



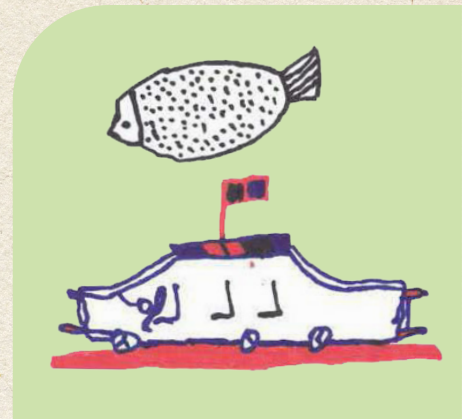
Until we are all equal



RIGHT: Salimata, 12, says she prefers to have fun with friends than talk about her past. BELOW: The boy who drew this picture says he wants fish to feed his family and a tank to protect them.

# PREAM Team

A research project on youth living in conflict and crisis



This innovative study uses an arts-based approach to explore how conflict affects youths' sense of control over their lives.



A group of girls walk to school in the Mopti region of central Mali.



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## Project Summary

How can we help girls living in conflict assert their right to education? Some early answers.

**M**ore than 1,500 schools in Mali are closed due to ongoing conflict in the country. We know that limiting a child's education limits their opportunities, but what else does it cost them?

Plan International joined with McGill University – a leader in education research in francophone countries – and the University of Letters and Human Sciences of Bamako (ULSHB) in Mali to invite youth in the Mopti and Ségou regions of central Mali to share their perspectives on the complex relationship between education and their ability to make decisions, act upon them and shape their own lives. The research found that going to school increases young people's capacity to help themselves and achieve their objectives in life. It also found that feeling a sense of agency helps them stay in school and get better results.

## THE FACTS

**WHAT:** The Participatory Research on Education and Agency in Mali (PREAM) project explores how girls' and boys' sense of control over their lives is affected by gender norms when living amidst conflict and how this affects their ability to access education.

**WHO:** Adolescent girls and boys, ages 11 to 18

**WHERE:** Mopti and Ségou regions of central Mali

**WHEN:** September 2020–August 2023

**FUNDED BY:** Dubai Cares, the E-Cubed Research Fund, McGill University, the McLean Smits Family Foundation and individual Canadian supporters

**WHY:** This research will help:

1. Understand how education programs can positively influence young people's ability to make choices and act on them.
2. Support the development of effective education programs for young people living in crisis-affected areas.
3. Improve girls' access to education in the midst of conflict.

BY THE NUMBERS

# Project Highlights

While school closures impact all students, in some of the rural areas most affected by conflict, girls' education suffers at a higher rate than boys'. In the Mopti and Ségou regions, for example, 53% of boys attend the later years of primary school, while only 47% of girls do.



Diatou (left) studies at home with her older sister in the Sikasso region of Mali.

**1,000**

young people in six municipalities shared their views through a comprehensive survey. Respondents included 700 in-school students (70%) and 300 young people who were not in school (30%).

**6**

art-based workshops were conducted, with a total of 60 girls and 60 boys participating.

**98**

interviews were recorded during community workshops, which brought together youth and adults to discuss the youth experience of education and agency.

Youth shared their artistic responses to the prompt "What does helping yourself look like?"

**23**

conferences and 16 academic events have featured the findings of the PREAM project, deepening understanding of how to support youth living in conflict. Presentations were also made to local and national institutions that govern education in Mali.

**1**

art book, *Picturing Agency*, was published to present the young people's creative work.

**120**

drawings and 23 videos were produced by workshop participants.



A STORY OF CHANGE

# Art & Science

How arts-based research opened the door for youths' personal stories.

**W**hen an adolescent girl sits in front of an adult to answer a series of research questions, there are inherent power dynamics at play that may hinder her ability to express herself freely. Arts-based workshops, using a methodology called the Participatory Visual Method, give youth a chance to express their views through creative activities.

In PREAM's research workshops, 120 youths were asked to create drawings that answered the question "What does helping yourself look like?" and to create short videos about "having the capacity to act and help yourself or not having the capacity to act and help yourself."

The results told powerful stories about the youths' daily lives, what agency looks like to them and what they need

to take control of their situation and their futures. One video portrayed students taking their education into their own hands by forming a study group during a teachers' strike. Another envisioned a group of boys protecting their peers and alerting the authorities after finding a bomb on the road. In the youths' drawings, they identified water, nutrition, housing, health care, transportation and education among the factors that allow them to help themselves.

Livelihoods that boost self-sufficiency were also often pictured. In their artwork and in group discussions, the participants showed a clear understanding of the issues affecting them and the solutions that would help. They also want to assist not only themselves but also their families and communities.



“In the drawing there is a dress that I made myself. This activity will allow me to make money and not depend on other people.”

– Baroueli, 13, shares the meaning behind her art



Stills from two "cellfilms" (movies shot on cell phones) show that girls do the largest share of domestic tasks.



SPOTLIGHT

## Research Matters

In the PREAM project's findings, young people emphasized that education alone isn't enough to develop their ability to set and achieve their goals. They stressed the importance of support from teachers and parents, along with personal traits like determination, courage, ambition, motivation and hard work.

Research like this contributes to a body of evidence to influence policy and practice in conflict-affected areas. By showcasing youth voices and experience, policy makers and education leaders can better understand how they can support youth to learn and to govern their own futures.

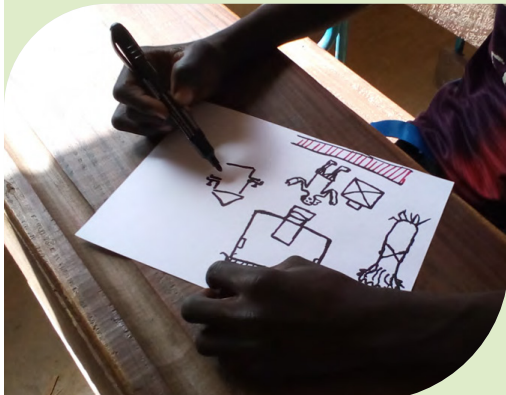
The PREAM project's research results have been shared with government agencies in Mali and internationally to improve the conditions and support available for students affected by conflict. They have also been shared with other influencers in international development, education and academia. Plan will continue to promote the voices of young people to inform decision making about the issues that affect them.

### 3 RESEARCH PHASES

**Phase 1 (2021):** The project team led arts-based workshops in six communes with 60 girls and 60 boys, ages 11 to 18.

**Phase 2 (2022):** A survey was developed and circulated to another 1,000 adolescents.

**Phase 3 (2023):** Phase 1 participants discussed how to share research findings at community workshops.



A participant looks at some of the drawings made as part of a project workshop.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Ongoing conflict in Mali has displaced 385,000 people.
- In Mali, 52% of girls are married by the time they are 18. When a girl gets married, she is often expected to drop out of school.
- Only 15% of girls in Mali are enrolled in secondary school.
- More than 1,500 schools in Mali remain closed because of violent threats, attacks, damage to infrastructure from conflict or neglect and difficulty recruiting teachers, especially to schools in dangerous areas. This is affecting nearly half a million children.

### Thank you for your support.

With this research, we have an opportunity to influence how education institutions support youth, especially girls, in conflict-affected settings, in Mali and around the world.



Click or scan the QR code to learn how you can support girls until we are all equal.

## WHAT'S NEW AT PLAN

# Our Shared Dream

**W**e see the world as it is and the world as it could be. No matter how complex the challenges, a better future is possible.

It takes **determination**.

It takes **optimism**.

It takes **vision**.

Our “moon shot” vision is equality for girls everywhere. Improving the lives of girls improves the lives of everyone in the family and the community. That understanding, which we know you share, is at the heart of our fundraising campaign, Until We Are All Equal. When you support this campaign, you’re trusting us to identify the greatest threats to equality, especially for girls, and respond to them as they arise.

Just going to school every day is impossible for many girls, with one in six living in a conflict zone. That’s why, right now, about 120 million girls are missing out on an education. What’s more, many girls – 12 million every year – are forced into early marriage, placing them at a heightened risk of dying from complications of early pregnancy or childbirth.

There are 500 million girls alive on our planet today, each filled with promise and potential and with their whole futures ahead of them. How do you transform the world? Start by investing in girls.



## About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children’s rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. We’re determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.

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