

# The Impact of Integrated Financial Services for Young People in Mali

A Comprehensive Research Report for the  
Freedom from Hunger *Advancing Integrated  
Microfinance for Youth* Project



*freedom*  
from Hunger

  
The MasterCard  
Foundation

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# Impact of Integrated Financial Services for Young People in Mali

*A Comprehensive Research Report for the Freedom from Hunger Advancing Integrated Microfinance for Youth Project*

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## Executive Summary

Freedom from Hunger, a recognized expert in integrated financial and non-financial services for the chronically hungry poor, launched the *Advancing Integrated Microfinance for Youth (AIM Youth)* initiative in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation to address economic needs of youth with appropriate and locally adapted financial education curricula integrated with customized financial products in Mali and Ecuador. As of December 2013, near the end of the four-year project, approximately 39,439 youth had received financial education sessions and had access to savings mechanisms either in the form of formal savings accounts (Ecuador only) or through non-formal, group-based savings (Mali only). Of these youth, 26,676 were reached in Mali alone, with 24,070 through youth savings groups (YSG) and 2,606 through group savings accounts (GSAs). The group-based savings mechanisms reached these youth by working with two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Conseils et Appui pour l'Education à la Base (CAEB) and Le Tonus, which formed YSGs, and one microfinance institution (MFI) Nyèsigiso, which formed GSAs. In both savings models in Mali, financial education was provided after the youth groups were formed. The following report provides an overview of the research activities organized by Freedom from Hunger to examine the impact of the *AIM Youth* innovations implemented by CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso on participating youth.

The project included a research agenda to understand the impact of the integrated financial services on the young people served. **The overarching goal of the research centered on understanding the degree to which the combination of financial services and financial education influenced better knowledge and attitudes in money management, ability to deal with life-cycle events, social capital, self-confidence and empowerment, socio-financial capability, economic and civic engagement and food security.** Additional key research included whether there were differences in outcomes according to age and gender, whether youth were satisfied with the services, the conditions that facilitated or challenged access to and use of financial services, and to what extent youth increased their savings. The methodologies used to collect data on these outcomes were meant to triangulate and strengthen findings found individually in the following: quantitative impact study (baseline and endline), financial diaries, qualitative assessment of youth satisfaction, and impact stories. Although the research was conducted with all three partners, CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso, more activities were conducted with CAEB than with the other two. In addition, Freedom from Hunger hired the local Malian research firm Centre d'Études, de Recherche, de Communication et d'Animation pour le Développement (CERCAD) to collect and conduct the data entry, and Dr. Benjamin Crookston, assistant professor at Brigham Young University, to conduct most of the analysis.

**To what degree does the combination of financial services and financial education influence the intermediate and long-term outcomes for youth (as described in the benefits model)?** The quantitative impact study and financial diaries contributed the evidence to answer this question. Increases in savings, improvements in attitudes towards financial matters, improvements in financial knowledge and the ability to maintain these improvements (or steady levels) despite a coup d'état during the course of the data-collection period provide evidence for six of the outcomes in the Benefit Process. There is clear and strong evidence that the youth in both CAEB YSGs and Nyèsigiso GSAs benefitted in terms of better knowledge and attitudes of money management. Regarding the ability to deal with life-cycle events, social capital, self-confidence and empowerment, and socio-financial capability, there is some evidence of improvement in each of these areas. There were small signs of change for more economic and civic engagement, but no evidence of better access to and/or utilization of food, greater family food security and improved family health and nutrition. Although it was theorized that changes in food security, health and nutrition could come about over time, it was not expected to occur in the short term.

### **How do these outcomes differ in terms of the demographic and service segments in the project?**

A few outcomes differ in regards to the demographic and service segments in the project. For example, there were more differences found for age (younger youth, ages 13–17 vs. older youth, ages 18–24) than for gender. Many differences observed between boys and girls existed before the start of the program, such as boys having higher income, expenses and savings, migrating more and saving more for emergencies, with the only difference in terms of changes over time was regarding savings goals. The quantitative impact study showed that savings goals for both boys and girls turned away from clothing towards more productive goals—although for girls, both the trousseau and livestock were equally important while for boys it was livestock and emergencies. Youth in YSGs benefited more than youth in GSAs. Since the YSG and GSA savings mechanisms are quite similar, it is more likely that the difference is due to characteristics of the population of those who were targeted and took up the services rather than the savings mechanisms themselves. CAEB and Le Tonus targeted rural areas with YSGs and attracted youth who were mostly younger and vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations, which affect income, expenses, savings, as well as food security. Nyèsigiso targeted youth in urban areas who may have been poor but were not very poor,<sup>1</sup> were somewhat protected from seasonal variations, and generally had higher income, expenses and savings.

**To what degree are youth (and their families) satisfied with the financial services?** Overall, the youth from both YSG and GSA, as well as their parents, expressed in the qualitative assessment that they are quite satisfied with the savings services. The financial education is also highly appreciated by both groups, and they think it is valuable to help them plan for the future, to be less wasteful and to manage their money better.

### *Key Findings from AIM Youth in Mali*

- Participating youth report higher amounts in total savings, including higher value of livestock
- Improvements gained by youth in savings, financial attitudes and financial knowledge were sustained despite a coup d'état during the course of the project
- Savings goals for both boys and girls evolved over time, moving away from clothing towards more productive goals, such as saving for livestock, emergencies and their trousseaus (for girls)
- The youth highly appreciated the financial education; they thought it was valuable to help them plan for the future, to be less wasteful and to manage their money better
- YSG members demonstrated greater improvements in financial knowledge and financial attitude indicators than GSA members; however, the YSG members had more room for improvement
- Not having money to save and migration are the biggest challenges to accessing and using the financial services.
- Age and gender may account for differences in needs and economic activities but they do not necessarily translate into different benefits from the financial services.
- Overall, the youth from both YSG and GSA, as well as their parents, expressed that they are quite satisfied with the savings services and the financial education.

**What are the conditions that help or challenge youth access to financial services?** The qualitative assessment yielded interesting insights to answer this question. A key condition that helps youth access financial services is having money to save, either on their own or with the help of parents and having a group of peers to form a group that meets at a convenient time (outside of school or work hours) and in an easily accessible location. Not having money to save and migration are the biggest challenges to accessing and using the financial services. One additional potential challenge that is worth further exploring is the role of parents in providing contributions and taking loans for youth, especially the younger ones. Some youth mentioned having to drop out of the group because their parents could no longer provide the savings contribution. The NGO staff expressed concern that if parents fail to repay loans, they will jeopardize the group fund and group dynamics.

**To what degree do youth have increased savings?** There is some evidence from the quantitative impact survey and the financial diaries that youth have increased their savings over time with both the YSGs and GSAs. The two studies show a trend of increased savings over time, which include livestock. Youth from both services indicate the savings groups have helped them save and that they appreciate that help.

In conclusion, the research results suggest that CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso executed successful savings and financial education programs. Evidence demonstrating resilience of the YSG participants in important savings behaviors and attitudes as well as high levels of satisfaction with the program during the time of political upheaval indicate that the financial education and savings group programs were well received and effective. The issues of available money to contribute, migration of youth and the somewhat complicated role of parents posed challenges to maintaining continued participation of groups, but did not disable the majority of groups to function well. Overall, it appears the youth practice behaviors that were promoted through financial services and the education, and this has likely been to their benefit. The YSG and GSA programs stand out as positive examples for other organizations to adopt as effective financial service programs in building the financial capability of youth in West Africa.

## List of Acronyms

<i>AIM Youth</i>	<i>Advancing Integrated Microfinance for Youth</i>
CAEB	Conseils et Appui pour l'Education à la Base
CERCAD	Centre d'Études, de Recherche, de Communication et d'Animation pour le Développement
CYFI	Child and Youth Finance International
FGD	Focus-Group Discussion
FSS	Food-Security Scale
GSA	Group Savings Account
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
MFI	Microfinance Institution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPI	Progress Out of Poverty Index
YSG	Youth Savings Group

## Acknowledgments

The research activities for the *AIM Youth* financial services in Mali have yielded useful insights into building financial capability for youth. Freedom from Hunger staff began this research with some basic knowledge of youth activities due to market research that had already been conducted in Mali, but were not sure what to expect otherwise. The team labored over how to best design surveys and data-collection processes that would be interesting and relevant to the youth participating as well as provide reliable data that was feasible to collect over a relatively long period. It has been a rich learning experience.

First, our team would like to thank The MasterCard Foundation for partnering with Freedom from Hunger to conduct this research.

In Mali, we have several people and organizations to thank. The research institute in Mali, Centre d'Études, de Recherche, de Communication et d'Animation pour le Développement (CERCAD), was instrumental in helping us navigate data-collection through particularly trying times and carried this torch even after the coup d'état. The data-collection efforts would not have been possible without Freedom from Hunger's valued partnerships with CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso, and the parents and youth who participated in this research. Oumar Maazou, our key staff member focused on youth services in Bamako, has acted as liaison to the partners, the research firm and our staff in California.

I also want to thank my colleagues who reviewed this paper to ensure it would contribute to the literature and would be interesting and useful: Rossana Ramirez and Bobbi Gray from Freedom from Hunger; Maria Perdomo from the United Nations Capital Development Fund; Dr. Benjamin Crookston from Brigham Young University; Ruth Dueck-Mbeba and Machal Karim from The MasterCard Foundation.

Please note that reviewers and their organizations do not necessarily endorse all of the content of this report.

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# Introduction

Freedom from Hunger, a recognized expert in integrated financial and non-financial services for the chronically hungry poor, launched the *Advancing Integrated Microfinance for Youth (AIM Youth)* initiative in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation to address these needs with appropriate and locally adapted financial education curricula integrated with customized microfinance products—beginning with savings services.

With this initiative, Freedom from Hunger and its partners aimed to reach 37,000 youth between the ages of 13 and 24 (22,000 in Mali and 15,000 in Ecuador) with integrated financial services and financial education. **As of December 2013, approximately 39,439 youth had received financial education sessions and had access to savings mechanisms either in the form of formal savings accounts or through non-formal, group-based savings.** Of these youth, 26,676 were reached in Mali alone. The project reached this goal by working with seven partners and three different financial products across the two countries. In Ecuador, four cooperatives, Cooperativa San Jose, Cooperativa Cooprogreso, San Miguel de los Bancos and Cooperativa Santa Ana provided financial education through middle and high schools, and offered individual savings accounts. In Mali, two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Conseils et Appui pour l'Education à la Base (CAEB) and Le Tonus, created youth savings groups (YSGs), and one microfinance institution (MFI) Nyèsigiso, created group-based savings account (GSAs). In both models in Mali, financial education was provided after the groups of youth were formed.

In keeping with Freedom from Hunger's longstanding commitment to measuring progress and documenting effectiveness of its programs, the project included an assessment of the impact of the integrated financial services on the young people served. The overarching goal for conducting the research centered on understanding to what degree the combination of financial services and financial education influenced intermediate and long-term outcomes for youth, as hypothesized by the *AIM Youth Benefit Process* (or theory of change). The intermediate outcomes include: better knowledge and attitudes of money management, improved ability to deal with life-cycle events, increased social capital, improved self-confidence and empowerment and improved socio-financial capability. The longer-term outcomes, which are beyond the focus of this research, include economic and civic engagement and food security.

**This paper provides an overview of the research activities organized by Freedom from Hunger to examine the impact of the *AIM Youth* innovations implemented by CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso in Mali on participating youth.** It is organized by first providing general background information on the partners, a general description of the products and a summary of their outreach. Then the paper outlines the research goals, activities and timeline and the key results. Last follows an analysis section interpreting the key results with a short conclusion. Overall, the paper focuses on project impact on youth and their perceptions, and does not include a discussion of the institutional perspective of the project or provide recommendations regarding the provided services.

## Services and Partners

### *Youth Savings Groups (YSGs)*

The YSGs, or Saving for Change for Youth, are an adaptation of Saving for Change, a methodology for self-managed saving and lending groups integrated with simple, relevant, high-impact training in health, business and money management. Under Saving for Change for Youth, self-selected groups of young people of approximately 10 to 15 members come together and, over several weeks, make decisions about the management of their YSG, with guidance from a trained field agent. The members elect a management committee and through a group

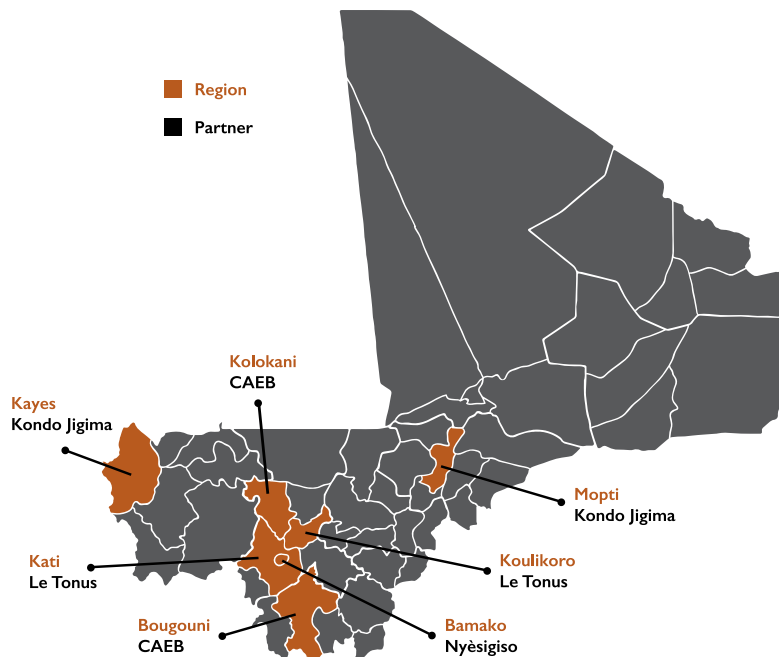
participatory process make decisions about their group name, savings amount, lending policies, cycle length and fines for late payments. YSGs also decide to engage in a social objective to address an issue that affects youth in their village. For example, YSGs might decide to clean the village or help plant new trees in heavily deforested areas.

Youth-group members set a specific amount to be saved at every meeting and periodically borrow from their pooled savings to meet their needs, including facing emergencies, starting income-generating activities (IGAs) and planning for the future. Loans are repaid with interest set by the group, allowing the group fund to grow more quickly. Funds are only accessed during meetings in the presence of all members, and are kept in a locked cashbox between meetings. Members divide the group fund in proportion to their savings contribution at a time agreed upon by the group, generally 9 to 12 months after group formation. YSGs can opt to have a group Godmother, an adult woman who is currently or formerly a member of an adult savings group. The Godmother is expected to provide guidance and assistance when conflict arises among the youth.

After the YSGs started saving, the financial education was integrated into the weekly meetings. The set of seven financial education sessions are a series of dynamic and participatory sessions intended to help youth make informed savings and borrowing decisions, increase savings and save in secure locations, and create a savings plan to meet life goals.

Both *AIM Youth* partners CAEB and Le Tonus delivered YSGs in communities where they had previously worked with Freedom from Hunger to deliver Saving for Change to adults. CAEB began operations in Mali in 1994, with a mission to promote the participatory development of communities by strengthening their self-help capacities, overall contributing to the improvement of socioeconomic conditions of the Malian population in peri-urban and rural zones. It has been forming YSGs near Kolokani and Bougouni. Le Tonus was established in 1996, driven by the mission to contribute to the citizenship efforts of improving the life conditions of the most deprived populations in Mali. It works primarily in rural areas, and have started YSGs in Kati and Koulikoro. Both have partnered with Freedom from Hunger since 2005, and started forming YSGs in early 2011. See Figure 1 for partner locations.

**Figure 1: Map of Mali and Partner Locations**



## Group Savings Accounts (GSAs)

The GSA methodology is somewhat similar to that of the YSGs, but with a few key differences. Youth are brought together in similar-sized groups to save weekly, but instead of putting the funds in a locked cashbox, they are kept in a formal savings account. The youth continue saving as a group over time, but do not lend group funds to each other or divide up funds at a specific point. If someone needs to leave the group, she can withdraw her funds from the account; however, the main purpose of the account is to help youth accumulate lump sums over time. Besides the ability to save large sums of money, an advantage of this product is that saving as a group makes it easier and more affordable for youth to accumulate the minimum balance and pay account fees.

And as with the YSGs, financial education sessions for the GSAs were integrated with the weekly meetings after the groups started saving.

Nyèsigiso started forming GSAs for the *AIM Youth* project in 2011. The MFI started operations in 1990, in the Ségou region of Mali. It aims to offer credit and savings services to the Malian population who do not have access to formal banking services. Nyèsigiso started working with Freedom from Hunger in 1996, by adopting Credit with Education services and offering them to rural women. The MFI primarily works in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, but has focused on Bamako for its GSAs. See Figure 1, for partner locations.

It should be noted that the MFI Kondo Jigima began partnership in the *AIM Youth* project with Freedom from Hunger in 2009. It created a GSA similar to that of Nyèsigiso, and started introducing it in the districts of Kayes and in and around Mopti (see location on partner map). Unfortunately, the partnership between Kondo Jigima and Freedom from Hunger ended in 2012 and were therefore omitted from the research activities. Its outreach numbers were also omitted from the monitoring information provided in this report.

**Figure 2 provides a summary of the savings services and their outreach in Mali as of December 2013.** The majority of the 39,439 total project youth outreach was achieved in Mali (26,676 youth<sup>2</sup>), and the majority of those through YSGs (24,070 youth). The demographics vary for those reached in with different products. For CAEB YSGs, more than one-half were women and most between 13 and 17 years old, whereas for Nyèsigiso GSAs, 19 percent were women and most were between 18 and 24. Le Tonus demographics fall in between. Access and education were simultaneously delivered to young people in Mali. Total amount of savings across all the products is US\$122,436,<sup>3</sup> with average savings per member slightly higher at CAEB than Le Tonus or Nyèsigiso, likely because CAEB YSGs have been functioning longer than Le Tonus YSGs and Nyèsigiso GSAs.

**Figure 2: *AIM Youth* Mali Services and Outreach as of December 2013**

Outreach	CAEB	Le Tonus	Nyèsigiso	Total
Total number of youth receiving integrated services to date	18,119	5,951	2,262	26,332
Percentage of total number of youth who are women	66%	57%	19%	60%
Percentage of total number of youth clients who are between 13 and 17 years old	85%	56%	26%	73%
Percentage of total number of youth clients who are between 18 and 24 years old	14%	22%	74%	21%

<b>Outreach</b>	<b>CAEB</b>	<b>Le Tonus</b>	<b>Nyèsigiso</b>	<b>Total</b>
Percentage of total number of youth clients who are in school	49%	56%	45%	50%
Percentage of total number of youth clients who are married	11%	17%	13%	13%
<b>Financial Education</b>				
Number of youth who have received financial education to date	15,941	3,450	2,262	21,653
<b>Youth Loans (Saving for Change youth only)</b>				
Total number of outstanding youth loans during this period	7,726	2,228		9,954
Amount of loans outstanding (USD)	59,955	20,221		80,176
Average amount of loans outstanding (USD)	7.76	9.08	–	8.05
<b>Total Average</b>				
Total number of group savings accounts opened to date	–	–	219	219
Total number of youth with a savings account OR in a savings group	18,119	5,951	2,262	26,332
Total amount in savings (USD)	90,712	24,486	7,238	122,436
Average amount of savings per client/member during this period (USD)	5.01	4.11	3.20	4.65

*Savings and loan amounts were calculated at \$1 US Dollar = 500 CFA*

## **AIM Youth Mali Research Agenda**

The research agenda used to assess the impact of the financial products in Mali included research activities designed to answer key research questions stemming from the *AIM Youth* Benefit Process. An explanation of the benefit process, the key research questions and research activities (per partner) are described as follows.

### **Benefits Model**

Figure 3 exhibits the benefits model or theory of change that Freedom from Hunger has used to describe the hypothesized short- and long-term outcomes that should result from youth participation in financial services and financial education. This model takes into account the global expectations for youth-focused financial services and financial education initiatives,<sup>4</sup> as well as the general logical framework that Freedom from Hunger uses to guide and focus all of its work. This model and the definitions of each term in the model were used to guide the evaluation work. See appendix B for the logical framework.

**Figure 3: AIM Youth Benefit Process**



It is important to note that the benefits model was designed with a long-term perspective regarding the benefits of providing integrated services of financial education and financial services to youth. However, given the short time for the program, the surveys primarily focused on short-term change indicators but also collected long-term change indicators even though changes in these indicators were not expected in a year's time. For example, we theorize that over time, as youth become responsible adult financial managers, their households will have improved food security and poverty status. We did not anticipate that improvements in food security, economic and civic engagement or family health would result in the short term for this program.

## Key Research Questions

**The research agenda aimed to answer the following questions:**

1. To what degree does the combination of financial services and financial education influence intermediate and long-term outcomes for youth (as described in the benefits model)?
2. How do these outcomes differ in the demographic and service segments in the project?
3. To what degree are youth (and their family) satisfied with the financial services?
4. What are the conditions that help or challenge youth access to financial services?
5. To what degree do youth have increased savings?

## Research Activities

The research results in this report are organized around five main activities listed below. Each involved various combinations of partners and multiple components. Figure 4 shows which key question each research activity addressed.

1. Group-Led Evaluation
2. Quantitative Impact Study
3. Financial Diaries
4. Qualitative Assessment on Youth Satisfaction
5. Impact Stories

**Figure 4: Research Activities Mapped to Key Questions**

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Key Questions Addressed</b>
Group-Led Evaluation	1) Services influencing outcomes in benefits model
Quantitative Impact Study	1) Services influencing to outcomes in benefits model 5) Increased savings
Financial Diaries	1) Services influencing to outcomes in benefits model 5) Increased savings
Qualitative Assessment on Youth Satisfaction	3) Youth satisfaction with services 4) Conditions for and challenges to accessing services
Impact Stories	3) Youth satisfaction with services 4) Conditions for and challenges to accessing services

## Description and Application of the Multiple Methods

Freedom from Hunger employed multiple methods to capture and triangulate program findings and outcomes, which also resulted in a richer understanding of the possible effects of a program. In the *AIM Youth* research, the quasi-experimental quantitative methods used to evaluate the key research questions included a baseline and endline assessment as well as a financial diary component. The baseline and endline surveys collected food security data (as measured by Freedom from Hunger’s Food Security Survey<sup>5</sup>), poverty data (as measured by the Grameen Foundation’s Progress Out of Poverty Index [PPI]<sup>6</sup>), demographic and household information, reported earnings (money received and earnings), reported expenses, reported savings and respective behaviors, attitudes and perceptions regarding savings and one’s financial situation, and social involvement such as church and sports groups. It is important to note that on the food security and PPI surveys, these questions are actually intended to be answered by heads of household; however, they were included in the assessment to not only serve as a means to evaluate poverty and food security, but to also test the accuracy of youth answers to these questions. While no comparison was conducted of what parents or other households would have answered with what youth reported, comparisons of this data and other available data was completed to determine how likely youth were able to answer these questions accurately. Qualitative assessments included youth “impact stories,” which were life-history descriptions as well as focus-group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews to assess how youth were engaging with the program as well as their satisfaction with it.

CAEB participated in a baseline and endline evaluation, including both treatment (youth who participated in YSGs) and comparison groups (youth who had no access to YSGs). CAEB and Nyèsigiso also participated in a series of financial diaries, which included several short, high-frequency surveys with a subset of youth who participated in the baseline study (15 surveys for CAEB youth and 7 for Nyèsigiso youth). Some of the youth participating in the financial diaries also participated in qualitative “impact story” life-history interviews. Lastly, FGDs to assess client satisfaction involved youth directly served by CAEB, Nyèsigiso and Le Tonus. Hence, some of the same youth were followed over time in multiple surveys, contributing to a longitudinal study with multiple data points. These multiple methods allow for triangulating findings, which will strengthen our understanding of any given outcome. A summary of the evaluation activities and sample sizes is included in Figure 5 on the following page.

To further understand the order of the research activities, Figure 5 summarizes the activities according to year of implementation, including the partners involved and an estimate of the number of youth interviewed. Further details of these activities are included in the description of key results.

**Figure 5: Research Activities and Sample Sizes for AIM Youth Mali**

	2011		2012		2013		N° of Youth Interviewed*
	Group-led Evaluation	Quantitative Impact Study: Baseline	Quantitative Impact Study: Endline	Financial Diaries	Qualitative Assessment on Youth & Institutional Satisfaction	Impact Stories	
Program Evaluated	YSGs	YSGs	YSGs	YSGs & GSAs	YSGs & GSAs	YSGs & GSAs	
CAEB	97	300 (150 treatment; 150 comparison)	240 (130 treatment; 110 comparison)	36 (interviewed 15 times each)	119	4	516
Respondent Type	New youth	New youth	Same as baseline	Participated in quantitative impact study	New youth	Participated in quantitative impact study	
Nyèsigiso	—	—	—	36 (interviewed 7 times each)	113	4	189
Respondent Type				New youth	New youth	Participated in quantitative impact study	
Le Tonus	—	—	—	—	118	—	118
Respondent Type					New youth		

\*Estimated total attempts to avoid double-counting for youth participating in multiple evaluation activities, such as the quantitative impact study baseline, the endline, the financial diaries and the impact stories.

## The Context for Mali

When considering the outcomes from the studies executed, it is useful to keep in mind a few points of context. There is a high population of youth and high levels of poverty.

A landlocked country, 65 percent of which is semi-desert, vulnerable to drought and desertification, Mali is one of the world's poorest countries, ranked 182 out of 186 countries on the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index.<sup>7</sup> Mali's 2012 gross domestic product is estimated at \$10.31 billion, with a growth rate of -1.2 percent and 5.4 percent inflation rate.<sup>8</sup> About 80 percent of the population of 15.97 million is engaged in farming and fishing, and about 10 percent is nomadic.<sup>9</sup> About 35 percent of the population is urban, and its economy is driven primarily by gold-mining and agricultural exports.<sup>10</sup>

Development Indicators show (as reported by the UNDP International Human Development Indicators<sup>11</sup> unless otherwise specified):

- Gross national income per capita in PPP is \$853 in 2012
- Population living below \$1.25 PPP per day, as of 2011, is estimated at 50 percent

- Primary school enrollment rates show 66 percent for girls and 75 percent for boys in 2011 (UNESCO<sup>12</sup>)
- As of 2011, only 26 percent adults and 39 percent of youth (ages 15–24) are literate<sup>13</sup>
- 48 percent of the population was under 15 years of age in 2013<sup>14</sup>
- Life expectancy at birth was 54 years in 2011<sup>15</sup>

In Mali young people are faced with many of the challenges to accessing services. Youth have limited access to financial services; only 4.85 percent of young adults ages 15–24 have an account at a formal financial institution, 3.23 percent have saved at a financial institution in the past year and 2.32 percent have a loan from a formal institution in the past year.<sup>16</sup> Both adults and youth also face the challenge of having limited access to technology: 98 out of every 100 people are a mobile -telephone subscriber (ranking 100th out of 211 countries globally) and only 2.11 percent use the internet, as of 2012.<sup>17</sup> With few resources to draw from, poor youth struggle to make progress.

### ***Political Economy of Mali***

In March 2012, Mali experienced a military coup d'état, which resulted in political and economic upheaval, and left part of the North occupied by Islamist extremist groups. The political crisis led to the withdrawal of multi-national and bilateral aid to Mali, which resulted in an economic recession for the entire country. Over 350,000 people were displaced during this period.<sup>18</sup> The humanitarian and political crises had further deteriorated the poor economic conditions of Malians.

Despite the conflict and political instability, the partners continued delivering *AIM Youth* services in many regions throughout the country. None had to interrupt services entirely, but many youth report that nearby conflict affected their ability to earn money. This has been confirmed by partner staff, as the overall economy has been impacted by the political instability. While impossible to measure under such conditions, we would expect the conflict and political instability to attenuate the results. Hence, under more ideal circumstances, one might expect the program to have even greater impact.

### **Seasonality and Data-Collection**

A summary of key events, holidays and seasons in Mali are provided in Figure 6 to help contextualize some of the research findings. The timeline reflects only the research activities. Key events and seasons are highlighted in the first two rows, and in the subsequent rows, the timing for the specific data-collection activities are depicted. This guide may be referenced in the interpretation of the findings in this paper.

Note that from July to September of each year, during the hungry season or rainy season, people (including youth) may have fewer economic opportunities and less money to contribute to savings. The October to December period is harvest time; rural youth may be working in the fields, and afterwards have money available for food and other purchases. In January, there is less work in rural areas and it is common to migrate to other areas looking for paid work. During Ramadan, the timing of which varies each year, youth may be a little less productive, and during the Tabaski holiday, youth receive gifts, including money. They may also use savings at Tabaski to help parents by contributing to pay for the animal or other holiday expenses.



**Figure 6: Seasonality Calendar and Data-Collection Timeline**

	<b>Apr– Jun 2011</b>	<b>Jul– Sept 2011</b>	<b>Oct– Dec 2011</b>	<b>Jan– Mar 2012</b>	<b>Apr– Jun 2012</b>	<b>Jul– Sept 2012</b>	<b>Oct– Dec 2012</b>	<b>Jan– Mar 2013</b>	<b>Apr– Jun 2013</b>
Key Events, Activities, and Holidays in Mali	School in session	School out of session; Ramadan <sup>19</sup> July 30–Aug 28	School in session; Tabaski <sup>20</sup> Nov 9	School in session; Coup d'état Mar 21	School in session	School out of session; Ramadan Jul 20–Aug 19	School in session; Tabaski Oct 26	School in session	School in session
Agricultural Seasons and Weather	Hot season	Rainy season/ Hungry season (soudure)	Harvest	Cold Season	Hot season	Rainy season/ Hungry season (soudure)	Harvest	Cold Season	Hot season
Group-led Evaluation									
Quantitative Impact Study									
CAEB Financial Diaries									
Nyèsigiso Financial Diaries									
Qualitative Assessment									
Impact Stories									

## Key Results

### Group-led Evaluation

#### *Methodology*

The purpose of the Group-led Evaluation was to learn about youth income and expenses, as well as financial attitudes, before YSGs were formed and to help inform the Mali quantitative impact study survey. In March and April 2011, Freedom from Hunger collaborated with a team of graduate students from George Washington University to conduct a series of 12 FGDs and self-evaluation surveys with 97 youth. The team first used a money-flow tool in FGDs to learn about income and expenses of youth. After the FGDs, the participants individually filled out a survey rating statements about trust, self-confidence, knowledge about saving, and money-making decisions pertained to them. All participants were selected by CAEB in the region of Bougouni, most being children or relatives of women who participate in the Saving for Change program administered by Freedom from Hunger and implemented by CAEB. The methodology was called “Group-led” in the sense that youth in the YSGs evaluated themselves, although it was more of an individual evaluation in reference to specific topics rather than a group evaluation.

## Key Results

### Daily Activities and Income

Daily activities of youth revolved around chores to help run a household and economic activities related to agriculture. For income, many youth cited gardening; working in the fields (dependent upon season); collecting and selling wood or wild produce such as cashews, baobab leaves and fruit; and small commerce. They sometimes start these activities when they are young—girls may start small commerce activities at about age 12, and boys may start selling charcoal at about age 14. Some mentioned exodes or short-term migration as an activity. Girls typically leave for three to six months and boys from six months to a year. They often migrate to the nearest sizeable town, with girls often earning money by cooking, cleaning and caring for children in homes and boys being an apprentice to a craftsman, working in agriculture or engaging in commerce. When they have reached their financial goal, they return to their homes. Sometimes the money they earn is also for school or to support the family rather than marriage.

### Expenses

**The youth spent their money most often on clothes and shoes, as well as food, jewelry and accessories.** They spend a lot of money on clothes and shoes because they are looking for social acceptance, sometimes obtaining bright, new dresses and tunics for every special occasion. Some expenses went towards preparing for marriage. The males are responsible for constructing and setting up the living space they will share with their future wife. The young women are responsible for their trousseau, comprised of clothes, household utensils, and possibly money for buying animals to start a herd or flock. These youth reported sometimes encountering unexpected expenses, usually for treatment of illnesses such as a headache, stomach ache or diarrhea, or sustain wounds from work and accidents. When there are larger unexpected events, both positive (marriages and baptisms) and negative (death), family, neighbors and the greater community often help with them. Some youth say they feel they are cushioned from economic shocks and risks because their parents still handle their costs, but this changes as they grow older.

### Attitudes

When asked about well-being, all of the youth said that having money or having work to make money contributed significantly to their overall well-being. They said having enough money can cushion you from risks and economic shocks. They also appreciated good physical health, having a good job, supporting parents financially, succeeding in school and having a large herd. They expressed a lot of confidence regarding their ability to make decisions about their life and future, decisions about how they use their money, repaying debts and trusting others in their community. They expressed difficulty in saving money for more than one month, where they keep their money and buying things they do not need.

### Gender, Age and Geographic Considerations

The research indicated that girls possibly worry more about where they keep their money, have a more difficult time saving for more than a month, and feel less confident about their ability to pay for a debt. Girls also start IGAs earlier than boys and are financially active at an earlier age (usually via petty commerce).

**It was clear that from a very young age, youth in rural Mali are involved in the informal market economy, first as gatherers, then sellers and producers.** Some IGAs, such as small commerce, can begin at 10 years of age. From the data collected, it seems as though youth living in villages closer to roads have more expenses, or at least more opportunities to spend their money. Having more expenses could negatively impact the ability to pay for expenses and repay debt. While youth in villages by roads may also have increased

opportunities for earning income and access to different services, they potentially do not consider themselves financially better off than youth in more distant villages. However, their attitudes differ in terms of ability to save and they feel more confident about long-term saving.

Overall, the team concluded that the youth in the rural areas of Bougouni, Mali are financially active, depending upon a variety of sources of income to cover their expected and unexpected expenses. Since youth start working early, they have financial responsibilities at a young age. Their financial transactions are diverse as they learn how to manage their money and make decisions for the future. Given their resourcefulness and hardworking nature, youth are valuable economic participants in village life.

## Quantitative Impact Study

### *Methodology*

A quantitative study looking at impact of CAEB's YSG program on youth was conducted in 2011 and 2012. The quasi-experimental design included 300 participants at the May 2011 baseline taken from matching treatment and comparison groups (150 of CAEB's YSG and financial education program participants and 150 youth residents of neighboring villages), found in 32 villages in the area of Bougouni, Mali. Due to migration for school and work, only 240 of the original respondents participated in the October 2012 endline (130 treatment and 110 comparison). Freedom from Hunger hired the local Malian research firm Centre d'Études, de Recherche, de Communication et d'Animation pour le Développement (CERCAD) to collect and conduct the data entry, and Dr. Benjamin Crookston, assistant professor at Brigham Young University, conducted most of the analysis. Much of the text in this summary comes directly from the *AIM Youth* Research Brief: Results from a Quantitative Study on Youth Savings Groups in Mali.<sup>21</sup>

The study collected evidence of hypothesized outcomes of the *AIM Youth* Benefit Process, including: better knowledge and attitudes about money management, improved ability to deal with life-cycle events, increased social capital, improved self-confidence, empowerment, socio-financial capability, and economic, civic engagement and food security. Although this study design cannot establish a causal link between the provision of a Savings Group and financial education program and the subsequent changes in member knowledge, attitudes and behavior, it will nevertheless help further understand program and non-program participants and suggested impact. This summary includes a difference-in-difference analysis (or double difference). That is, the analysis first examined the difference between the pre- and post-test outcomes for the treatment group and then those for the comparison group and second, it compared the difference between the two. It is important to note that instability caused by the coup d'état of the Malian government and the launch of the war against rebels in the northern part of the country that occurred during the study very likely influenced some outcomes.

### *Key Results*

#### Demographics

**The YSG youth live in rural areas, and the majority are very poor and food-insecure.** As the results in Figure 7 indicate, there are more girls than boys, more younger (ages 13–17) youth than older (ages 18–24), more in school than out, and the majority are unmarried. Measurement with the Progress Out of Poverty Index showed that 66 percent of the treatment group lived below the National Poverty Line and the ranking from the Freedom from Hunger Food -Security Scale showed that many were food-insecure, with levels ranging from 44–95 percent throughout the year (higher averages occurring during the hungry season in July). Their incomes or money received from parents fluctuate, ranging from \$0.50-\$1<sup>22</sup> for the past seven days, and \$5–\$8 for the past 30 days (for work activities). In general, it seems that expenses are closely correlated with income, also ranging from \$0.50–\$1 for a seven-day period. For work in the village, many work in the fields,

some are involved in petty commerce, and some do not work at all. For additional money, some migrate (25%) and earn about \$50–\$100 for the time they are gone. More boys (39%) than girls (15%) and more older youth (38%) than younger youth (17%) migrate for work. When migrating, male youth often work in agriculture, and female youth work in households—babysitting and cleaning. Many of all respondents plan to migrate next year (58%). In terms of work overall, about 75 percent like their work, but only 61 percent feel it is safe. Many of these profile characteristics reflect the typical participant in for the Saving for Change for Youth program in Mali.

**Figure 7: Average Treatment Respondent Characteristics**

Characteristic	Outcome
Male	45%
Female	55%
Ages 13–17	80%
Ages 18–24	20%
Not Married	85%
In School	60%
Rural	100%
Food-Insecure	44% (May); 95% (Oct)
Percentage of Treatment Group Living Below National Poverty Line	66%
Migrated in Past Year for Work	25%
Income in Past 7 Days	\$0.50–\$1
Expenses in Past 7 Days	\$0.50–\$1

### Financial Activity of Youth

In the baseline survey, the treatment youth reported a median amount of \$3 in cash savings. The median amount did not differ significantly at the endline, but most, if not all of the groups, ended a cycle and began another during this time, where they often spend their share-out of savings from one cycle and begin anew. However, the median value of livestock increases from baseline to endline, suggesting that youth may be investing more in livestock, a common savings strategy in rural Mali. This trend coincides with savings goals for the entire treatment group; when asked what goal they are saving for, the number stating clothes decreased while those stating livestock increased (both statistically significant differences at the 1% level). Although it is not entirely clear why cash savings stayed the same from baseline to endline, spending distribution money on livestock is a plausible explanation. Practicing savings through group participation not only reiterates learning and develops new money management skills for youth, but can also help them use long-term savings strategies.

Over time, savings goals for both boys and girls changed, with both showing an increased preference for saving for livestock, although the overall preference for girls was their trousseau and for boys, saving for emergencies.

Although it is not possible to determine how much the political instability in Mali affected the rural youth, some outcomes provide possible insight into how each group fared during the conflict. For a number of indicators, both groups experienced decreases in positive financial behaviors. **However, the treatment group often experienced a less substantial decrease than the comparison group, exhibiting greater resilience in the midst of political uncertainty.** For instance, although group members continued saving throughout the study period, the percentage of the comparison group who reported saving for most weeks decreased over time from 31 to 16 percent, and those with a savings goal decreased from 91 to 35 percent (both outcomes statistically significant at the 1% level). A majority of the treatment group (67%) sustained confidence in reaching their goals over time, while the confidence of the comparison group youth in reaching their goal decreased. Where the baseline outcomes for having cash set aside for difficult times were similar for the treatment and comparison group, the practice trended downwards for the comparison group at the endline. The median amount the treatment group set aside for difficult times (\$5) is also more than that of the comparison group (\$2.50). Lastly, those with livestock set aside for difficult times declined for both the treatment and comparison groups, with this decline being greater for the comparison group. These outcomes suggest the program provided individuals from the treatment group with a better ability to respond to the governmental upheaval than those from the comparison group. See Figure 8 for outcomes.

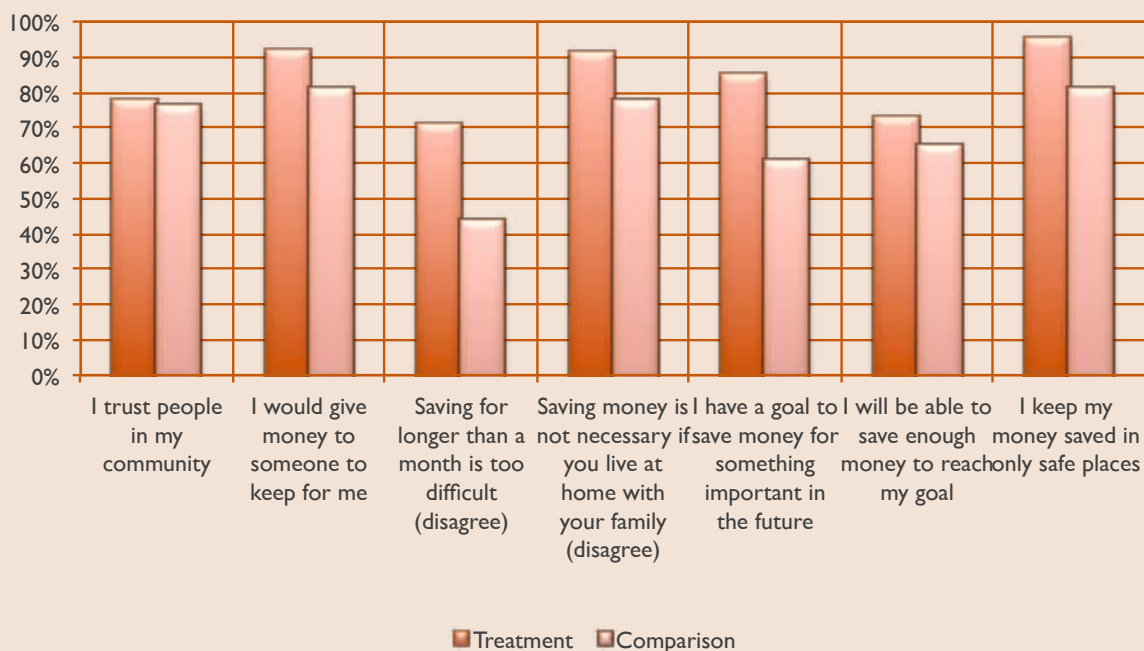
**Figure 8: Select Savings Outcomes**

Indicator	Treatment		Comparison	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Do you save money during the week for most weeks?	55%	65%*	31%	16%***
Do you have a goal to save for something special?	90%	85%	91%	35%***
How confident do you feel that you will be able to save enough money for your savings goal? (Very confident)	70%	67%	67%	47%*
Do you have cash savings set aside only for difficult times (like an emergency)?	28%	23%	25%	16%*

Significant difference between the baseline and endline outcomes: \* $p \leq 0.1$  (10%), \*\* $p \leq 0.05$  (5%), \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$  (1%)

**Evidence of resilience with the treatment group is also apparent in many attitude outcomes at the endline.** The endline outcomes in Figure 9 demonstrate that the treatment group has more confidence and a better outlook on issues such as trust in others, the difficulty of saving, the necessity of saving, savings goals, confidence in reaching savings goals and keeping money in safe places than the comparison group at the end of the study. What the graph does not show is that for many of these outcomes, there was a statistically significant drop between baseline and endline results for the comparison group—a drop that the treatment group avoided. Even though the treatment group outcomes may not have increased significantly over time on their own (with the exception of “giving money to someone to keep for me”), on average the treatment group was able to remain confident compared to a loss of confidence for the comparison group. Note that this happened for some indicators, but there were mixed results for others regarding expenses, paying debts and protecting long-term savings.

**Figure 9: Endline Attitude Outcomes**



### Membership

Group members seem to have gained new knowledge from the financial education and put it to use through the savings group mechanism. The treatment respondents demonstrated improvements in knowledge for identifying safe places to save money and identifying ways to protect long-term strategies (each of which are covered in the financial education). Sixty-two percent of the treatment group reported sharing financial education knowledge with others on ways to save and manage their money, up from 45 percent at the baseline (significant at the 1% level), and only 3 percent of the comparison group reported doing so, with no change over time. A vast majority of group members trusted that they would get their savings back, would ask for help from members if there was an emergency with their family, felt valued and appreciated by other members and liked being a member of the group. Although these outcomes were high at the baseline and did not change over time, one indicator increased—those who would express their opinion on how to manage their group during meetings rose from 86 to 98 percent (significant at the 1% level).

Although an overwhelming majority of the youth would recommend being a member of a savings group to family and friends, there was a decrease of those who would recommend joining from 99 to 91 percent (significant at the 1% level). Perhaps this decrease occurred because of those who are mobile and migrate; although those who leave active savings groups are often replaced with new members (such as siblings), it may be undesirable to some to join a group with a year commitment if they know they are going to leave in a few months. However, with 25 percent of the respondents migrating, but 91 percent still recommending the group, those who may leave still join groups. Approximately 23 youth or 18 percent of the treatment group surveyed at endline had left the savings group (but were identified and surveyed at endline). The demographics of those who left were distributed proportionally to the general demographics of the sample; about 52 percent girls, 48 percent boys, 74 percent below age 18 and 26 percent older youth. The main reasons for leaving are 1) did not have the money (39%); 2) migrated for work (26%); and 3) group dissolved (17%).

## Financial Diaries

### Methodology

The financial diary methodology consists of high-frequency surveys administered at regular intervals over several months. Data-collection was split into two time frames, one for CAEB YSGs and one for Nyèsigiso GSAs, based on the introduction of the respective saving services at each institution. For CAEB, 36 youth participated in monthly financial diaries from July 2011 to July 2012 (and henceforth will be referred to as “CAEB youth”). The sample was split equally among youth in villages near the city of Bougouni (south of Bamako) and Kolokani (north of Bamako). All of the youth in the CAEB diaries were also respondents in the baseline quantitative survey. For Nyèsigiso GSAs, 36 youth also participated in monthly financial diaries, but for only six months, from July 2012 to December 2012 (and henceforth will be referred to as “Nyèsigiso youth”). All of the youth lived in Bamako. The sampling for both sets of diaries was purposeful, yet random, to include a composition of males and females, younger and older youth, that closely represented the program demographics at the start of the study. CERCAD managed the monthly data-collection. It is important to note that during the implementation of the financial diaries, a coup d’état occurred in March 2012 and disrupted data-collection for a few weeks. It is easy to see that this major event, plus the ensuing military intervention in the north of the country, affected outcomes as well.

Given the much smaller sample sizes used in the financial diaries, it is also important to note that the objective of the financial diaries was not to necessarily demonstrate statistically significant impact of the program. The main objective was to take a deeper dive into understanding youth behaviors and attitudes and then determine how this research activity could support contributing to our overall research objective outlined above. In short, we wanted to understand and document short-term financial decisions and behaviors as a way to develop a richer understanding of the financial management habits of youth.

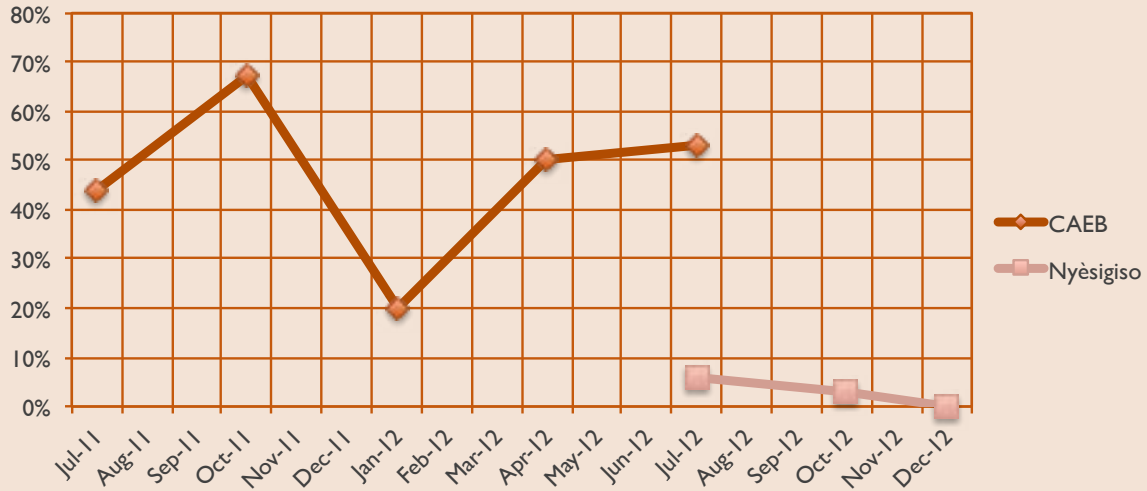
The report “*AIM Youth—Financial Diaries Research Report*<sup>23</sup>” provides a great amount of detail on the outcomes. The text summarized here draws directly from that report, focusing only on main conclusions. See the full report for more information.

### Key Results

#### Financial Services

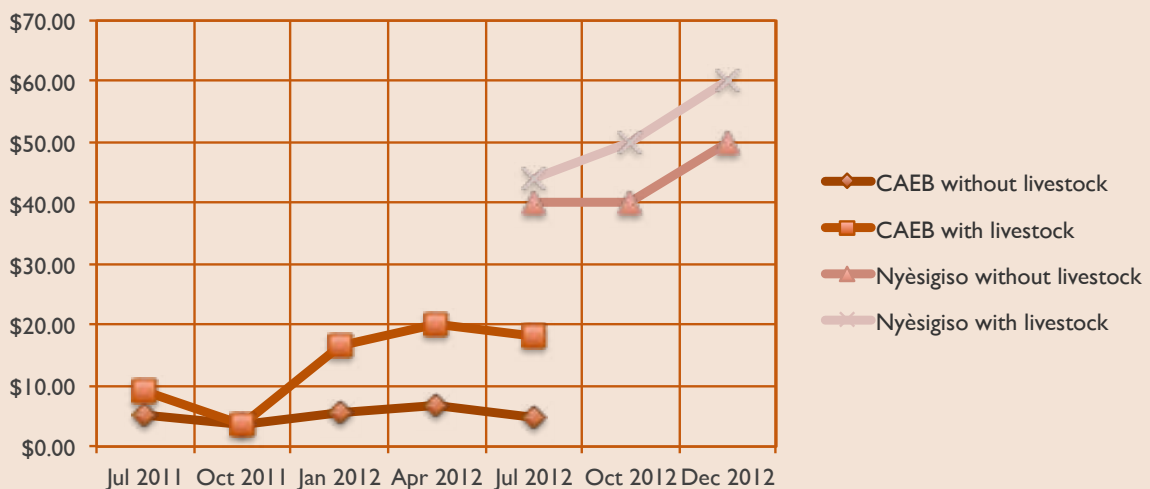
A comparison of financial diary outcomes from CAEB YSG members and Nyèsigiso GSA members demonstrated a few key points about providing financial services to youth. One finding is in regards to serving different populations. While Mali is considered a low-income country, there is a lot of economic variance in the population. Participant samples from YSGs showed that they lived in rural areas and are vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations, which affect income, expenses, savings, and food security. They did not have many economic opportunities or access to formal financial services. Data on GSAs showed they lived in urban areas, may have been poor but were not very poor;<sup>24</sup> were somewhat protected from seasonal variations, and generally had higher income, expenses and savings. Figure 10 illustrates differences between these youth in a key area—food insecurity throughout the year. The spike in food insecurity for CAEB youth is during the hungry season, and the dip occurs just after harvest. The Nyèsigiso youth are somewhat protected from these fluctuations at similar times (although data was only collected for the July–December time frame). Many GSA youth were not in school, but they had many more economic opportunities and some access to formal financial services (although age factored into a barrier here). **The two NGOs and the MFI proved to reach these diverse populations with the group-based services.**

Figure 10: Food Insecurity Over Time for CAEB and Nyèsigiso Youth



A second key point is that these youth saved money, despite constraints on income and an unstable political environment. YSG members had small amounts of money, and got some of this money to save from parents, yet overall their savings increased. When looking at cash savings for YSG members, the median amount in July 2011 was \$5, and the median amount in July 2012 was \$4.70. It can be said that in terms of cash, the CAEB youth had not increased their savings overall; however, when you add livestock, which respondents consider as savings (since asked directly in that manner), the total savings increased over time from \$9.10 to \$18 (although full ownership of claimed livestock was not clear). GSA members had more cash to save, and overall they increased their savings as well. Within the six-month period of the diaries, the median amount increased from \$40 to \$50 without livestock, and from \$44 to \$60 with livestock. Figure 11 depicts these trends for CAEB and Nyèsigiso youth. It is important to note that these amounts reflect all of their savings, not only from the group mechanisms. Almost all youth reported continuing to save outside of the group, most often keeping their savings at home.

Figure 11: Median Total Estimated Savings for CAEB and Nyèsigiso Youth





## Financial Education

As part of both the GSAs and YSG programs, the youth participated in seven financial education sessions that focused on savings. The seven sessions focused on the following topics: creating steps to achieve a goal; examining different savings strategies; categorizing ways youth save as more or less safe; identifying when financial pressures are greatest; deciding how to save for difficult times; differentiating between good and bad borrowing decisions; comparing advantages of borrowing and using savings; and making decisions on how they will achieve their next goal. Objectives for each session are included in the Appendix.

**The surveys captured improvements in financial education knowledge that contributed to the hypothesized outcome of better knowledge and attitudes in money management.** There were improvements in the following areas for CAEB respondents: 1) recognizing safe places in which to save their money; and 2) identifying strategies to protect long-term savings. Figure 12 shows an upward trend in the percentage of respondents who answered questions on these two topics. The outcomes were different for Nyèsigiso, however. The knowledge levels for these indicators were high for Nyèsigiso youth at the first point of data-collection and remained high throughout the six months of the diaries (the downward trend in percentages is less likely due to a loss in knowledge over time than simply inconsistent responses). One could say there was room for improvement with CAEB respondents, but not for Nyèsigiso respondents.

**Figure 12: Select Financial Education Outcomes**

NGO and Indicator	Oct 2011	Jan 2011	Apr 2012	July 2012	Oct 2012	Dec 2012
<b>CAEB</b>						
Identify safe places to save	77%	97%	100%	91%		
Identify strategies to protect long term savings	47%	72%	95%	100%		
<b>Nyèsigiso</b>						
Identify safe places to save				97%	91%	89%
Identify strategies to protect long term savings				100%	91%	86%

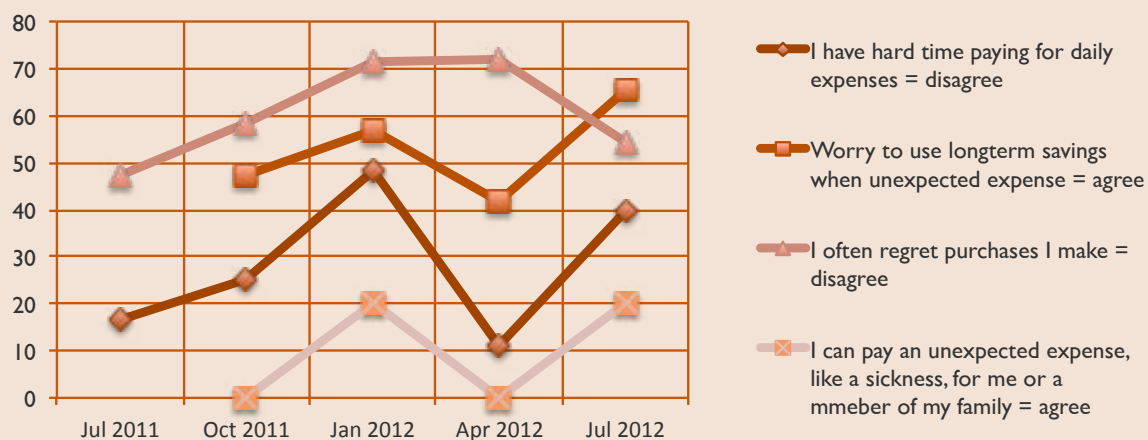
Although trends in the data showed increases in knowledge for the two specified areas, finding effective indicators for concepts such as achieving goals, identifying when financial pressures are high, deciding how to save for difficult times and issues about decision-making for borrowing and savings proved difficult. Youth provided answers to questions on these topics that both corresponded to the education, but also to relevant outside concepts, showing that they considered the material in the education, but made it difficult to demonstrate a clear increase in knowledge.

## Financial Attitudes

**Financial attitudes seemed to be some of the most interesting indicators to track.** CAEB youth benefitted in terms of better attitudes and confidence in terms of savings and expenses overall. Interestingly, a handful of indicators on expenses, described in further detail below, were on an upward trajectory until the coup d'état, when they headed downward, but then "recovered" later. These changes amount to overall improvements in six out of eight indicators.

For YSG members, there were overall improvements in three out of four indicators on expenses from July 2011 to July 2012, although those three drastically decrease in April 2012, which was just after the coup d'état. These include indicators on having difficulty paying for daily expenses, worrying about using long-term savings when unexpected expenses arise, and paying unexpected expenses for themselves or a family member. What is notable, though, is that they “recovered” after the coup, and by July 2012, were higher than they were a year prior. The one indicator that contradicts these trends is “often regretting purchases.” This indicator at first improved like the others, stays constant at April, then declined by July. Figure 13 depicts these trends for CAEB youth. For GSA members, the three attitudes that improved for YSG members seem to have worsened or stayed about the same. “Often regretting purchases” started high and stayed high, however. Overall, attitudes about expenses improved for YSG members, but stayed about the same or got slightly worse for GSA members.

**Figure 13: Attitudes About Expenses for CAEB Youth**



**Similar to the attitudes about expenses, there were improvements overall in some attitudes about savings for CAEB youth despite a downturn during the coup.** The level of these indicators do not “recover” the same way as for the indicators on expenses, nevertheless, they show improvement over the year. Youth were given statements and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them. Again for YSG members, there were overall improvements in three out of four indicators (indicators highlighted in Figure 14 below) from July 2011 to July 2012, and those three drastically decreased in April 2012, just after the coup d'état. These included their outlook on the difficulty of saving for longer than a month, safety of their money and saving despite their friends and family asking for money. The indicator that showed a decline is “It is not necessary to save if you live with your parents.” For GSA members, the outcomes were different; the improvements were so small that it was basically as though there was no change. However, there was not as much room for improvement since many attitudes were already high at the beginning of the diaries. Figure 15 is provided to show these trends for Nyèsigiso youth. Regarding the view that it is necessary to save if you live with parents, almost 100 percent of the youth disagreed with this. As with the attitudes about expenses, the YSG members seemed to have shown greater improvements than GSA members, but at the same time there was more room for improvement with YSG members since the attitudes for GSA members were more positive at the onset of the surveys.

Figure 14. Attitudes About Savings—CAEB Youth

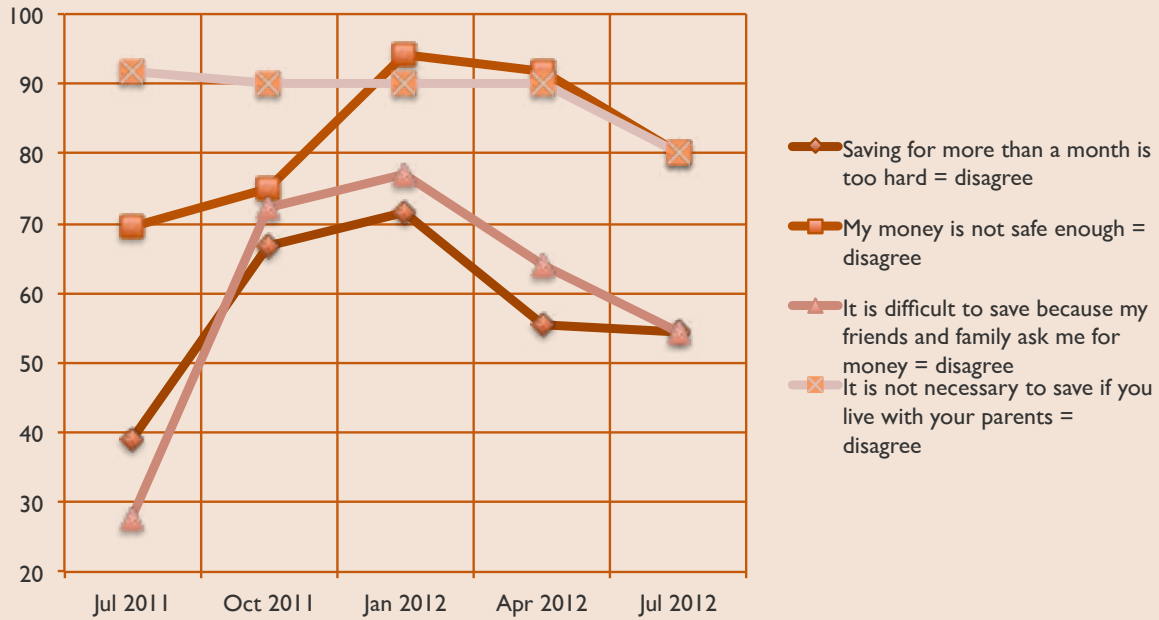
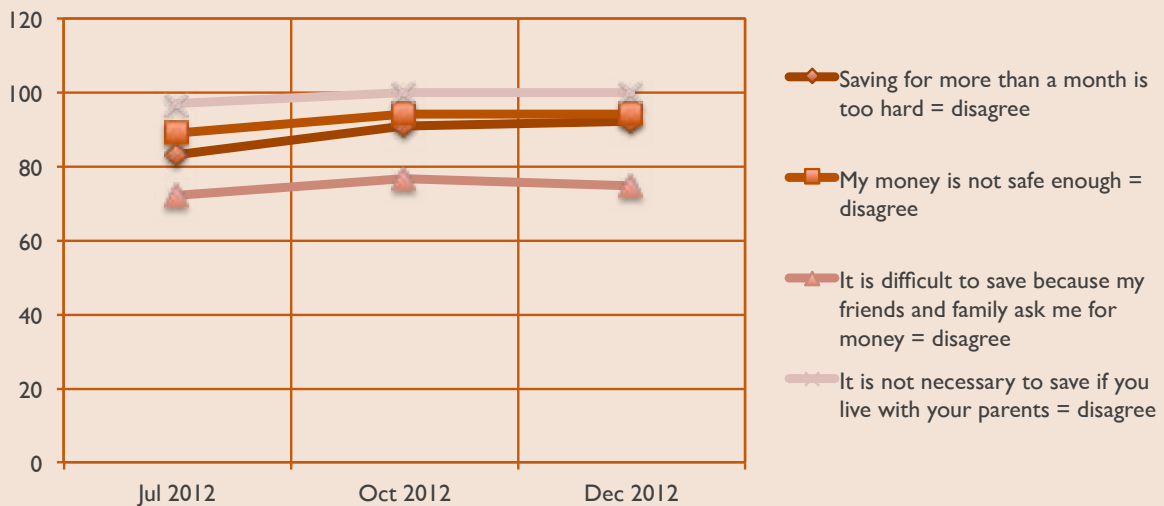


Figure 15: Attitudes About Savings—Nyèsigiso Youth



### Age and Gender

**Age and gender may account for differences in needs and economic activities, but they do not necessarily translate into different benefits from the financial services.** In general, all groups demonstrated improvements in savings amounts, savings knowledge and attitudes and money management. The analysis of changes in these areas did not show many differences. Considering that the sample sizes were quite small, a closer comparison of age and gender differences would be useful on a larger population, but in terms of the general trends for these diaries, the differences are not remarkably apparent.

## Qualitative Assessment on Youth Satisfaction

### Methodology

In February 2013, Freedom from Hunger staff in Mali carried out a Qualitative Assessment on Youth Satisfaction. The objective of the assessment was to understand more details about the perception of the youth financial services being offered through the project. The study focused on the following areas:

- Strengths and weaknesses of the financial services and financial education
- Potential for long-term sustainability of the services
- Role of parents in the financial lives of youth
- Gender differences in group leadership and participation

Information provided in this section summarizes findings directly from the final report, authored by the consultant Violet Diallo.<sup>25</sup> Areas included from the assessment are those relevant to the overall impact of the program on youth, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the services, the role of parents and how gender affects leadership and participation. Issues of sustainability are summarized in the Freedom from Hunger *AIM Youth* paper on integrated services.

Approximately 401 people participated altogether across CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso. Participants had not participated in other research activities in the project thus far. The team conducted 27 FGDs with youth participants, their parents and staff of participating organizations. Four individual interviews with youth who formally participated but left were also conducted. The composition of participating youth reflected the program demographics at the time of data-collection. Data collected was also informed by a mid-term assessment carried out in March and July 2012 with 189 youth in YSGs and GSAs.

### Key Results

#### Satisfaction with the YSG

**Youth in the YSGs are satisfied with the service and plan to continue participating in the long term.** Many plan to use savings for their future, and the older ones often say they will use them for IGAs. Some even said they are saving for an emergency. They appreciate the access to loans and the earned interest. Many said the groups give them a sense of solidarity to help sustain the discipline of saving, and they feel an attachment to the group. Parents say the youth in YSGs are becoming more autonomous and their social behavior is changing, stating that some groups are cleaning up the surrounding areas of the mosque and market. One group said that parents now share some of their commercial activities with the children in the YSG.

**The greatest challenge by the participants in the YSGs—especially the younger youth—is the ability to make their weekly savings contribution, although their parents often help them.** Parents think this can cease when the youth start an IGA. There are also some difficulties in repaying loans due to the fluctuations in seasonal income.

The youth and animators agreed that the youth need more training, especially for IGAs, to improve the program. It seems that the youth would prefer help from their animators instead of the Godmothers to settle conflicts; some said they want support from animators to enforce group rules, and all groups thought they could continue on their own without the Godmothers. In addition, animators commented that they should be asked to make sure the program does not negatively affect the school work of the children, but they did not provide details on what these negative effects are, or whether they have occurred before.

## Satisfaction with the GSA

**Youth with GSAs say that being engaged in regular savings has changed their behavior; they have developed a habit of savings and manage their finances better.** They think being in a GSA will lead to a long-term savings culture, being more thrifty, creating group solidarity, feeling better equipped to meet future goals, and strengthening economic activities. As seen with the impact study and the financial diaries, older youth are interested in buying inputs for IGAs and supporting activities from their apprenticeships. Parents think that their children are gaining better money management skills.

The youth participating in GSAs expressed a high level of satisfaction with the service. They appreciate the opportunity to save, the interest paid on the account and the security of the funds. They understand the importance of saving over time to help with investments in the future (like with their IGAs). A few of them also mentioned they liked the easy access to deposits and the initial promotional activity conducted by the marketing agents at Nyèsigiso.

Challenges were expressed by some groups, but usually not by a consensus of several groups. One issue expressed by a few groups was the difficulty of making the weekly savings contribution, which may be linked to financial difficulties of their parents since many parents help their children with their contribution. Other considerations included not liking the fees charged by Nyèsigiso, not having easy access to their money, and the distance to the branch.

Regarding areas for improvement, many suggested more frequent contact with animators since they appreciated their encouragement, and additional education and support to continue saving. Some asked that account fees be lowered, others asked for an increase in the interest received. In the 2012 study, finding appropriate meeting locations and times also posed a challenge. Parents noted a special event may attract more youth to the product, and Nyèsigiso staff said they would like to use media, such as radio announcements to promote the youth GSAs.

## Financial Education

The youth consider the methodology of the financial education in these services as different from what is used in formal schooling, and that it has a different purpose. Formal schooling is serious, and discussion is not encouraged: the purpose is to learn to read and write. The financial education in the YSGs is a new format for them; it is participatory and based on dialogue. It also introduces a new topic not covered in school, money management. Some preferred formal school and others preferred the financial education.

Even if some youth preferred formal schooling, both urban and rural youth expressed a positive attitude about the financial education sessions. **They thought the financial education was valuable to help them plan for the future, to be less wasteful and to manage their money better.** Some rural youth said they feel as though the financial education gives them important information that earned them respect from their families, and their parents agreed. Parents believed the education helped youth manage their money, and the animators saw that the group members have a greater sense of financial responsibility. There were mixed reactions on the methodology, including by the NGO animators, with an overall slight preference for more dialogue in the sessions than games, although younger youth in the GSAs clearly preferred games.

## Dropouts

Only a few youth have dropped out of the GSAs, about one to three people in a small number of groups. Of those who have dropped out, migration for work and financial difficulties that make it difficult to continue saving were the most common reasons.

**Interviews with youth who have dropped out of the YSG suggest that there was no significant dissatisfaction with the YSG, and that the main reasons for leaving the program are due to migration to earn more money, or in the case of girls, moving to another village when getting married.** One respondent said a group disintegrated when a several group members left to get married. When relatives can no longer help with weekly contributions, it can also lead to dropping out for those dependent on it—one participant left because he said his grandfather could no longer afford to pay for him.

### Gender

Regarding gender composition in groups, opinions differed depending on the group. **Mixed-gender groups said gender did not pose a problem in group cohesion, and single-sexed groups said they did not want a mixed group.** Many groups said that managing girls was easier than managing boys, and they liked having mixed-gender groups. Both mixed- and single-gender groups indicated that girls are and could be members of the management committee, however.

As to reasons for being in same-sex groups, girls said they were more interested than boys to join a group or that it was a group decision among their friends and left no room for boys who were latecomers. Participation of girls in GSAs is limited, though, and one member of the Nyèsigiso staff even made a strong request that the services pay more attention to girls. Although discussions with the youth did not reveal the reasons for this gender imbalance, one suggested possibility is that older males can more easily meet the requirements for opening an account (identification and minimum amount), or that it might be easier to reach them in urban areas.

### Parents Involvement

**In both rural and urban areas, parents are active in their children's financial lives, to the extent that they often help them make their savings contributions.** Parents indicate this happens only when youth are not able to make their savings contribution, but they also say that they are asked for help more often than youth may admit. The issue is not entirely clear, however, since most rural youth get paid for doing work for their parents, which they can turn and use for their savings contributions. Urban youth say their parents are not involved in meeting the account requirements or managing the GSAs, but some keep their parents informed of their activities.

**A complicated aspect of the involvement of parents is in the rural areas, where parents have their children take loans out from the YSG for household expenses, such as health and school-related expenses, or even for their own IGA.** It is not clear whether youth see this as a problem, since several youth (and animators) indicate that the members get the most satisfaction from being able to use funds for the family (it is also not known if this is connected to parents' membership in an adult savings group). Problems can arise for repayments, though, especially if parents are facing financial difficulties such as during the rainy season. Animators say that parents can sometimes forget to make a loan repayment, which results in missing sums at the end of the savings cycle. For youth whose families cannot make these repayments, it can affect group participation.

All groups seem to have a limited degree of knowledge of their parents' financial affairs. Very few group members have any knowledge as to whether their parents have a savings account with or a loan from a financial institution. Parents seem to have a better understanding of their children's financial activities, especially since they often provide the savings contributions. However, there is a discrepancy between what the parents and youth say regarding awareness of their participation. Some youth say they tell their parents

about their participation in the savings services, but that their parents are not involved or deeply aware of their activities. Parents, on the other hand, insist that they are well aware of the activities and even that they are pleased with the changes in their children’s attitude to handling money.

## Impact Stories

### *Methodology*

In May 2013, the research firm CERCAD collected eight Impact Stories with youth participants in the CAEB and Nyèsigiso programs, as well as three parents. The Impact Stories are surveys that attempt to provide a more holistic life scenario of a youth participating in a program under the *AIM Youth* initiative. The purpose of the impact story is to better understand youth hopes and aspirations for themselves and their families, their major challenges, their general health, how they manage their money and how CAEB or Nyèsigiso has played a role in their lives. Interviews were conducted with four youth in GSAs from Bamako; three youth in CAEB YSGs from Bougouni; one youth who was in a YSG but had migrated; and three parents of youth in CAEB YSGs. The eight youth interviewed were all part of the financial diary respondents, and the CAEB respondents were also in the quantitative impact study. Freedom from Hunger wrote the survey guide, and CERCAD moderated the conversations that were recorded and summarized into life stories. Although the impact stories were qualitative, they were structured and questions were administered consistently across respondents. Any youth names used in the summaries throughout the paper, including the sample stories in the Appendix, have been changed.

### *Key Results*

Since many of the outcomes for youth in both the CAEB YSGs and Nyèsigiso GSAs are similar, they have been mixed together and organized by topic.

#### Achieving a “Good Life”

**When asked “how would you describe ‘well-being’ or ‘the good life,’ most of the youth answers centered around themes of good health, being married, having a home, having children and having money.** Some mentioned their future ability to take care of their needs and the needs of their families. Most were confident that they would achieve this good life, and that life for them will be better in the future and better than that of their parents. Most of this optimism focused on education—school is more accessible for them than their parents, more youth are getting educated and more youth are literate.

**“The good life is to have money, health, marriage, a home.”**

**Boureima, age 16  
YSG member**

#### Good Health and Food Security

Most of the youth felt they had good health, which was often defined as being free from disease. Some thought that they ate well, since they eat food with vitamins. A few said they did not eat well, however, mentioning that they did not eat much more than *tô*, a traditional meal made of a starchy staple such as millet or sorghum boiled and prepared like porridge, and rice, and that they did not eat enough food in general.

#### Money

**Regarding who or what most influenced them in the way they think about their own money, some said their mother or a specific animator, but many said it was their savings group.** Several felt that their group helped them a lot. They talked about how their behaviors have changed; that they previously wasted money but now spend less and save more. They say the group has helped them control their spending. The savings group

influenced them to save, and many felt they would not have saved as much without the group. They appreciate how the group has allowed them to save money for their businesses and cover expenses such as school

***“I especially love the savings in a savings account because it is more secure and our money is safe.”***

**Sidi, age 16  
GSA member, Nyèsigiso**

supplies, food, shoes or clothes. They now see the benefits of savings. They felt their money was safer now in the group, they spend less and save more. In the past they may have lacked the motivation to save, or lacked a savings goal, but now the group has motivated many to earn money. For savings goals, several talked about building their poultry businesses or purchasing cattle.

Many youth do not have financial responsibilities, and their parents pay expenses. Youth pay for small items, such as food, shoes or some clothes. Some talk about wanting to take on more expenses for their families, to contribute to daily expenses or even emergencies. One youth interviewed had migrated to Bamako the year prior to earn money. He said that while he was away, he missed the atmosphere and the friends in the group.

### Financial Education

All of the youth spoke highly about financial education. The most common comment was that it taught them how to manage their money. For instance, they learned when to spend and when to save. Several mentioned they now know how to control their spending. Two youth gave examples of setting aside for savings the money they received by dividing the amount in two. Some feel they have more financial education than many of their friends in the neighborhood and share information with their families. Many liked the lessons on how to improve their savings to save for cattle and their poultry business. They also appreciated the cohesion in the group.

***“They save their money and at the time of distribution they pay for their own clothes with this money. Now with the group they are more able to take over some of their own expenses.”***

**Animata, parent of 15-year-old son  
in YSG with CAEB**

### Parents

In general, the three parents of YSG members interviewed thought their children benefitted from the YSGs and financial education. They thought their children manage their money better now, whereas they had wasted it before. Because they are saving more, they can contribute more to their own expenses, such as purchasing clothes and school supplies. One woman mentioned she thought her children had become more enterprising, putting together a poultry business, and that their savings can help with business costs. Another mother mentioned her son has more responsibility now: he knows he is a member of a group and must make his contribution. Thanks to the group, he has livestock and pays certain expenses for himself, instead of relying on his family.

The parents also discussed their role in helping their children save in the YSGs. They often help with their children's savings contribution. All three said that their children take loans out for them. One woman mentioned that she asked her son for credit that she used to buy food for the household and for emergencies such as health problems. Sometimes when a child is asked to take a loan for a parent, the child repays out of his own pocket or does more work to earn money to help out. Overall, the parents would recommend the group to all the village youth because they feel it is important to have the knowledge of money management and the help with saving.

[See “Sample Impact Stories” in the appendix for two stories illustrating individual scenarios of impact story participants.](#)



## Analysis

To understand how the results from the studies fit together to describe the impact of the integrated financial services on the participating youth in Mali, it is useful to examine how the results answer the key research questions and provide support for the hypothesized *AIM Youth* Benefit Process. The following section answers each question, provides some relevant supporting information and sets the stage for the conclusion.

### 1. To what degree does the combination of financial services and financial education influence the intermediate and long-term outcomes for youth (as described in the benefits model)? (See *AIM Youth Mali Research Agenda* section for reference)

**Better knowledge and attitudes in money management.** There is clear and strong evidence that the youth in both CAEBYSGs and Nyèsigiso GSAs benefitted in terms of better knowledge and attitudes regarding money management. They have better attitudes about the necessity of saving and the difficulty of doing so. They were more likely to have defined savings goals, to maintain them, and to have confidence in reaching their goals, in contrast to comparison group youth. They are also saving each week towards that goal, as a function of the YSG and GSA mechanisms. They know to protect their savings by correctly identifying safe places to save and strategies to protect long-term savings. Some youth, especially older ones, have emergency savings (including livestock), and have more money saved for emergencies than a comparison group. Attitudes about worrying to use long term savings when unexpected expenses arise have improved (for CAEBYSGs members, although not for Nyèsigiso GSA members). In addition, they are sharing what they have learned through the financial education with family and friends.

**Improved ability to deal with life-cycle events.** Ability to deal with life-cycle events included their confidence and ability to save for future events, having savings goals focusing on life-cycle events, and accumulating savings. There is evidence that they are increasing their ability to deal with life-cycle events in these terms. Many of the youth already had articulated life-cycle events in terms of savings goals: saving for a trousseau or dowry for marriage, and there was improvement for some who earlier focused on less productive goals. Those saving for clothes decreased and those saving for livestock—which can be an IGA or act as an asset to be sold at a later point—increased. The financial diary data showed increases in the amount of savings and livestock, and although the quantitative study did not show increases, it showed they maintained a minimum savings (savings could have been spent since the previous savings cycle had ended). As mentioned earlier, attitudes regarding the ability to save and save for future goals improved.

**Increased social capital.** Measures of working as a team, relying on and trusting group members (and hence other community members) and feeling valued as part of the group are the indicators used to understand increases in social capital. Evidence was found to support an increase in social capital. Those agreeing with the attitude indicator “I trust people in my community” maintained outcome levels over time for the treatment group and avoided a downturn that the comparison group exhibited. The number of youth that agreed they “would give their money to someone to keep for them,” also increased, indicating a rise in the level of trust and willingness to depend on others. Indicators that were high at the baseline and maintained over time included trusting that they would get their savings back (from the group), being willing to ask for help from members if there was an emergency with their family, agreeing they felt valued and appreciated by other members and liking being a member of the group (these questions were not asked of the comparison group).

**Improved self-confidence and empowerment.** There is also some evidence of increased self-confidence and empowerment. As mentioned earlier, attitude indicators showed an increased confidence in youth ability

to save and to reach their goals. The number of those indicating they “would express their opinion on how to manage their group during meetings” increased, signifying they are confident enough to express their opinions to the group. The qualitative assessment showed that several of the youth spoke with pride about their newly gained knowledge about money management, and talked about an increase in respect from families and community members because of their new knowledge.

**Improved socio-financial capability.** Socio-financial capability was assessed using savings amounts, the existence of a savings goal, and having emergency savings. Improved outcomes for savings goals, increased savings (and increases in livestock), and attitudes and knowledge about money management all contribute to the strong evidence for improved socio-financial capability. Many of the youth have more savings; most have more confidence in savings; many have new knowledge of money management; some are saving for more productive goals; and some are maintaining savings for emergencies. Each of these outcomes leads to a greater capability to manage their future finances well.

Economic and civic engagement. The *AIM Youth Benefit Process* suggests that the financial services and financial education will lead to a longer-term impact of economic and civic engagement. Thus, there was not an expectation of a change in this area at the onset of the project. There were some small signs of change; however, parents say the youth in YSGs are becoming more autonomous and their social behavior is changing, which is shown by some groups cleaning the surrounding areas of the mosque and market. Additionally, the act of being in a YSG or GSA is another form of economic engagement and engagement with their community.

**Better access to and/or utilization of food.** There is no clear evidence that youth have better access to or utilization of food. Access to and utilization of food are components of food security, along with the availability of food. The outcome from the security scale used in the endline and financial diaries reflected seasonal fluctuations, but did not indicate a clear overall change. Changes in food security could occur with more time in the program, stemming from more economic activity and increased savings spent on food (or loans through the YSGs). However, it would be better to understand how the youth contribute to their own food security (or if their parents are primarily responsible), and how this differs with the age of youth. As mentioned earlier, Freedom from Hunger did not anticipate a change in food security would become clear in the short term for this project, although follow-up surveys at a later point could track it for the longer term.

**Greater family food security and improved family health and nutrition.** There is also no evidence of greater family food security or improved family health and nutrition for the time frame of this research. Seeing a change in family food security could occur if younger youth gave money to their family to spend on food, or if loans taken by parents through YSGs were spent on food. For older youth, they would likely contribute more to their family or use YSG or GSA funds on their own children. However, there is no indication that either scenario is happening at this point at a degree strong enough to see a difference. Family health and nutrition could be affected with greater family food security over time. As with better access to and/or utilization of food, even though it is theorized these changes could occur over time, it was not expected to capture a change in family food security, health and nutrition in the short term.

## **2. How do these outcomes differ in regards to the demographic and service segments in the project?**

**Age.** The results show that older youth have more productive-oriented savings goals, such as livestock and business costs. They are more worried about unexpected expenses and more likely to have money set aside for emergencies than younger youth. They feel more financial pressure in the form of lending money to family and friends. Older youth also migrate more than younger youth, which at least for rural areas, makes them

less likely to engage in YSGs for long periods of time. They saved more money over time. Many of the other outcomes, in terms of attitudes, social capital, self-confidence and economic engagement had similar outcomes to younger youth.

**Gender.** Only one difference in gender outcomes was clearly identified in the results of these evaluation activities in regards to potential impact of the financial services plus education. Over time, savings goals for both boys and girls turned somewhat (but not entirely) away from clothing towards more productive goals—although for girls, both the livestock and trousseau grew in importance while for boys it was livestock and emergencies. Many differences observed between boys and girls existed before the start of the program, such as boys having higher income, expenses and savings, migrating more and saving more for emergencies. In addition, both mixed-gender and single-sex groups say that girls can be on the management committee of groups, indicating that there is gender equity in leadership opportunities.

**YSG or GSA.** The YSG youth had greater changes in attitudes and knowledge about savings and expenses than GSA youth, but GSA youth had higher levels of knowledge at the start, greater amounts of money, and were more likely to have savings set aside for emergencies. GSA youth also save more money over time. Since the YSG and GSA savings mechanisms are quite similar, it is probably more likely that the difference is due to characteristics of the population of those who were targeted and took up the services. YSG youth were younger, poorer, lived in rural areas and had less money overall. Their initial outcomes on attitudes were less positive; there was more room for improvement. GSA youth were older, more economically active, lived in urban areas and wealthier from the start. They had more money to save, and their age may make them take the threat of unexpected expenses more seriously.

### **3. To what degree are youth (and their families) satisfied with the financial services?**

Overall, the youth from both YSG and GSA, as well as their parents, are quite satisfied with the savings services. CAEB youth like the YSGs and the majority would recommend them to family and friends. Both YSG and GSA youth said the groups helped them save. YSGs appreciated the access to loans, the earned interest and the solidarity from the group. GSA youth appreciated the interest on their savings, the security of their savings and the group solidarity.

The financial education is highly appreciated by both groups. They think the financial education is valuable to help them plan for the future, to be less wasteful and to manage their money better. Some rural youth say they feel the financial education gives them important information that earns them respect from their families, and their parents agree. Parents believe the education is helping them manage their money, and the animators see that the group members have a greater sense of financial responsibility. There are mixed reactions on the methodology, however, with an overall slight preference for more dialogue in the sessions than games, although younger youth in the GSA clearly preferred games.

Although satisfied overall, two issues seem to cause difficulty for groups. One is having enough money to save every week. There are also some difficulties in repaying loans due to the fluctuations in seasonal income. More youth said financial difficulties were an issue in the YSGs than GSAs, but it was still a problem for some in GSAs. The second issue is migrating youth. Youth who leave groups cause a disruption, which seems a bigger problem for YSGs than GSAs based on commentary from group members. Even though those leaving are quickly replaced, departures can decrease overall savings of the group and if enough youth leave, a group will dissolve.

#### **4. What are the conditions that help or challenge youth's access to financial services?**

The conditions that help the youth access the YSG and GSAs refer to both money and logistics of the group. First, a key issue is having money to save, either on their own or with the help of parents. Other key issues involve having a group of peers to form a group, a willingness and ability of individuals to cooperate as a team (for these group-based mechanisms), meeting at an amenable time outside of school or work hours and in an easily accessible location. These other key issues were addressed in the initial design of the program and were not explored in depth in the research, but are discussed in the project papers “Saving Together: Group-Based Approaches to Promote Youth Savings,<sup>26</sup>” and “Integrating Financial Services with Financial Education for Young People.<sup>27</sup>”

The biggest challenges in accessing and using the financial services are not having money to save and migration, also expressed as dissatisfaction in the qualitative research. Since saving each week is a requirement, youth who do not have the money of their own or cannot obtain money from relatives cannot participate. This is a bigger problem for younger youth who are less economically active and earn less money. Although migration is a bigger problem for the older youth since they are more likely to leave a group, it is the younger remaining youth who must deal with the consequences of change in the group dynamics.

One potential challenge that is worth further exploration is the role of parents in providing contributions, and taking loans, for youth, especially the younger ones. Some youth mentioned having to drop out of the group because their parents could no longer provide the savings contribution. The NGO staff expressed concern that if parents fail to repay loans, they will jeopardize the group fund and group dynamics. Even though the youth did not express negative consequences from having their parents take out loans through them, except when the parent paid late or defaulted, the issue should be explored further, with sensitivity for the involved parties. Do children feel they must take loans for parents even when they prefer not to? Do children consider the money they saved belongs to them, and do they have ownership of it at distribution (for YSGs), or do they return it to their parents because it was originally their money at the time of contribution? Finding answers to these issues would not be easy, but would help better identify the nuances about the benefits of participation.

#### **5. To what degree do youth have increased savings?**

There is some evidence that youth have increased their savings over time with both the YSGs and GSAs. The financial diaries show a trend of increased savings over time for both the youth in YSGs and GSAs. The quantitative impact study with YSGs, however, did not show an increase in savings between the baseline and endline. But during this 18-month period between the baseline and endline, all or most groups had ended a cycle and had begun another. At the end of the cycle, they can spend their savings (or give to parents) and begin a new cycle with little or no funds, therefore their “total savings” does not reflect consistent savings for the entire 18-month period. The median value of livestock increases from baseline to endline for the quantitative survey though, suggesting that youth may be investing more in livestock, a common savings strategy in rural Mali.

In addition, youth from both services say the groups have helped them save and that they appreciate that help. To what extent has this led to a more solid habit of savings? The desire to save existed before the group mechanisms were available to them, but the qualitative assessment shows the groups have made it easier to save systematically and in a safer place. Youth are also continuing to save despite constraints on income and an unstable political environment.

## Conclusion

The research results suggest that CAEB, Le Tonus and Nyèsigiso conducted successful pilots of the *AIM Youth* YSG, GSA and financial education programs. CAEB and Le Tonus brought the YSG program to a very poor, food-insecure and financially excluded population in hard-to-reach areas. Evidence demonstrating resilience of the YSG participants in important savings behaviors and attitudes as well as high levels of satisfaction with the program during the time of political upheaval indicate that the financial education and savings group programs were well received and effective. Nyèsigiso brought together youth in urban areas who saved relatively large amounts of money in the GSAs, gained valuable insights on money management from the financial education and were satisfied with their experience. The issues of available money to contribute, migration of youth and the somewhat complicated role of parents posed challenges to maintain continued participation of groups, but did not disable the majority of groups to function well. Overall, it appears the youth put into practice behaviors that were promoted through financial services and the education, and this has likely been to their benefit. The YSG and GSA programs stand out as positive examples for other organizations to adopt as effective financial service programs in building the financial capability of youth in West Africa.

# Appendix

## Summary of Financial Education Objectives for AIM Youth Mali

### Achieve Your Goals: Manage Your Money Wisely Learning Games

Number and Title	Objectives <i>By the end of the Learning Game, participants will have:</i>
Steps to Achieve a Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organized their goal into steps they can achieve one by one.</li> <li>▪ Committed to discussing their goal with their family.</li> </ul>
Grow Your Savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examined different savings strategies.</li> <li>▪ Selected strategy to grow their savings.</li> </ul>
Keeping Your Savings Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Categorized ways that youth save their money as more or less safe.</li> <li>▪ Decided what to do to protect their savings</li> </ul>
Planning for Difficult Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identified periods when financial pressures are greatest.</li> <li>▪ Decided how they will save for difficult times.</li> </ul>
Borrowing Wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Differentiated between good and bad borrowing decisions.</li> </ul>
When You Should Borrow and When You Should Use Savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Compared the advantages of borrowing and using savings.</li> </ul>
Reaching Your Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reviewed previous Learning Games.</li> <li>▪ Decided what they will do next to achieve their goal.</li> </ul>

## Simplified Logical Framework

### Simplified Evaluation Logical Framework for AIM Youth Research

Benefits Model Components	Research Questions	Indicators	Methods
Impact: Overarching question—To what degree does the combination of financial services and financial education influence long-term outcomes for youth?			
<b>Food Security and Poverty</b>	To what degree does food security and poverty improve as a result of the integrated services for youth?	Food-Security Score PPI (below national poverty line)	Baseline, Endline
	To what degree does food security and poverty fluctuate over time for youths' households?	Food-Security Score PPI (below national poverty line)	Financial Diaries

Benefits Model Components	Research Questions	Indicators	Methods
	What are youths' perceived reasons for food insecurity in their own household or community?	Description of reasons for food security	Impact Stories
<b>Economic and Civic Engagement</b>	To what degree are youth working or looking for work?	Looked for work in last year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
	To what degree do earnings improve over time?	Amount of money earned in a paying economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
	How satisfied are youth with their work?	Work is perceived to be safe	Baseline, Endline
		They are very, somewhat or not satisfied with their work	Baseline, Endline
<b>Outcomes: Overarching question—To what degree does the combination of financial services and financial education influence short-term outcomes for youth?</b>			
<b>Socio-financial Capability</b>	To what degree do youth report saving money over time?	Saving money (anywhere)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Saving money in multiple specified places (home, with guardian, with friend, in other savings group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Saving money in other forms (as livestock, jewelry or other item)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
	To what degree do savings amounts improve over time?	Amount of money saved in last 7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
		Amount of money saved in total	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
	To what degree do youth report having a savings goal?	Has a savings goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> <li>▪ Qualitative Assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>
Description of savings goal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> <li>▪ Qualitative Assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>	

Benefits Model Components	Research Questions	Indicators	Methods
	To what degree do you save for emergencies and how much?	Reported having money set aside for emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline,Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Amount reported saved for emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline,Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
<b>Better Attitudes and Knowledge in Money Management</b>	To what degree do youth have improved knowledge regarding identifying save places to save and identifying strategies to protect long-term savings?	Can identify a safe place to save	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline,Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Can identify strategies to protect long-term savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline,Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Express that only keep money saved in safe places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline,Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
	To what degree are youth satisfied with the financial services?	Are satisfied with YSG or GSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Qualitative Assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>
		Would recommend YSG or GSA to friends and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Qualitative Assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>
	To what degree are youth motivated to save in the future?	Understand necessity of saving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Outlook on difficulty to save	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Are confident about ability to save	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Have defined savings goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Have confidence to reach savings goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Are saving money to reach goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Find difficulty in saving since family and friends ask for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>



Benefits Model Components	Research Questions	Indicators	Methods
	To what degree are youth worried about paying expenses?	I4.1 Are worried about long-term savings in the face of unexpected expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Are worried would not have enough money to pay expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Are worried would not have enough to help family cover expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Can pay for unexpected expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Have confidence around purchases they make	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Have confidence knowing when have expense, is best to borrow or pay with savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Have difficulty paying for daily expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
	To what extent do youth have confidence in their decisions in general?	Feel make good decisions about future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Feel make good decisions about work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
<b>Improved Social Capital</b>	To what degree do youth feel they trust other members in their group	Feel they trust they will get their money back from others in group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
	To what degree do youth feel valued by other members in group	Feel valued by other members in group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
	To what degree would they ask other members in group for help	Would ask members of group for help if there was an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
	To what degree do youth trust others in community	Trust others in community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
	To what degree would trust others to hold money for them	Would trust others to hold money for them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>

Benefits Model Components	Research Questions	Indicators	Methods
	To what degree do youth give advice to others or receive advice about money management?	Have received advice on how to save or management money in last 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
		Have given advice on ways to save and management money in past 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
		Shared advice that parents have given	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
	To what degree do youth talk to their family about money management?	Have talked to family members about their future goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
		Have talked to family members about planning for difficult times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
		Have talked to family members about making good decisions about borrowing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
		Have talked to family members about when you should borrow and when you should save	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> </ul>
	<b>Ability to Deal With Life-cycle Events</b>	To what degree do youth feel confident about their ability to save for future events?	Understand necessity of saving
Outlook on difficulty to save			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
Are confident about ability to save			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
Have defined savings goals			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
Have confidence to reach savings goals			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
Are saving money to reach goals			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
Find difficulty in saving since family and friends ask for money			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>

Benefits Model Components	Research Questions	Indicators	Methods
	To what degree do youth have savings goals focused on life-cycle events?	Has a savings goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> <li>▪ Qualitative Assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>
		Description of savings goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> <li>▪ Impact Stories</li> <li>▪ Qualitative Assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>
	To what degree do youth have accumulated savings?	Saving money (anywhere)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Saving money in multiple specified places (home, with guardian, with friend, in other savings group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
		Saving money in other forms (as livestock, jewelry or other item)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> <li>▪ Financial diaries</li> </ul>
<b>Self confidence and Empowerment</b>	To what degree do youth feel more self confidence and empowerment regarding their personal financial future?	Understand necessity of saving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Outlook on difficulty to save	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Are confident about ability to save	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Have defined savings goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Have confidence to reach savings goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> </ul>
		Are saving money to reach goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
		Find difficulty in saving since family and friends ask for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, Endline</li> <li>▪ Financial Diaries</li> </ul>
	To what degree do youth feel comfortable expressing their opinions to others?	would express opinions on managing group during meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Baseline, endline</li> </ul>
	To what degree do they feel respect for their financial knowledge?	Feel respect from families and community members from knowledge gained in financial education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualitative assessment/ FGDs</li> </ul>

## Sample Impact Stories

### Assa

Assa is a 15-year-old female and has been a member of the CAEB savings group Benkadi for two years. She serves as president of her group.

When asked about the “good life,” Assa said that to “have a good life is to have money. If you have money you can satisfy all your needs.” She identified the characteristics of a good life as having money, food, and livestock. She feels confident that she will have a good life. In five years, she sees herself in five years as a trader, and better off because she will have more money.

Assa feels that she has a good diet because she said, “often I eat potatoes and other food necessary for my body.” To her, good health means being fit and not getting sick. She also feels healthy because “I’m able to do everything I need.”

The savings group is what has most impacted her thinking about money and how to manage it. Since joining the savings group she has started to save money. At home she has no financial responsibilities as her parents pay for major expenses. She buys shoes, but her father buys her clothes.

Assa is happy with her savings, but isn’t currently saving the amount of money she wants because she hasn’t been in the group for enough time. In her participation with the group, she has learned how to “increase your money and understand when to borrow.” She shares this information with friends and with her parents. She especially likes the collective activities within the group and thanks the group for helping her save more than she would have on her own. Her savings goals include saving for urgent needs (emergencies), and in the future she hopes to buy a cow.

She does not plan to migrate, but said that many members of her group have migrated to other areas and have not returned. Their departure “had a big affect on the group since we gave them their money that they had saved.”

She is proud to be a member of a savings group because she “learned a lot with the group on money management” and plans to continue participating in the group. Assa recommends the group to friends and to her parents because “the group allows us to easily solve our money problems.”

### Bourama

Bourama is a 16-years-old male, and has been part of the savings group Avenir at Nyèsigiso for one-and-a-half years.

Bourama described “well-being” or the “good life” as “getting married, having children and money.” He is confident that he will have a good life because he knows that he will work. In five years he sees himself as being independent. “I will take care of my own needs and those of my family—that is to say, electricity, and some household expenses.” He thinks he will be better off because he will be working.

He says that young people today have a better life than during the time of their parents because they are lucky; they can save money in safe places. He also said they are more educated, literate youth, and remarked, “Today, there is more school whreas it was difficult for our parents to study.”

Bourama said he has a good diet. He eats enough to be full, and he eats foods with vitamins. To him, good health means, “One that can do everything he needs, and he who can work is healthy.” He feels healthy because he can move, he feels strong and can do everything he needs to do.

Marie (the Animator at Nyèsigiso) is the person who has had the most influence on the way Bourama thinks about money. The group has also helped. “Before the group, I spent as much of my money as I wanted. But with the group, I’ve started to control my spending, I even [have] savings at home now.” Although Bourama does not have much financial responsibility at home, he pays for his soccer shoes, socks and other small needs for playing the sport. Bourama said he has the skills and information to make good financial decisions. “After receiving training in financial education, I now know how to manage money. That is to say, when to spend and when to save.” The word “money” makes him feel content because it allows him to have everything he needs—it is important.

Bourama’s mother has taught him about managing money and savings goals, and he especially liked her advice on saving. He is happy with his own savings because he can save through his livestock and by selling his pigeons. He also has access to money or credit when he needs it because of the savings group. He said, “We help friends, but we do not give ourselves credit.”

When asked what he likes most about the group savings account, he said, “I especially liked the savings location and the savings interest you get. It is also secure.” The Nyèsigiso group has helped Bourama to make his own savings more easily, and he said he would not have saved as much without the account, “It was very difficult for me because I had no concept of money management.” He paid for the pigeons he sells now, and that has allowed him to have more money. He has also shared information with a friend in the neighborhood who started a new group.

Bourama’s savings goals are to buy equipment to help him reach his dream of being a soccer player, and so far he has been able to pay for his cleats. One of his challenges is overspending—but with the group, he thinks he spends less. Compared to a year ago, he has saved more money because he saves every Saturday with the group. He feels proud to be a member of a savings group because “since the formation of the group, we have not had any problems.” He said he is likely to continue to be a member of the group because “there is cohesion within the group and the group allows me to save easily. Without the group, I wouldn’t be able to save what I’m trying to save.” Bourama recommends Nyèsigiso to his friends and family members because he sees the benefits of the group and he loves “that everyone enjoys these benefits.”

## Endnotes

1. Defined as living below the National Poverty Line.
2. The total outreach in Mali for December 2013, 26,676, includes 344 youth reached by Kondo Jigima, although Figure 2 does not include Kondo Jigima's statistics.
3. All dollar amounts (\$) in this paper refer to U.S. dollars.
4. A global framework is being facilitated by Child and Youth Finance International (CYFI) in the Netherlands. CYFI consists of implementing and donor organizations focused on bringing financial services and financial education to the world's youth. Please see <http://childfinanceinternational.org/>
5. The food-security scale is a 17-question survey instrument that Freedom from Hunger adapted from a United States Department of Agriculture food-security survey, adapted to international contexts, that measures household access to food through available resources to purchase or barter for food.
6. Progress Out of Poverty Index (PPI) of the Grameen Foundation is a poverty measurement scorecard that consists of ten questions about a household's characteristics and asset ownership that are scored to compute the likelihood the household is living below the poverty line. There are separate PPIs for each country. For more information, see <http://www.progressoutofpoverty.org>.
7. <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI.html>
8. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali>
9. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ml.html>
10. Ibid.
11. <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MLI.html>
12. [http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF\\_Language=en&BR\\_Country=4660](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=en&BR_Country=4660)
13. Ibid.
14. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ml.html>
15. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.FE.IN>
16. <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/financialinclusion/topic/age>
17. <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>
18. Arieff, A. "Crisis in Mali." Congressional Research Service. January 14, 2013. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42664.pdf>
19. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar during which Muslims observe a period of fasting from food, drink and other select activities from sunrise to sunset each day. The holiday of Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the month. Youth are not as economically active during this time. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramadan>.
20. Fête de Tabaski, also called Eid Al –Adha, is the most important Muslim holiday of the year, falling two months and ten days after the end of Ramadan. During Tabaski, Muslims sacrifice a domestic animal, generally a goat (or other animals) and youth receive gifts.
21. Gash, M. (2013). *AIM Youth* Research Brief: Results from a Quantitative Study on Youth Savings Groups in Mali. Freedom from Hunger: Davis, CA.
22. Using US\$1=500CFA.
23. Gash, M. and B. Gray. (2013). *AIM Youth—Financial Diaries* Research. Freedom from Hunger: Davis, CA. Forthcoming.
24. Defined as living below the National Poverty Line.
25. Diallo, V. (October 2013). "Key Qualitative Findings of AIM Youth Services in Mali." Freedom from Hunger.
26. Ramirez, R. and L. Fleischer Proaño. (2013). *Saving Together: Group-Based Approaches to Promote Youth Savings*. Freedom from Hunger: Davis, CA.
27. Ramirez, R. (2013). "Integrating Financial Services with Financial Education for Young People." Freedom from Hunger: Forthcoming.