« Hikima » (*Strategy in Hausa*) radio distance learning safe spaces program activity report

Community-based listening groups

December 2020

Prepared by: Hamani Karimoun Ramatou **Approved by: Rachida Issoufou Mani**

INTRODUCTION

Context :

The outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic forced the government of Niger to suspend classes in schools in Niger for 10 weeks. During this period, sessions of the Hilin Mu program of Initiative OASIS Niger (now organized as **Lumière des Filles et des Femmes**) were also suspended. To make up for missed sessions during school closings, we adapted 20 safe spaces sessions to be diffused through radio posts. This remedial support was key for preparing the girls for the start of the new school year in October 2020. One of the biggest reasons for girls dropping out of 6th grade has been their lack of proficiency in the required academic competencies, and their resulting failure of exams that determine whether they progress to the next class. With the support of our Hikima project, we aimed to strengthen oral comprehension and written expression in French, in addition to life skills, to facilitate the participation of these girls in the next academic year.

This project - Hikima - served 500 girls participating in the Hilin Mu project in CM2 class for the 2019-2020 school year in the municipality of Tibiri in the Maradi region. This activity serves as a pilot to test this adaptation of our traditional school safe spaces model to see its impact on girls' learning. Normally the mentors are teachers from the establishment and they facilitate in the school; but with this adaptation, it is community « Godmothers » who are recruited and trained to lead the sessions in a community place. If the results are promising as a result of this pilot phase, the strategy can be integrated into the standard program.

Objective :

This activity aimed to better prepare the participating girls in the Hilin Mu program for the start of the school year given the 10-week interruption suffered due to the covid-19 pandemic.

More specifically, it aimed to strengthen the following skills:

- Oral comprehension in French
- Writing in French
- Critical thinking
- Life skills such as:
    - Learn about myself, my friends and my community
    - My body and keeping it clean
    - Threats of violence in my community
    - The qualities of a good marriage ...

Project Description

Hikima is based on the strategy of safe spaces by bringing together girls of the same age in clubs supervised by a woman from the community. The girls were grouped together in clubs of 12 to 20 girls with a mentor who was a community mother (« marraine » or godmother). The Godmothers were selected by the village chief and the School Management Committee on the basis of the following criteria, **the mentor must**:

1. be female
2. be an older woman
3. know how to read and write
4. Have a good understanding and oral expression in French
5. Know how to conduct a group discussion
6. Be a patient woman who loves children
7. Be a wise and respectful woman chosen by the community
8. Be available to lead the group sessions

The clubs met three (3) times a week for a period of one and a half hours for 7 weeks with 20 sessions completed. They met at a location identified by the community. Each club had a radio, a memory card, two to three mats, and comprehension booklets and pens for the participants.

Overview of a Hikima session:

Once the girls gather for the session, the mentor welcomes the group and begins the session with a song or dance to make the girls feel comfortable. The mentor plays the first part of the session recorded on the radio, which is a reading of Nigerien tales. After listening with the group, she asks the girls questions to stimulate a debate. Then the girls answer the comprehension questions in their exercise booklets.

The mentor plays the second part of the recording, which is a life skills skit. The same process follows: the mentor asks questions to prompt a discussion, and the girls end by filling in the comprehension questions in their workbooks.

Closing the session, the mentor asks the girls what are the main ideas they took away from the session, and how they plan to share this information with their peers and sisters.

RESULTS

Table N°1 : Comparison of Hilin Mu and Hikima participants

- out of 502 girls in the HILIN MU (*"My Space" in Hausa*) program, 391 girls participated in at least one session of the HIKIMA program, **for a 77.88% participation rate**.
- The smaller number of girls participating in HIKIMA than in HILIN MU is due to the lack of qualified mentors prepared to lead groups (and thus of HIKIMA safe spaces

VILLAGES	NUMBER OF GIRLS IN HILIN MU	NUMBER OF GIRLS IN HIKIMA	DIFFERENCE
LAOUALI DANGO	54	47	-7
GARBA KANE	42	31	-11
KATARE	57	54	-3
WARAOU	45	45	0
NORD III	21	17	-4
MAGAGI ROGO	21	19	-2
GOD	50	50	0
SOURA ABOUBACAR	110	62	-48
YARI IDI	23	19	-4
KALGON WARAOU	12	12	0
MADARA	18	0	-18
MOUNDOURKOUSSA	14	0	-14
GUIDAN ADJIA	35	35	0
TOTAL	502	391	-111

groups) in 2 villages (Madara and Moundourkoussa).

- Further, there was a high rate of girls' absences in the village of Soura Aboubacar due to:
    - higher incidence of seasonal (winter/rainy season) health problems (Malaria),
    - Going on vacation
    - girls having to conduct petty trading and sales;

  To address the issue of absences, we held a community dialogue to reduce absences as much as possible.

- Nonetheless, overall attendance rates were high. Out of 391 girls in the HIKIMA program, 370 girls participated in 100% of the 20 sessions, i.e. **a 94% attendance rate**.
- Out of 391 girls, only 5 girls missed the 1st session, i.e. a rate of 0.01%.

Table N°2 : Distribution of mentors by village

- 20 godmother/mentors led 20 groups, with an average of 19 girls per club.

VILLAGES	Number of HIKIMA participants	Number of 'Godmothers' (mentors)
LAOUALI DANGO	47	2
GARBA KANE	31	2
KATARE	54	3
WARAOU	45	2
NORD III	17	1
MAGAGI ROGO	19	1
GOD	50	2
SOURA ABOUBACAR	62	3
YARI IDI	19	1
KALGON WARAOU	12	1
GUIDAN ADJIA	35	2
TOTAL	391	20

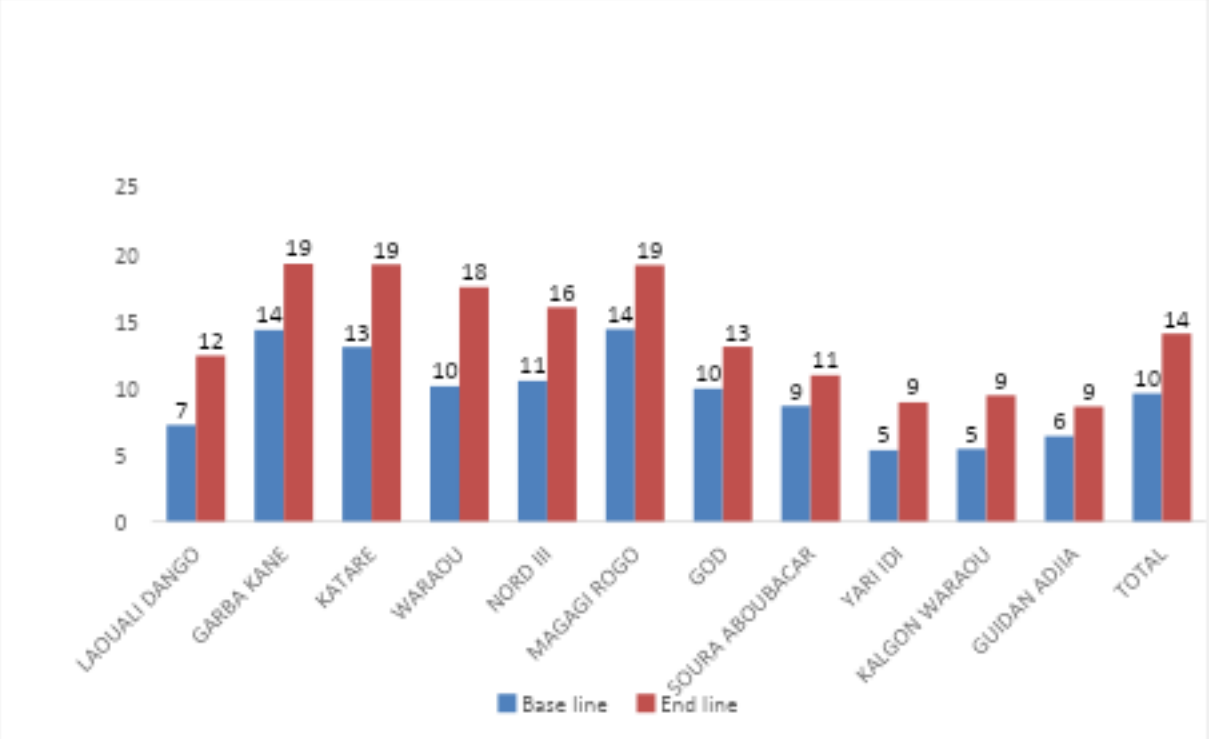
At the start and end of the program, the program administers an assessment of each girl's academic skills. The table below shows, by village, girls' average scores at baseline and then when the same assessment is readministered at program endline. The comparison of baseline and endline scores enables us to assess changes in comprehension levels associated with the program.

Table N°3 : Comparison of baseline and endline academic test results (pré-test vs. post-test)

Villages	**Pré-test** (out of 20 points)	**Post-test** (out of 20 points)	**Change**	**Percent increase**
LAOUALI DANGO	7	12	5	71%
GARBA KANE	14	19	5	36%
KATARE	13	19	6	46%
WARAOU	10	18	7	70%
NORD III	11	16	6	55%
SOURA MAGAGI ROGO	14	19	5	36%
GOD	10	13	3	30%
SOURA ABOUBACAR	9	11	2	22%
YARI IDI	5	9	4	80%
KALGON WARAOU	5	9	4	80%
GUIDAN ADJIA	6	9	2	33%
TOTAL	**9.5**	**14**	**4.5**	**47%**

Scores vary from 5/20 to 14/20 for the baseline assessment versus 9/20 and 19/20 for the endline assessment. Overall we noticed a **47%** (4 percentage point) **increase in endline versus baseline scores**.

Graph N°1 : Pre-test and post-test results, by village



- A significant improvement in girls' results is observed in all villages.
- There is a particularly dramatic (70%) improvement in Waraou (from 10/20 points to 18/20 points).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the HIKIMA program has been successful given the marked improvement in the girls' results when comparing their baseline to endline outcomes. Nonetheless, as any program can be made stronger, in the table below we list program strengths, as well as areas where we can make improvements, finishing with recommendations for further program success in future.

Strengths	Areas to improve	Recommendations
● Recording of 20 fables in Hausa and French on time ● Recording of 20 sketches in Hausa on time ● Availability & willingness of Godmothers to serve as mentors: ● 2 training sessions carried out to strengthen Godmothers' facilitation capacities; ● 20 sessions per club carried out in each village ● 160 supportive supervision visits to groups carried out to strengthen mentoring ● Funds were available to conduct the activity as needed ● 78% participation rate of girls in the club (HILIN MU in HIKIMA) ● Strong community support and engagement	● Godmothers in villages of GOD and Guidan Adjia were not sufficiently qualified to lead spaces ● Lack of qualified Godmothers in Madara and Moundourkoussa meant no clubs held there ● Insufficient supervision in some villages ● Insufficiency in the organization of the activity ● Non-compliance with pre-established schedule at Laouali Dango and Yari Idi	● Recruit effective Godmothers to facilitate the clubs; ● Recruit Godmothers in villages tneighboring Madara and Moundourkoussa to run clubs ● Plan activities on time in order to be better organized ● Ensure the villages respect the pre-established planning for the proper functioning of supervision