

SDGs covered by this initiative: **1, 4, 5, 16**



UNICEF PARTNERSHIP

SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN ARTISANAL MINING COMMUNITIES

The Kéniéba District in Mali is known locally and globally as one of the most important gold-producing areas in Africa. Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) is a traditional livelihood and common activity in the region. The presence of children at artisanal mining sites is common and they are among the most vulnerable people in Mali: they work on the sites, have limited access to health and education services and schooling, and they are prone to experience violence, abuse and exploitation – especially girls.

B2Gold partnered with UNICEF in 2019 with the aim of minimizing these risks. The Partnership will support UNICEF in implementing the following activities in two villages over three years, in partnership with the government and local organizations:

Young children under the age of five are protected and have access to daycare

Many young mothers work on artisanal mining sites. Due to the long hours of work and distance from their homes, mothers must bring their young children with them. To address this, UNICEF will establish mobile nurseries and early learning centres supervised by trained community staff on artisanal mining sites. The nurseries will allow mothers to keep breastfeeding their babies, and the early learning centres will ensure that their young children can learn and play in a safe space. The nurseries will be set up as temporary spaces so that they can move with mining communities.

Young girls have access to education and training opportunities

Many children follow their parents and work on artisanal mining sites. They have limited access to education because mining sites are too far from schools. To address this, UNICEF will establish mobile learning spaces for children aged 6–10 so that they can start and continue their education. Accelerated schooling centres will also be created for children aged 9–12 who have dropped out of or have never been to school. These centres will provide

intense nine-month programs to reintegrate them into the school system. For children aged 13–17, vocational training will be provided to help them meet market needs, with a particular focus on girls.

Adolescent girls are protected and empowered

Girls in mining communities face significant health risks as well as violence and exploitation. To address this, UNICEF will establish mobile child-friendly spaces where they can receive psychosocial support and participate in sports and leisure activities. Girls at risk of or who have experienced abuse, violence or exploitation will receive additional support and be referred to child protection services. Adolescent support groups, meeting points and awareness campaigns will be created to provide girls and boys with information on healthy relationships, gender-based violence, reproductive health, and education and training opportunities.

As well as protecting, educating and empowering vulnerable girls and boys in mining communities, the overall well-being of the community will also improve. This will contribute towards social cohesion, reducing potential tensions that may arise. Through education and training, the project will also enhance the knowledge, skills and confidence of girls and boys in the area, contributing to local employment and economic development.

In the last quarter of 2019, UNICEF launched formative research for the project, in collaboration with the Malian Department of Education and Public Research, to enable the development of a gender-, cultural- and context-appropriate methodology. An operational strategy was also developed in collaboration with a local NGO and the activities will start in 2020³⁷.

The project will be implemented in two villages neighbouring B2Gold's permits (Médinandi and Dioulafoundou) over three years. All activities will be developed and implemented in close collaboration with local government and linked to formal education services.

³⁷ Date based on current assumptions, subject to variation due to impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

