

## Bend it like Bassira

Aminata was five years old when her parents died. She was taken to her aunt's house in a nearby village. The little girl was in shock. She felt lost without her mother and her father. Aminata's aunt and uncle accepted her as a daughter. They took care of her together with their own three sons. The boys were distant at first, but they soon accepted her as a sister.

When she started school, her cousins walked all the way to school with her. They played football after school. Aminata played with them. One day, her uncle saw Aminata playing football with her cousins. He ordered her back home immediately. Aminata's aunt told her not to play with the boys after school. She obeyed at first. But after some time, she started playing with them again. Then her uncle saw her playing football again. He told her girls did not play football. At home, Aminata's uncle and aunt punished her. They forbade her from playing football. The girl obeyed them. But after a while they decided to send her to live with her grandparents.

The grandparents lived in a village further away. Her grandfather was ill. She spent most of her time helping her grandmother look after him. Aminata's grandmother found a place for her at the village school. Aminata did not know anyone in the new school. She hated it!

Aminata became sad and shy. She did not understand why she had to go to school. She could not wait until she was old enough to get married. She dreamed of having her own house, her own family.

When her grandfather died, Aminata thought she would stay at home and look after her grandmother. But her grandmother had other plans. She wanted her granddaughter to have a better life than her. She wanted Aminata to continue her studies.

It was not easy for Aminata to continue her studies though. Education in Mali was free. In theory, it was also compulsory. Aminata passed the entrance exams for secondary school. But there were not enough places for all students in their public secondary school. She was told she was not going to have a place in secondary school. Her grandmother was devastated and said "it was all because she was a girl".

The old woman did not give up. She found out about another school that would take Aminata. The school was part of a foundation and it was within walking distance. The school also had a Girls Project. Aminata started secondary school with no enthusiasm.

She was only there because she did not want to disappoint her grandmother. But her new school was different from what she expected. Besides the normal classes with boys and girls, there were girls-only activities. One of these activities was football. Yes, football for girls! Aminata could not believe it. The teachers encouraged her to join the football team. In little time, she was one of the best players.

She started to love school. She did not know there were so many interesting things to learn. She never knew there were so many things that women could do. She started to imagine herself as a nurse, a doctor, a teacher, a journalist, an engineer, a judge... She could be a NGO worker or a mayor, a secretary or a minister. But there was nothing she wanted more than to be a footballer and play for Mali Women's National Football Team.

She shared her dreams with her grandmother. Now, the old woman loves when there is a football match at school and she can watch Aminata play.

Note: Bassira Touré is a star footballer who plays as an attacker for the Mali national team.

### New words for this article

Forbade	prohibited
Compulsory	obligatory
Disappoint	make someone feel bad

### Comprehension Questions

Indiquez si les expressions suivantes sont vraies (True) ou fausses (False).

1. Aminata went to live with her relatives
2. The boys in the family liked her immediately
3. Aminata's uncle thought it was wrong for girls to play football
4. When she stayed with her grandparents, Aminata wanted to get married
5. Aminata's grandmother wanted her to look after the house

5	False
4	True
3	True
2	False
1	True

*Indiquez si les expressions suivantes sont vraies (True) ou fausses (False).*

### Comprehension questions

### Answers