



F.A.Q.s

Our answers include a lot of information because we want you to understand our unique program! We welcome your ideas and other questions. Thanks for joining this global movement!

BRIEF HISTORY

1. Who started School Girls Unite?

A group of 12-year-old girls in the U.S. started this youth-driven initiative in 2004. Four of these co-founders now serve on our Board of Directors of the parent nonprofit organization called Youth Activism Project is located in the DC metro area (PO Box 422, Kensington MD 20895). This national clearinghouse encourages young people to pursue lasting community change locally and globally. Our slogan is "There's no minimum age for leadership."

2. Why Mali? What about other countries where girls also face discrimination?

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) identified this West African country as an education crisis because less than 50% of girls were completing elementary school. Differing from other nations on the UNICEF list in 2014, Mali's stable democracy had a record of good governance and low AIDS rate, unlike other countries with extreme poverty. A third reason was several of our co-founders knew people in Mali.

3. How does School Girls Unite partner with our sister organization in Mali?

Les Filles Unies pour l'Education was established in 2004 by 20 students from several high schools (called lycées) in Bamako, the capital of Mali. Several of these young women, including the current president, have been active in this association for over a decade. These volunteers regularly visit the villages to check on the students who receive School Girls Unite scholarships and meet with school directors and village elders. Our sister organization sends us reports about all the scholarship students and delivers our letters, decorated notebooks, banners, etc. to the scholars. Every week or two, School Girls Unite and Les Filles Unies chat via Facebook or Skype.

4. How are girls selected and tracked for our Mali Scholarship Program?

At the beginning, our sister organization met with village elders who recommended 5 girls from 5 different elementary schools who were orphans or whose parents could not pay tuition or school supplies. Every year more girls were added and then we decided to cap the program to 75 students. Les Filles Unies leaders, who really serve as role models for these scholars, make regular trips throughout the school year to monitor each girl's attendance and grades, and coordinate with teachers and tutors.

MALI GIRLS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

5. How much does it cost to send a girl in Mali to school and how many students are currently receiving scholarships?

Our 100% volunteer-run program means it only costs \$75 to cover an entire school year (approximately \$35 tuition, \$20 books and supplies, \$20 tutoring and mentoring). Because of this low cost, currently 40 girls are receiving scholarships. Often, many girls have to repeat the same

grade one or more times because they missed school due to malaria or caring for their siblings. Over the past dozen years, about 10 of our scholarship girls have moved with their families to the city. Although our sister organization has tried to stop girls from becoming child brides, about 10 students have been married. Tragically one 6th grader who was pregnant died in 2015. There's great news though...10 girls have completed 9th grade--a remarkable achievement in rural Mali. Even better, 3 students are continuing their education without our scholarships and two others have received an associate's degree.

6. How do our donations get to the students in Mali?

Every dollar raised for our scholarship program goes to these students. For large donations, we provide a receipt to the donor because these contributions are tax-deductible. This money is deposited in the Youth Activism Project bank account and then money for our scholarship program is wired to Les Filles Unies, usually once per semester. School Girls Unite provides funds to reimburse our sister organization's meetings and trips to the villages as well as for events they decide to hold, for example, the Day of Awareness (see photos and article written by two School Girls students: <https://schoolgirlsunite.org/2016/03/15/the-latest-from-les-filles-unies-in-mali/>)

7. Why has School Girls Unite decided not to offer any new scholarships to more girls?

So far School Girls Unite has provided over 500 years of education. Our Board of Directors decided to continue providing scholarships for the remaining students to complete 9th grade. It is not uncommon for our scholars to have to repeat the same grade several times, which is why so many extra years of scholarships are necessary. No upper secondary schools for grades 10-12 are located in this community. School Girls Unite cannot maintain responsibility for students staying with relatives or friends. Les Filles Unies cannot follow these students who no longer live in the cluster of villages that they visit regularly.

8. Do you collect school supplies, books and clothing for these girls in Mali?

Occasionally, School Girls Unite will seek in-kind donations that get delivered by someone traveling to Mali, for example, our sister organization needed a laptop and we were able to get one to them. When our scholars needed shoes, Les Filles Unies bought them in Bamako, which supports Mali merchants. Pencils, textbooks, etc. are bought in Bamako to help the local economy as well.

9. Do high school students with School Girls Unite travel to Mali?

Unfortunately, our nonprofit does not have the staff and resources to organize trips or student exchanges. Members of our Board have made several visits over the years. Because of extremism in Timbuktu and more recently in Bamako, the U.S. State Department has issued a travel advisory so our communications consist of weekly chats via Facebook or Skype with Les Filles Unies.

LISTENING & ASKING, RATHER THAN DIRECTING

10. How does School Girls Unite try to avoid imposing Western values?

We embrace a philosophy of Pride Not Pity. The girls and women in Mali are strong, determined and fun. Our philosophy is to learn from our sister organization and recognize that these young women know far better than us what will keep our scholars in school and also get the Mali government to make educating all girls a top national priority. So what School Girls Unite tries to do is raise your questions and offer your suggestions but not impose these ideas. Many of you suggested providing bikes or working with another organization that provides free wheels for the scholars who walk 1-2 hours each way to their school. Les Filles Unies considered it but decided against the idea because of potential problems including bike repairs, jealousy and favoritism.

11. What is the purpose of School Girls Unite meeting with Members of Congress?

Our firsthand knowledge from our Mali Girls Scholarship Program gives us credibility and unique influence with the decision makers who determine the U.S. foreign aid assistance. Most lawmakers

do not hear from their constituents about this human rights issue, especially young people who are not paid to lobby. Our stories about individual scholars are shared in your letters and face-to-face meetings and they make a major impact. For example, we told Senator Cardin's senior legislative aide about one third grader who taught her father to count and the critical need for more female teachers. In the past, School Girls Unite has made a decisive difference in persuading Members of Congress to co-sponsor and vote for legislation including the International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act and the Education For All Act.

12. What is the Global Campaign for Education-US (GCE-US)?

School Girls Unite is one of 80 organizations that make up the GCE-US, located in Washington, DC. This national coalition provides the latest information about the Education for All Act of 2016 and other legislation being considered in Congress. GCE-US is eager for blogs written by students so if you are interested, please let us know. We can arrange with GCE-US to loan you copies of "Girl Rising," "He Named Me Malala," and other films for building awareness and fundraising for this fundamental human right for girls everywhere.

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