



**RIGHT TO PLAY**  
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

# Impact of the PAQE II Project

## Program Description

Children in Mali have improved their reading and life skills thanks to the Play for the Advancement of Quality of Education (PAQE II) project. The project, which aimed to improve the quality of education for students in Grades 1 to 6, ran between 2017 and 2024.

From June 2023 to May 2024, program staff introduced a school food program in 10 of the 20 partner schools in Koulikoro and Bougouni

During the extension period, 21,442 children benefited from play-based learning, and 3,228 children benefited from play-based learning as well as the school feeding program.

The combination of access to nutritious food and a supportive learning environment led to improved school attendance and performance.

### KEY RESULTS

- 1 Children were more likely to attend school**  
in schools that used both play-based learning and the f program. Those students missed 36% less school than students attending schools that didn't offer the food program.
- 2 Children showed improved reading skills**  
Students in schools offering a food program and play-based learning could read 17 words per minute (WPM), compared to 16 WPM in schools without the food program, and 11 WPM in non-partner schools.
- 3 The program boosted life skills**  
In schools offering both play-based learning and the food program, 92% of students demonstrated teamwork, compared to 88% of students in play-based learning schools and 70% of students in non-partner schools.
- 4 Play makes learning more enjoyable**  
80% of students in partner schools said they enjoyed school and participating in class, compared to 64% of students in non-partner schools.
- 5 High rates of positive discipline**  
91% of teachers in partner schools used positive discipline compared with only 7% in non-partner schools



## Context

Children in Mali have been affected by high levels of political instability, as well as school strikes and COVID-19-related school closures. Our teams observed that hunger and the widespread use of corporal punishment were significant barriers to children attending school and meeting desired learning outcomes.

We introduced a school food program in some partner schools and supported teachers to use positive discipline and play-based lessons in their lessons to create positive learning environments, and help children catch up on and enjoy learning.

### KEY LEARNINGS

- 1 Ensuring that children have adequate nutrition is key to improving school attendance and learning outcomes. Right To Play can consider partnerships with organizations that specialize in school feeding in areas where poor nutrition is a challenge.
- 2 Parents were supportive of the school feeding program because it relieved them of financial pressure and helped their children progress in school.
- 3 Children's learning outcomes still fell short of expectations; this may be due to the impacts of trauma and instability. Prioritizing emotional well-being in fragile contexts is key.
- 4 Instead of aiming for the standard 61 word-per-minute reading benchmark, which may be unrealistic in fragile contexts, we can focus on other literacy milestones and measure progress on simpler tasks that can help children feel a sense of achievement.
- 5 Reducing corporal punishment in schools requires collaboration with government, families, and communities to change policies and cultural norms.

The Play for the Advancement of Quality Education (PAQE II) program is made possible thanks to the generous support of Norway.



Click [here](#) to read the full endline evaluation.