



Final Report

Learning & Earning Programs for Girls In Five Agadez Communities

By Brian Nowak, Director of Programs

Organization Name: Rain for the Sahel & Sahara

Program Title: Learning & Earning Programs for Girls in Five Agadez Communities

Grant Amount: \$36,066.33 over 2 years

Contact Person: Bess Palmisciano

Address: 56 Middle Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801; bess@rain4sahara.org

1. Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.

Mentoring for At-Risk Girls

Outputs

Supplementary health training monitoring of mentoring activities;

Socio-educational mentoring support for 170 at-risk school girls;

Artisan craft training workshops for 170 students in rural elementary schools.

Outcomes (as listed in the application – how to do we support these goals with results?)

Enduring support for 170 students by 40 women mentors in five communities;

Students become skilled producers of locally marketable artisan crafts;

Students succeed in completing primary school;

Women and children use knowledge from trainings in their daily life and share information with others;

Women serve as advocates for girls and women in their communities, raising awareness of social and educational issues.

Income Generating Activities (IGA's) for women mentors: Herding

Outputs

- Supplied 3 female and 1 male goat to each mentor;
- Trained mentors in animal health and management with veterinary consultant;
- Provided additional training in long-term strategy and problem-solving for herding activity.

Outcomes (as listed in the application – how to do we support these goals with results?)

- Increased milk production with increased herd size; allowing the women to sell milk and cheese products;
- Periodic income through livestock sale with more frequent income as herd grows;
- Animal sales provide income for the mentors, replacing RAIN monthly stipends, as well as funding the materials needed for practical skills classes.

Savings & Loan Groups

Outputs

- S&L groups formed with RAIN mentors as lead members;
- Trained members in meeting facilitation, operations and basic financial concepts;
- Provided seed fund for loans;
- Organized first annual distribution of a portion of savings.

Direct quantifiable measurements for this program include:

Outcomes (as listed in the application – how to do we support these goals with results?)

Members of the S&L groups:

- Formed extra-familial bonds with other women in the village, creating a new network of social relationships;
- Earned through the use of small loans, measured by food security and other reported improvements;
- Succeed in independently managing the S&L group for long-term socio-economic support.

What was accomplished in connection with this project? Please address each stated objective. If any project objectives were changed, please also explain the circumstances leading to the modification of the objective(s).

Direct quantifiable measurements for this program include:

Mentoring for At-Risk Girls

Outputs

Mentoring program support for mentors and students for 2 years in 5 communities including craft workshops:

- Iferouane – 10 mentors and 50 students
- Soulefet - 5 mentors and 25 students
- Tadek – 5 mentors and 25 students
- Tchinfiniten - 10 mentors and 50 students
- Tchintelouste - 5 mentors and 25 students

In the women's words:

- *Tchimaden Ghoumar of Tchintelouste* – “In addition to our regular mentoring responsibilities I have taken additional initiative to help younger students that live far from the school. I personally take care of children at my house especially during times of need. During the cold season it is very difficult as the night becomes very cold and children, especially those without blankets, often fall ill. Another mentor in the village, *Halima Ahmad*, also helps these children that stay in our village during the school week in the cold season by building fires at night. We both emphasize personal hygiene, especially during the cold season when colds, eye diseases and other illnesses hit our communities.”
- *Tamamoune Silmane's student, Halima Mamane of Iferouane* (student in 5th grade) – I have really had a hard time learning how to embroider sheets. I do not do as well as my other friends (other students learning from mentors) but we are working together. I

Forging partnerships with rural and nomadic desert peoples of West Africa
PO Box 1503, Portsmouth, NH 03802/56 Middle St, Portsmouth, NH 03801

603-371-0676

www.rain4sahara.org

am working hard as I see that some of my friends in school are making single-bed size decorated sheets for \$5. Older women make larger double-size sheets and sell for \$10. I want to improve my skills so that I can also.

- *Halima Ahmad's student Mariama Mohamed* (student in 4th grade) – I am learning how to make palm-frond mats, but really I know how to make palm-frond winnowing pans much better. I find the winnowing pans much easier to make. For me to finish one strip of 3 meters, it takes me 3 evenings. We need at least 10 of these 3-meter strips to make the full size mat we use to make our nomadic tents. I am happy to learning this while going to school also.

**Income Generating Activities (IGA's) for women mentors: Herding
Outputs (as listed in the application – how to do we support these goals with results?)**

- 40 women mentors received four goats (one he-goat and three she-goats)
- 40 women mentors received veterinary assistance, vaccination and animal care training at the time of animal distribution
- 40 women mentors received supplemental animal feed (four sacs of cotton-seed) in two phases during the most difficult period of the year
- 40 women mentors received initial training in how the goat herding program will lead to program sustainability.

In the women's words:

- *Ghaicha Ghoumar of Tchinfiniten* – Raising goats is so important to our lives and our food security. Not only because grow our herds and sell our animals to buy food and other basic needs, but also for our own nutrition. As our herds have decreased (with drought and famine), we are forced to buy powdered milk that can be very expensive. When our goats grow, fresh milk will help reduce the cost of feeding our families and provide more nutritional meals.
- *Talate Elhadji Moumoutou of Tchinfiniten* – Goat-herding is an important part of our rural economy as it provided us with revenue as herds grow. The goat manure also helps to provide organic fertilizer for our garden. Goats also provide milk, that we use to make cheese to eat and sell, and for meat for celebrations -- all important for one's health and to earn money.

**Income Generating Activities (IGA): Savings & Loan Groups
Outputs**

Five new women's Savings & Loan Groups (S&L Groups) were created, trained and monitored weekly for three months, with RAIN field agent advice and assistance for loan meetings following the initial three-month training.

Outcomes (as listed in the application – how to do we support these goals with results?)

In the women's words:

- *Sillaha Aghali of Soulefet* – This is my first time trying a small business. I bought tea with my \$20 loan and earned \$3 over the 3-month loan period.

- *Mako Attaher of Soulefet* – I took a \$40 loan to help with supplies for my family garden. After the 3 month duration of the loan I earned \$10 in profit and vegetables for my family to eat.
- *Fatima Atafo of North Iferouane* – I took a \$40 loan. Over the 3 month loan period I sold headscarves and earned \$10 in profit. With some of this profit, I have reimbursed my loan and interest and reinvested some of my personal profit to sell small items to help increase my profits.
- *Fati Bahi of North Iferouane* – I took a \$40 loan for 3 months. I bought peanuts in bulk and resold over the loan period. I earned \$15 in profit.

We don't meet with the groups during the rainy season of August – September. We are in the process of completing our evaluation documents and will forward to you separately.

What challenges did you face in connection with this project? How did you address these challenges?

We encountered environmental and socio-economic challenges that affected the original program. Adjustments were made to the goat-herding program calendar due to environmental challenges, and we changed three beneficiary communities for the Savings and Loans program.

Environmental challenges mostly affect rain-fed subsistence agriculture and herding communities in Niger. In the Iferouane region, communities do not practice rain-fed agriculture, gardeners use wells for irrigation during the primary growing season – in our winter. However the most important economy is herding – raising animals to sell to purchase food and for all expenses. And the animals are dependent upon grazing in the countryside.

- After two dry years, with little rainfall during the 2-3 month rainy season, a decrease in the amount of grass in the pastureland shortened the number of months that grass and shrub-leaves were available for animals. Families used several strategies to survive during these times, such as temporary relocation of herds or selling animals to buy animal feed.
- For the goat-herding program, young animals were purchased to maximize reproduction the initial investment in animals. However, young animals do not always survive food or water shortages well. In Year One of our program rainfall was low and grazing lands scant. To avoid putting young animals at risk of starvation, we delayed the program for a year. When we instituted the program, in Year Two, we distributed the animal feed in two stages, both during the most vulnerable time of the year -- springtime in the US, that coincides with the hot-dry season in Niger.

Socio-economic factors that impacted the program were based in the impact of new gold-mining sites in the region.

- The resulting gold rush motivated many men and boys to press their luck in the dangerous mines. Those who succeeded in earning money from selling gold introduced a significant amount of money into some communities. This is not a sustainable activity, nor one that helped the whole community, but the immediate impact was a disinterest in S&L Groups, despite the long-term benefits.
- We changed three of the communities originally planned to assure strong program participation. Accordingly, Tintelouste, Tadek and Tchinfiniten participated in the

mentoring program and the goat program, but not the S&L Groups. Three new communities were selected: Etaghas, Betarmatas and Aouderas. Etaghas is located in the Iferouane area, while Betarmatas and Aouderas are located in a different area of Agadez, near the administrative center of Elmiki.

Partner Community	Mentoring (# of mentors)	Goat-herding	Savings and Loans
Iferouane	(10)	X	X
Soulefet	(5)	X	X
Tchinfiniten	(10)	X	
Tintelouste	(5)	X	
Tadek	(5)	X	
Etaghas*			X
Betarmatas*			X
Aouderas*			X

*new partner community – changed from originally identified community

Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

- We were thrilled to find a new employee to select, train and monitor the Betarmatas and Aouderas groups. Azara Touma-Touma Ibrahim, a Tuareg woman from the region, with a passion for women and children issues and rural development divided her time at the Agadez Learning Center (another RAIN program) and the Aouderas and Betarmatas S&L Groups. Azara’s title is Women and Children’s Program Specialist.
- Our Grant Writer, Marsha Filion, resigned this summer. We are happy that Marsha, a creative writer and editor, found her dream position but we miss her. She was played a key role in monitoring and evaluation. While we have not yet filled the Grant Writer position have hired a young Nigerien man, Mohamed Alkamissa Djingo, as our Representative and Evaluation Specialist in Niger. Mohamed recently earned his MA in Public Administration with a concentration in Non Profit Management. Our field agents, gather information but are not skilled in compiling and analyzing the information. With Mohamed in place we have made improving these functions a top priority.
- We had no other significant changes.

What were the most important lessons learned?

We have learned several lessons from implementing these programs:

- *The importance of having constant contact* with beneficiary communities and regional socio-economic activities to assess risks to program implementation from the time the program is planned to implementation. In ultra-poor areas, things can change quite quickly when their tentative livelihoods confront environmental challenges and/or socio-

economic changes. Our system of field agents is essential for information specific to different localities and assessing risks to planned programs.

- *Strategic planning* has helped us to look ahead, and part of this forward thinking including assessing potential partner communities. Our field agents had assessed several different areas that helped reduce the burden of locating partner communities when unexpected and rapid change affected communities originally identified for this program.
- The success of the mentoring program – bringing substantial benefit to both mentors and their assigned students, has convinced us to make this program our priority. Mentoring is key to the success of rural and nomadic students who are challenged because:
 - 85% of them have parents who are unlettered and never attended school;
 - Rural schools are more lacking in trained teachers, books and supplies than urban schools;
 - Rural parents rarely speak French – the national language that is the only language of instruction;
 - Children and parents alike have little experience beyond their immediate family clan or village and lack basic knowledge of education and the opportunities it may offer them.
- Through the mentoring program we are seeing the first girls ever to graduate primary schools, some of whom are continuing their educations. Mentors have become wise women in their communities with deep understanding of issues that were unknown to them such as:
 - The benefits of good hygiene, later marriage and smaller families;
 - Positive effects of education upon girls as they become women;
 - That through their roles as mentors they are empowered to assert themselves as advisors and influential members of their communities.

What has changed within your organization as a result of this project?

We have included the growth of the mentor program in our Strategic Plan, as follows:

- Increasing our mentor groups from 5 or 10 members each, to 20 each. This would not only bring the benefits of mentoring to more girls; it will create ideally-sized groups for the S&L Program. Our S&L Groups funded by Dining For Women provide us with women eager to become mentors.
- By incorporating S&L Groups and Herding Programs we anticipate bringing each of our mentor groups to sustainability. The DFW grant gave us the experience necessary to develop a 5-year plan Mentoring Sustainability Plan that incorporates Mentoring, S&L Groups and Herding to generate sufficient income for mentors to replace the monthly \$10 RAIN stipends with their earnings, while still enjoying a profit.

We now have new communities interested in our education programs. The unexpected change of partner communities for the Savings & Loan Program helped us to move forward with our strategic planning goal of expansion with new staff being trained in program implementation and field work skills.

Describe the unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits.

Unexpected events and outcomes:

Forging partnerships with rural and nomadic desert peoples of West Africa
PO Box 1503, Portsmouth, NH 03802/56 Middle St, Portsmouth, NH 03801
603-371-0676 www.rain+sahara.org

- Women in S&L Groups benefit from increased solidarity with other women in the community. The solidarity within the existing mentor groups, that formed half of the new S&L Groups, created an increased interest in joining the mentoring program for S&L Group members that were not mentors.
- One member in Betarmatas is breaking cultural norms and improving access to fuel for the growing number of motorcycles in the area by selling gas. She manages and often her son helps with the sales.
- Thanks to Azara's work in Betarmatas and Aouderas, women are pushing the boundaries of savings possible in their communities by combining a portion of the profits from the sale of their traditional craft of making palm-fronds into their savings amount. Whereas most communities in a similar socio-economic range find it challenging to find 20-30 cents per week for savings, women in Azara's S&L Groups are saving 50 cents per week. They understand that any percentage of profits from palm-frond sales put into the savings will grow when used for loans and interest paid to the group on the loaned funds. This may seem obvious but in regions where there are no banks, the concepts that saving money over time, as well as payment of interest on loans, will result in significant sums are unknown.

Approximately how many lives have been touched, both directly and indirectly, by the program?

How lives are touched. The mentoring program touches the lives of the mentors and their families as the women become leaders in their communities. At the same time, the students and their families benefit by appreciating the benefits of girls' education, learning that later marriage and smaller families will lead to healthier, wealthier families, as well as developing crafts skills that can generate future income. Goat herding and S&L Groups help the families of mentors and students alike by improving incomes and food security. An unanticipated benefit of the mentoring program is the magnitude of the women's influence in their communities. Mentors report gathering women at festivals and celebrations to discuss girls' education as well as the risks of too-early marriages and too-large families. They partner with mothers throughout their communities to support girls and are active advocates for girls' education in ways that only members of a community can be.

How we count.

- Goat-herding and S&L Groups have the same beneficiaries in communities where the mentors are participating in both programs; they are not double counted.
- The ten women in the S&L Groups who are not mentors do not have sponsored students; only their families were counted as lives directly touched.
- Directly touched lives include:
 - the mentors and their families,
 - the sponsored students.
 - Calculation: the women in the S&L Groups who are not mentors, plus their families. (Mentors x 7 family members) + (sponsored students) + (non-mentor S&L women x 7 family members) = total lives directly touched by programs.
- Indirect lives touched by the programs include families of sponsored students.

Partner Community	# lives directly touched by programs	# lives indirectly touched by programs
Iferouane	190	350
Soulefet	190	350
Tchinfiniten	120	350
Tintelouste	60	175
Tadek	60	175
Etaghas	140	-
Betarmatas	140	-
Aouderas	140	-
Total	1040	1400

If the program is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.

The mentoring, goat herding, and Savings & Loans programs are all ongoing programs. The two income-generating activities will help the mentoring program become sustainable and independently supported by the mentors. The S&L Groups provide direct income to mentors and their families. Profits from the goat-herding programs – including milk and cheese for nutrition and profit, as well as income from selling male animals support mentors, their families and costs incurred by mentors for materials for their mentee craft lessons.

The S&L Groups benefited from 3 months of weekly trainings followed by 9 months of Group monitoring and support. After the first year the group is independent. Field agents will visit the groups 3-4 times during the second year to provide supplemental support as needed and to make recommendations for improving the benefits of the group.

The goat-herding program takes to time as the herd must be grown in age and number before it can generate offspring for sale. The chart below helps to estimate herd growth during until sustainability.

Year	Animals	Notes	Profit
1	3 females + 1 male	Growing herd	0
2	8 animals	Minimum reproduction rate; each female with at least one offspring during the year	0
3	14 animals	Sell original male	\$50-\$60
4	24 animals	Sell original 3 females and other fully grown males	\$120-\$160
5	Min of 8 reproducing females	Maximum herd-size depends on the location and the time women have to spend. A minimum number of required female goats will prevent the herd from	\$200+

		becoming dangerously small and set parameters for the mentors to make decisions about sales	

What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured (e.g., surveys, observation)? Be specific and include measurable results.

To measure the success of our programs, field agents combine group and individual interviews with monitoring documents to provide a global picture of a programs success or challenges.

The Mentoring program:

RAIN staff have meeting with mentors every two months. Mentors, students, parents and school staff participate in discussions, both formal and informal with RAIN field agents. At the beginning of the year, school attendance, including the total numbers of girls and boys, and the number of girls and boys per class with a mentor are all accounted for. Changes in sponsored students and school staff are also noted.

Recently, the Niger Government decided on 100% passing for all students for most schools, creating a variety of compounded problems for both the school system itself and organizations working in the education sector. Now RAIN monitors abandonment in school and compares the difference among students with mentors and those without at the 6th grade level, the final year of elementary school. Not all partner school have all grades in these cases, abandonment at each grade level is noted.

The Goat-herding program

Three times a year, the status of mentors' goat-herds are monitored at important seasons during the year: after the rainy season, after the cold season, and towards the end of the hot season (the most vulnerable time for animals in terms of hunger and disease). Field agents enter the number of male and female goats, death/loss/theft, reproduction, and any amount spent by the mentor on medicine or supplementary food for the animals. Once the herd grows to a size that allows mentors to sell animals, sales will be followed and the percentage going towards the mentor and the mentoring program. Proceeds for the mentoring program will mostly be used to purchase raw materials for craft workshops.

The Savings and Loans Program

The savings and loans programs are monitored mostly using quantifiable measurements due to the nature of the program. Weekly savings amounts, fines, interest on loans and important group discussions are all noted during weekly savings meetings for the three months and then during the monthly loan meetings for the first year.

During loan meetings, women receiving loans state the amount, reason, duration and interest rate and interest total for the loan taken. Women returning loan money with interest are interviewed about small business challenges and successes and profits made during the duration of the loan period.

See attached examples of monitoring documents attached separately.

School statistics – beginning of the year

Mentor profile

Goat herding monitoring

Savings and loans group rules and loan meeting monitoring

Did this grant and relationship with DFW assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity?

The Niger government's new policy of requiring education to the age of 16 is accompanied by the construction of many new middle schools in rural areas. We have been supporting students with scholarships, mentoring and tutoring at our residential Agadez Learning Center for Tomorrow's Leaders in the city of Agadez. The Center has been the only option for children from our partner communities in the bush to continue education beyond primary school. We stress recruiting girls but parents in more distant communities are sometimes hesitant to send their 12 or 13-year old daughters to a residential program. The new middle schools offer the opportunity for us to provide mentoring and tutoring support on site.

These ideas for mentoring in Aouderas and Betarmatas -- along with other locations -- align with the Stromme Foundations speed schools and income-generating activities. Funding and partnership proposals are underway to two other organizations interested in the Mentoring Program and our 5-year sustainability plan.