sup>4</sup> 66% of second grade children in curriculum schools could not read a single word of a story, USAID's Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) National Baseline Assessment in Mali, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.CMDF.ZS?locations=ML>, Data from 2017.

<sup>6</sup> US Department of Labor, <https://www.dhs.gov/legislation/fish/immigration/immigration-labor-law>.

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, 'Children Under Attack', 2019.

<sup>8</sup> PACETEM, internal monitoring system, February 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Jam Suka, Year 4 Annual Report, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Village and Commune Child Protection Committee and School Registers.

# Program Overview



## IMPROVING ACCESS TO QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Right To Play works closely with other non-government organizations that have complementary areas of expertise and geographic reach. Through these partnerships, Right To Play is supporting the Government of Mali to increase access to quality education for vulnerable children and to improve learning outcomes, particularly in literacy. Right To Play trains teachers working in schools and alternative education settings to use child-centered, active learning approaches and to create positive, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning environments. These teachers are then supported by pedagogical advisors who have been trained by Right To Play on how to use coaching and mentoring for supportive supervision.

To promote early reading, Right To Play and its partners have developed readers for children in grades 1 to 4 in line with the requirements of the national curriculum. Early reading is also enhanced through the establishment of after-school reading clubs which provide homework support and supplementary reading activities. In 2019, almost 65,000 children participated in 185 reading clubs.

In the District of Bamako, Right To Play has led a massive effort to mobilize communities to identify out-of-school children and provide them with the means to enroll and stay in school. These children are provided with school supplies, assisted to register and obtain their birth certificates where necessary, and supported through intensive remedial courses to enter or re-enter school at an age-appropriate grade.



## STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Working in collaboration with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family and a network of local civil society organizations, Right To Play is strengthening government and community structures that prevent and respond to serious violations of children's rights. Key protection actors at local and national levels have been provided with equipment and training, and coordination mechanisms have been enhanced. Village child protection committees have been re-activated and trained on gender equality, child protection, and resource mobilization.

Improving the access of vulnerable children to basic social services such as health, education, and psychosocial support is an important element of Right To Play's response. With the support of Right To Play and its partners, villages have established special learning centers to facilitate the withdrawal of thousands of children from artisanal mining sites and other situations of vulnerability.



## EMPOWERING CHILDREN AS CHANGE AGENTS

Right To Play uses play-based activities to develop leadership skills in children, encourage their active participation in school and community, and empower children to protect themselves and their peers. Right To Play, together with community leaders and teachers, has established 200 children's clubs which promote the leadership of children in community sensitization efforts to encourage parents and caregivers to send children to school rather than to work and to eliminate harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. Right To Play works closely with the National Children's Parliament and engages representatives of the Children's Parliament in decision-making regarding the Jam Suka program.



*... this child-based game approach... is a good pedagogical choice for Mali which puts the child at the heart of his learning. We learn by playing. The approach can only be beneficial."*

– Education official<sup>11</sup>



# Right To Play International

Right To Play is a global organization that protects, educates, and empowers children using all forms of play – games, sport, poetry, performance, dance, art and music. We work with children in some of the most difficult and dangerous places on earth, empowering children with the knowledge and skills to drive change in their lives, their families, and their communities.

In 2019, Right To Play transformed the lives of 2.35 million children in 15 countries around the world, working in collaboration with teachers, governments, communities, and parents.



Community interventions transform social norms about issues like child labour and child marriage.

## Supporters



Government of Canada  
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6th Street, left West, Monument Bougieba | Hamdallaye ACI 2000, Bamako | 00 223 20 21 10 24

[www.righttoplay.com](http://www.righttoplay.com)

Charity Number: 88880 4218 RR0001