



Final Report

10. Organization Name: The Tandana Foundation

Project Title: Women LEAP: Literacy, Empowerment, Awareness, Possibilities

Grant Amount: \$47,980

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11. The project's goal was to promote women's economic independence and participation in local decision-making in the Bandiagara District of Mali by improving their literacy, numeracy, and association management, democratic governance, and leadership skills in 2017 and 2018. The specific objectives are as follows: 1) By July 2017, 677 of the 900 women participating in the extended Tommo So literacy classes would achieve a satisfactory score in reading, writing, and calculation skills; 2) by November 2017, 250 booklets containing association documents, governance and leadership skills in Tommo So would be created to be used to train 250 women leaders; 3) by March 2018, a minimum of 10 women's associations would be registered by women who participated in the training and asked to submit proposals for income-generating activities; and 4) by June 2018, 5 women's association proposals would be selected for continued funding and technical support.

12. This project has achieved its goal of promoting women's economic independence and participation in local decision-making in Bandiagara District by improving their literacy, numeracy, association management, democratic governance, and leadership skills in 2017 and 2018. Specifically, 1) 687 literacy students achieved a satisfactory score on the skills test; 2) 250 sets of 2 booklets on association documents, governance, and leadership were created and used to train 250 women leaders; 3) 30 women's associations were created by women who participated in the training and 15 of them have been registered with the local government; 25 were invited to submit proposals for income-generating enterprises (several in villages that have already received support for women's enterprises were asked not to submit); 4) 24 proposals (2 associations worked together on 1 proposal) were submitted and 6 received funding and technical support for their enterprises. By analyzing expenses, we realized that savings due to a favorable exchange rate made it possible to support 6 enterprise proposals, rather than just 5.

13. In the first year, out of the 900 women expected to participate in the literacy classes, only 837 attended regularly. Social obligations and gardening work prevented some students from attending regularly. This change in number of direct beneficiaries means that approximately 8,370 people benefited indirectly in the first year, instead of the 9,000 expected. In the second year, 250 women participated in the leadership workshops as planned. They then created more associations than planned, with 2,533 members collectively. Six of these associations, with a collective total of 923 members, received funding for their enterprises. Based on a count of all of the leadership workshop participants plus all the members of the associations that received funding as direct beneficiaries, the total number of direct beneficiaries for the second year was 1,119. There were 1,381 members of the associations that were formed who did not participate in the workshops and did not receive funding for their enterprises who were indirect beneficiaries. The direct beneficiaries' family members are also indirect beneficiaries, bringing the total up to approximately 10,000 indirect beneficiaries. In the second year, the number of beneficiaries was thus much greater than the 400 direct and 900 indirect beneficiaries planned in the proposal.

14. The challenges mostly related to timing and scheduling. We found that some women did not have time to participate as regularly in the classes as we had hoped. We also found that, due to busy schedules, we were not able to schedule the evaluation of the enterprise proposals on time and experienced a delay in that process, as well as in the actual funding of the enterprises. We addressed this challenge by seeking to schedule events around women's busy work times and persisting despite delays to ensure that all components of the project were completed as soon as possible, even if it was not precisely according to the original schedule. Another challenge was that we realized that we had overlooked certain important steps, such as workshops to evaluate the enterprise proposals and the costs of official registration of the women's associations, in our original plan. Luckily, we were able to save money due to a favorable exchange rate and use our savings to pay for these additional steps. A third challenge was that in some villages, students had greater difficulty attaining the desired skill level than expected. Some of those who had attended their first session of classes several years ago had forgotten much of what they had learned, and more review was required than we had expected. Some students had used their skills in their own micro-businesses or in their Savings for Change groups, and retained the knowledge, while others had not practiced much and had forgotten more. The instructors responded by providing the necessary review to bring the struggling students up to speed.

15. Aaron DiMartino has replaced Juliana Essen as Operations Director. We have not experienced other significant changes.

16. The most important lesson learned was that women in Bandiagara District of Mali have tremendous enthusiasm, energy, capability, and drive to improve their economic situations, exercise a greater voice in local decision-making, and demonstrate their independence and competence. Their stories about realizing that traders have been cheating them at the market but no longer can because now they can read the scales, being able to use cell phones on their own to call family members, keeping records for their groups and project committees, making their own income-generating activities more profitable by doing on their own steps they used to pay others to do, and so many other

forms of progress testify to their abilities and their excitement about using their new skills. When leadership workshop participants shared their personal stories of struggles to be heard and to demand equal treatment in governmental and political settings, listeners honored each story with both applause and a quiet moment of reflection and appreciation as they considered how they, too, could take greater leadership roles. Women also speak with much greater confidence in mixed-gender settings. Whereas before, they would sit quietly in the back of a community meeting, now they speak up and share their ideas. One president of a new women's association even spoke up at a public event hosted by the mayor to warn the mayor that he had better make sure to inform her of any township activities so that the women of her association could participate and share their opinions. Men, too, have shown a change in behavior in response to women's new confidence and activities. Several husbands made comments about how their wives go where they want to now and the husbands can no longer tell them not to go. They are pleased to see their wives earning more income through their new activities. The fact that more women, both in villages that have already had literacy classes and in neighboring ones, keep requesting the program also testifies to the enthusiasm for this kind of empowerment.

17. The Women LEAP program (which, for 2019, we are renaming Women's Literacy, Leadership, and Enterprise) has become a very important program in our organization, one that we hope to continue for many years to come and expand to reach more beneficiaries. It is also one of the programs of which we are most proud. This program has also made it possible for us to hire more women staff in Mali. We have now hired Kessia Kouriba, one of the literacy instructors, full time as our Program Assistant. Her experience as a literacy instructor contributed to her ability to take on this role. Also, for the new phase of literacy classes in 2019, 7 out of 10 instructors are women, so we have been able to create more employment opportunities for women and increase the number of women on our staff.

18. This program has brought several unexpected benefits. Perhaps the most surprising is an increase in cleanliness. Participants explained that, when they get together every day for literacy classes, or every week for association meetings, they are obliged to bathe and wear clean clothes. A number of participants mentioned this increased cleanliness as a benefit. It was also a surprise to learn the frequency with which traders at markets had been cheating illiterate women by lying about the weights of products, since the women could not read the scales. Now, since so many women know their numbers, the traders are afraid to assume that women will be unable to read the scales. The women of Dana-Guiré found that the traders who had been selling them cotton refused to sell to them anymore once they realized that so many women from that village were literate. Luckily, The Tandana Foundation helped them create a cotton bank in 2018, so they have a revolving fund with which they can buy their cotton in bulk directly from growers, instead of having to rely on dishonest resellers at their local market. It has also been a pleasant surprise to see how several men, including one mayor, who were originally dubious of The Tandana Foundation's work, have seen the positive results of this program and become ardent supporters.

19. Learning from the challenges we experienced, we have altered the program design for the next phase as we expand to support new beneficiaries. For example, seeing the difficulties that women who waited several years between their initial literacy session and their continuation session had, we have henceforth scheduled the initial session and the

continuation session in the same year. We have also planned for the additional expenses that we had overlooked in our original proposal and realized were necessary. We are trying to get a head start whenever possible, in order to minimize delays.

20. Approximately 1,119 women benefited directly from this program. Through the associations they created and through their increased income, which benefits their families, approximately 10,000 people benefited indirectly.

21. The measurements included observation during supervision visits, test results, scores on daily evaluation exercises during the leadership workshops, lists of participants and members, and evaluation of the enterprise proposals using a rubric with 20 criteria. AFTCD/PD, our partner organization, provided both qualitative reports and test result data from their supervision of the literacy classes. Test results showed that out of the 837 regular students, 687 achieved a satisfactory score on the skills test. During the leadership workshops, each day closed with an evaluation exercise through which small groups worked together to answer questions about the concepts presented that day. The average score on these exercises was 7.37 out of 10. AFTCD/PD also provided qualitative remarks based on observation of the workshops. The lists of participants and members show that 837 women participated regularly in the literacy classes, 250 women participated in the leadership workshops, and 2,533 women belong to the new women's associations. The enterprise proposals were evaluated by a committee using a rubric of 20 criteria. The 6 proposals that were selected for funding all received either 19 or 20 points on that rubric. The average score of all the proposals was 15.54.

22. The ongoing part of the original proposal is quarterly supervision and support of the enterprises of the 6 women's associations that received funding. This follow up will continue each quarter for the next three years. We have also received requests to hold another contest for enterprise proposals from the associations created through Women LEAP in 2019 and to provide funding for the best proposals. If funding allows, we will hold this new contest. Additionally, due to the great success of this program and the continued demand for it, we have decided to extend it to 600 more women in 20 new groups. In 2019, we are providing initial literacy sessions and will also provide continuation literacy sessions to 300 women in 10 groups. In 2020, we will provide both initial and continuation literacy sessions to an additional 300 women in 10 new groups. At the same time, we will host women's leadership workshops for 80 leaders from the 2019 literacy classes and support them in forming women's associations and submitting proposals for enterprises. These proposals will be evaluated, and the 5 best proposals will receive funding. In 2021, this same process of leadership workshops, creation of associations, and funding for enterprise proposals will be extended to women from the 2020 literacy classes. We have been promised some funding for this next phase from Foundation Beyond Belief, Somebody's Mama, and Vital Edge Aid. However, the new phase is not yet fully funded. If there is any opportunity to seek additional funding from Dining for Women to help extend this successful program to more beneficiaries, we would be delighted to learn about that opportunity.

23. Please see the budget/actual comparison for more detail. Expenses covered by the DFW grant include the following:

1. Preparation for Continuation Literacy Classes
 - a. Training session for instructors: \$286.94
2. Continuation Literacy Classes

- a. Supplies: \$1,292,95
 - b. Instructor Pay: \$6,825
 - c. Instructor relocation costs: \$748.25
 - d. Evaluation: \$2,437.50
3. Creation and Printing of Association and Governance Documents
 - a. Creation of women's association management booklet: \$812.50
 - b. Creation of democratic governance booklet: \$812.50
 - c. Creation of instructors' guide: \$812.50
 - d. Printing of management booklet: \$2,223
 - e. Printing of governance booklet: \$2,223
 - f. Printing of instructors' guides: \$145
 4. Women's Leadership Workshops
 - a. Workshops: \$17,064.10
 - b. Support for registration of women's associations: \$377.80
 5. Support for Income Generating Activities
 - a. Workshops for proposal discussion and evaluation: \$867.60
 - b. Capital for 6 enterprise proposals selected: \$10,930
 6. Preparation for Extension of the program to more women
 - a. Training session for instructors: \$499.06.

N.B. We have recruited several new women to be instructors for the next set of classes, and we used the remaining \$499.06 from Dining for Women to contribute to the cost of holding a training session for these new instructors.

24. This grant, and the successful results that it allowed us to achieve, helped us to acquire additional grant funding from Foundation Beyond Belief, which selected this program for its 2018 Compassionate Impact Grant, and Somebody's Mama, which selected this program for funding in 2019. We are tremendously grateful to Dining for Women for making this program possible, and for increasing our ability to raise more funds to keep extending the program to more beneficiaries.

Thank you so much for making this program possible! It is truly transforming not only individual women's lives but also their collective ability to generate income and participate in political processes, as well as local norms regarding listening to women's voices and respecting their independence. We are so grateful to Dining for Women for supporting this important change.

We would love to share with you stories and quotes from some of the participants that illustrate the difference it has made in their lives.

You can find a video featuring participants' stories here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HonMYCGOTA>.

You can also find stories at the following links:

- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/12/16/long-live-the-tandana-foundation/>
- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/10/14/taking-risks-to-become-female-leaders/>
- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/07/29/what-we-can-do-now/>

- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/07/14/we-see-clearly-we-hear-we-walk/>
- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/06/02/advocating-for-gender-equality-in-local-elections/>
- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/04/21/a-woman-leading-by-example-to-inspire-others/#unique-identifier>
- <https://tandanafoundationblog.wordpress.com/2018/03/03/teaching-literacy-to-empower-women-in-mali/>

Here are just a few of our favorite stories from participants:

In 2017, after the continuation course, I went to the Sangha market to sell my dried onions. The shopkeeper weighed my onions in front of me, and it was 29 kg. He told me, “Your onions only weigh 20 kg.” Because he did not know that I have my diploma [from literacy class], I smiled and asked the trader, “Can the scale lie?” He said no. “If that’s the case, then the scale said 29 kg,” I said. The shopkeeper was surprised when he answered: “what did you do to read the kilograms?” I told him it is thanks to the Tandana Foundation that you cannot steal from me anymore. I realized right away that he had been stealing before tens of kilos at the market, right in front of us. As a Bambara saying goes, “illiteracy is indeed darkness.” I cried with joy in front of everyone at the market. From this day on, no one steals from me at the market.

- Adama Kanambaye

Personally, I didn’t know phone numbers. My husband is away working. When I needed to talk to my husband, I went to my brothers’ home in my village. I gave them money to put the digits in my phone to call him. I had my phone, but I didn’t know how to put credit into it, and I didn’t know the numbers. People are crooks, because as a woman you don’t have the right to ask for something from your husband as you’d like if he is away. Today, I can put my credit in my phone as I want. I can record the names and numbers of my relatives in my contacts list, call my husband and children who are away, where I want and whenever I want. The Tandana Foundation has put a new life into my life and into almost half of the village women, who are now literate. It’s like they liberated me from a prison. Thank you and thank you to the Tandana Foundation.

- Kadidia Kassogué

Today, we have a village-level women’s group. Every Friday, we contribute 50f [about 9 cents] per person for all the women in the village. There are more than 100 women in the village. Therefore, our contribution is more than 5,000f [about \$9] each meeting. Our fund comes not only from this contribution but we also have working groups and fines, too. Today after the training, we have more than 35,000f [about \$62] in our fund, and furthermore, we have a plan of action. This year, it is our group of women who will move all the manure from

the village to the fields. We'll carry clay [for construction] too. After the rainy season, it is we, the women, who will bring all the ears of millet to the houses, and all this money earned goes into our group fund. We don't have much difficulty because all the women know and respect their rights and duties of the group work. We, the women of Nounou, have already decided not to borrow money anywhere else. . . . Before we were blind, dumb, deaf, and we couldn't walk. Today, thanks to the Tandana Foundation, we see clearly, we hear, and we walk.

--Assatou Goudienkilé

I am a student of the literacy class in Kansongho and one of the cooks trained by The Tandana Foundation to cook for Tandana volunteer groups on their visits to Mali. I am also a member of the executive committee of the Olouguelemo Environmental Association and a member of the Kansongho cotton bank committee. Thanks to the literacy classes, I can carry out my responsibilities in all the roles that have been entrusted to me and I can take notes during meetings and assemblies. Now I know how to calculate so I can estimate the quantities of ingredients needed for meals we cook for the different workshops and Tandana activities, based on the number of participants. Thanks to my work cooking for these workshops, I earn the money I need for skin cream, soap, clothes for me and my children, and ingredients for our family's meals. After the literacy classes, I now can keep a notebook recording the attendance and contributions of each member of my Savings for Change group, and I assist other Savings for Change groups in my village when they share their group fund at the end of the year.

--Yagouno Tembiné