



SUCCESS STORY

Child Trafficking Doesn't Pay

Mother highlights economic returns on her children's education



Photo: Pierre Achade, USAID

Alimatou Sarrè proudly shows a picture of her son: "It is because my children finished school and got good jobs, that now they can send me lots of money all the time."

School enrollment increases when communities organize to combat child trafficking.

"By giving their kids to traffickers, parents are jeopardizing their own future as well as their children's lives." Pointing a warning finger at a circle of villagers assembled under a tree, Alimatou Sarrè, a seventy year-old woman, voices her discontent with the situation of child trafficking in Tiranga. Tiranga is a village of northern Benin with a population of 985 people, and is located in the district of Copargo, in the Donga department.

Alimatou Sarrè is a widow. She belongs to the women's association of Tiranga. The association works with UNICEF and USAID to combat child trafficking. In Benin, UNICEF set up community based committees and works with other community groups, like the women's association of Tiranga, to raise awareness about the dangers of child trafficking. Working together, these associations also help to rescue children and put a stop to child trafficking. When Sarrè volunteered to join the association, other members were reluctant to accept her because of her age. On Sarrè's insistence, the association finally accepted her. However, to try and discourage Sarrè, the association challenged her with the tough responsibility of monitoring school enrollment and attendance of children in class. The association was confident that Sarrè would not last very long in this demanding role.

Sarrè proved them wrong. Today, she demonstrates how she uses her age to her advantage. To convince the community to join the fight against child trafficking, she talks of the success of her own children.

"I'm sure that many of those who chose to traffic their children can't say that they are happy today. But look at me! I'm well dressed. I have all the food I need and I can buy what I want. "

Sarrè explains how she suffered to educate her children. "It is because my children finished school and got good jobs, that now they can send me lots of money all the time."

Continued >>>

Success Story: Child Trafficking Doesn't Pay

To convince a skeptical audience, Sarrè shows a large, framed picture of one of her son who belongs to the Peace Keeping Force of the United Nations and supports her.

The combined efforts of USAID and UNICEF working together with the women's association, the local committee for combating child trafficking, and women like Sarrè, are helping to protect Tiranga children from being trafficked. Because the committees have reduced the number of children being taken away, school enrolment has increased dramatically. "Only two years ago," said Tiranga school director, "the school had less than 50 students. Today, 125 children attend school, including 48 girls."

###