

In their own words...

Senegal: Famara regrets leaving school to mine for gold

Famara, 16-year-old boy, “I was born here. My parents and grandparents work daily in the mines searching for gold. And me, I started when I was 7 years old. Here, everyone does the same work, child or adult, man or woman. It’s really hard work, but if we don’t do it, we might not have enough money to eat. Our only source of income is gold mining, but we don’t have the money to buy the right tools and machines. So we do the best we can with what we have: hoes, picks and gourds. Sometimes we only find tiny bits of gold that aren’t worth much. Gold is sold by the gram (5000 Fcfa) and it’s not easy to find that much. It takes time, effort and lots of patience. I give almost all of the money that I earn to my mother for household expenses (mostly food). We can’t make money farming, not even with millet or peanuts. Our village is so isolated and the foreigners who come here are only interested in gold.” “I don’t know what the future holds for me. I went to the village elementary school through the last year but then I failed the entrance exam for secondary school twice. So I decided to stop school and go work in the mines full time. I really regret this because I would have liked to continue my studies, go to town, work and later help my parents because they are so tired. I know that gold mining is dangerous for both children and adults, but what can I do? It’s all I know”.

