



Dining for Women Interim Report 3

Learning & Earning Program for Women and Girls
in
Five Agadez Communities in Niger, West Africa

Amount: \$36,066 over two years

November 2015 - April 2016



S&L training session in Aouderas

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Introduction

Funding from Dining for Women is making it possible for women in several communities in Northern Niger to become empowered leaders through community advocacy and income generating programs.

Education serves as the focus for networks of women mentors, who support vulnerable children - mostly girls - that want to stay in school, while teaching them important lessons about health and hygiene, as well as providing training for practical and traditional skills.

In a country with one of the world's highest rates of poverty, child marriage, and illiteracy, every additional year a child can stay in school has the potential to improve lives and futures to a significant degree. Mentors benefit by serving a new and dynamic role in society as education advocates.

Mentor groups will be able to work towards self sufficiency through new supplemental programs that have been designed to cover program costs and create improved economic opportunities for participants while simultaneously increasing the significance of the role women play in community-based development.

The two supplemental programs are:

- 1) Goat-Herding: Leading a structured goat herding program to support their mentoring program
- 2) Savings & Loan Groups: Establishing women's savings & loan groups (S&Ls) to improve household resiliency through small-commerce while organizing community women to unite in a formal association.

Projects and Progress from November 2015 - March 2016

Community	Mentoring	Goat-Herding	Savings & Loans	Notes
Iferouane	*	*	*	North Iferouane group
Souloufet	*	*	*	
Tchinfiniten	*	*		S&L relocated do to logistical concerns
Tchintelouste	*	*		S&L relocated do to logistical concerns
Tadek	*	*		S&L relocated do to logistical concerns
Etaghas			*	New community
Betarmatas			*	New community
Aouderas			*	New community

The Mentoring Program, Goat-Herding and Savings & Loans Groups

Dining for Women's support for the mentoring program and two income-generating activities for the mentors provide increased motivation, respect, and improved livelihoods. These benefits combine to help women move towards a formal association, becoming more independent in group management, and in the future, recognized as independently managed, self-sustaining groups by the local authorities.

Implementing the goat-herding program in December 2015, women:

- Received 4 goats: 3 females and 1 male. Under the right conditions, goats can produce 2 offspring per year.
- Veterinary care: anti-parasite medication, skin disease vaccinations, herding advice
- Program training: growing herd to ideal size, when to sell animals, partition of animal sales [50% mentor; ~25% student training fund (artisan raw materials, training supplies such as soap for hygiene training); ~25% supplementary goat feed and medicine]

Implementing S&L groups in January 2016

- New women groups of 20-25 members formed in:
Iferoune zone: Iferouane Nord, Etaghas, Souloufet
Tchirozerine zone: Betarmatas and Aouderas

- Three-day initial training -- program function, participant roles, defining group's by-laws for savings, establishing a management committee, savings and loan amounts and duration, weekly meeting time and location
- Three months of supervised weekly savings and loans meetings
- Three months of weekly trainings on best practices, problem-solving, group cohesion, small business basics, and planning for small enterprises.

Challenges Encountered

Mentoring Program:

- 1) The Tadek and Tchintelouste schools suffered from a lack of teachers at the start of the year. These two schools also skip class years due to low community population and a lack of teachers in general. With help from the mentors and parents, school staff is realizing that the community is also anxious to see their school grow.
- 2) One mentor in Tchinfiniten, Assolo Sidi, moved with her husband and was replaced by a new mentor, Lalla Elh. Houmoutou.

Goat-Herding Program:

- 1) Tchintelouste required purchasing goats in two phases and coordinating with the veterinarian to travel for a second visit to vaccinate the second round of goats due to logistical problems of the goat market.
- 2) Identification issues addressed by the community after reflecting about the number of goats being introduced into the area led RAIN staff to work with the women to use local animal identification strategies to help monitor their animals.
- 3) All five communities involved in mentoring received goats towards the end of the cold season as grasslands begin to deteriorate. To allow women to keep herds closer to home and to increase the probability of reproduction during the rainy season, we have planned animal feed and additional veterinary care during the hot season.

S&L Program:

- 1) Etahas: Due to a high level of interest in RAIN's programming, including interest in implementing a mentoring program there, RAIN's

- field agent Djibrilla Mahamane formed a group of 24 women that we hope to include in other education programs in the future.
- 2) Etaghas women, influenced by a local Muslim cleric, were hesitant about fixing a set insurance rate based on the amount loaned. Trainings and discussions to address this topic, including vocabulary and specific details of the insurance policy, were discussed at the RAIN staff meeting in March. We hope to allow the women to fully benefit from the full extent of the program after the next trip. As the interest remains within the women's lockbox and is not a fine or penalty imposed by an outside party—the issue opposed by Muslim tradition—there is no conflict.

Progress and Challenges from April to September 2016

All programs are running according to plan, although as the hot season begins life slows down and other challenges arise including decreased water tables and displaced family members who are herding animals further away from home. Women finished the three months of weekly S&L training at the end of the March. They will take a step towards independence after this training period with field agents only monitoring monthly loans meetings through the end of the annual cycle.

The S&L program offers small loans to members that are often used to start small business opportunities to earn supplemental income. Additional income will help women make ends meet as they move into a difficult season. As women gain experience with small business skills this year, they will gain confidence and understand the possibility of expanding their small business ventures based on successes and local demand.

The dry season is a difficult time to herd large groups of animals and for this reason families move away from areas surrounding their cold season camps where the pastureland has been depleted and scrub-brush leaves are mostly gone. The mentors' four goats will mostly stay close to home for supervision and will benefit from additional feed and vaccination to help them make it to the rainy season, when they can benefit from fresh grass. If goats are not healthy and full during this time, they are unlikely to reproduce.

For the remainder of the goat-herding activity, expenses to date and through the end of the program's implementation are noted below. The amounts shown in dollars here use a 580Fcfa/\$1 exchange rate.

Activity	Month (completed or planned)	Description	Amount in US dollars
Goat purchase and delivery	End of December 2015; early January 2016	Purchase and deliver goats; veterinarian training and medical support	\$5,809
Animal feed 1 and veterinary care	Early April 2017	Provide wheat shaff or cotton grain feed; administer hot season vaccinations	~\$2,573
Animal feed 2	End of May 2017	Provide wheat shaff or cotton grain feed	~\$1,618
		TOTAL GOAT PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$10,000

The mentoring program and S&L groups will benefit from monitoring through the end of the 2015-16 school year for mentoring (end of May 2016) and through mid-rainy season for the monthly loan meetings for each group before staff vacations. Each group will continue to receive monthly monitoring through the end of the yearly cycle.

RAIN staff is exploring the possibility of additional training in forming formal associations with our mentor groups as they expand into more organized and dynamic groups with multiple activities.

We are happy to continue working with Djibrilla Mahamane our Iferouane-based field agent for mentoring, goat-herding in all Dining for Women funded communities, and S&L activities in three of the five communities.

RAIN is pleased to announce the recruitment of Azara Touma-Touma Ibrahim, a Tuareg woman from the Tidiene area North-East of Agadez. She now resides in Agadez town but prefers working in the countryside for trainings, program implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Azara is now our Coordinator for Women and Children Programs and has been working with the Betarmatas and Aouderas S&L groups with great success.

RAIN message to DFW donors:

Through the support of Dining for Women and its members, Rain for the Sahel and Sahara (RAIN) is providing herding and savings and loan (S&L) groups to women living in eight extremely remote and underserved communities in rural Niger. The majority of women living in these communities have little to no education, and few chances to improve their livelihoods, or that of their children. Herding and S&L groups give women a chance to earn their own income, which, studies consistently show, women tend to invest in the health and well-being of their families. Gradually, income generated from these activities will also contribute to the self-sufficiency of the project. Thanks to your support, these women are taking an important first step towards acquiring the skills and resources they need to lift themselves out of poverty.

For more about RAIN's work, please visit our website at www.rain4sahara.org.