

**Title:** Village Technologies Change Women's Lives in Mali

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**Department:** Democratic Governance

**Description:** Women's access to technologies is limited in rural Mali. USAID-Mali, through a small grant to a local NGOs, has provided simple equipment and tools to village women to help them increase their productivity and incomes. This improved women's confidence and status, enabling them to participate in local level decision-making processes.

**Content:** (the full content of an article: this does not to be long – web based articles are easiest read when short; nobody like to scroll down a lot to read an article)

**Geographic areas:** Markala, Ségou (West-Africa)

**Keywords:** Gender; Appropriate Technologies; Small scale Agriculture; Leadership.

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## **Content**

In Mali, rural production is mainly controlled by men and is still based on traditional practices. Traditional gardening is widespread in rural areas and is a good source for household food provision and income generation. In Markala, a small Bambara town located 30 km South East of Ségou, traditional gardens are one component of traditional food production systems, and share many basic characteristics with small-scale traditional agriculture, as in many other rural areas. Women's incomes in this town are so minimal that even small amounts of savings earned from the sale of garden products contributes tremendously to improving household well-being. However, very few farmers in Markala, particularly women, enjoy the use of modern technologies for food production and processing. Instead, they continue to produce and process food using rudimentary equipment that is time consuming and provides only poor economic returns. Many rural women remain unskilled farmers because of their limited access to production tools and equipment. Despite all the difficulties they face, women are responsible for storage, processing and marketing of their garden products. During the cool season, they grow an abundance of vegetables but produce frequently spoils because of poor conservation and processing practices.

In 2004, USAID Mali, through a small grant mechanism (\$50,000), contributed to improving and increasing garden produce and products for women's groups in the areas by introducing new technologies into their production systems. A total of 13 women's groups received various tools and equipment such as solar dryers, buckets, oxen, donkeys and donkey carts, seeds, ploughs, etc. In addition to the technical assistance provided to women, the locally made equipment the groups received helped them double their productivity. Today, with agricultural equipment at their disposal, women can save time and reduce their daily workload. Women improve household nutrition by increasing and diversifying their diet, and many of them have increased household revenues.



Photo courtesy: Kadidia Dienta - *Marie Salomé is expressing her thankfulness to USAID during the distribution ceremony. "With simple equipment we save tremendous time and energy; and increase both our production and incomes. We could now participate more in our commune's development activities."*

Access to appropriate technologies constitutes a significant element for increasing rural production. To quote Mme Marie Salomé, the president of "Parisé", a rural women's group in Markala, "with simple equipment we save tremendous time and energy; and increase both our production and income. We could now participate more in our commune's development activities." "With more resources," she continued "we will contribute to the construction of a daycare center in our commune so women will have more time to devote to the management of commune life." Her comments underscore the importance of appropriate technologies on rural women's lives.

For many of the poor women, access to technology has increased their knowledge and made their lives easier by increasing their productivity and adding value to their produce. In the context of Mali, the advantage of developing and promoting rural technologies is that rural artisans can locally make many small tools and equipment. This presents an opportunity to create and/or promote rural employment and provide additional jobs in the private sector.



Photo courtesy: Kadidia Dienta - *Members of the "Parissée" carrying away their new tools.*