

TRANSCRIPT:

Walk On My Own

a BYkids film
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS



Ndèye Fatou Fall: [Singing] Knowing ourselves is our responsibility. When I go for it, I win. I am you, you are me me me.

My name is Ndèye Fatou Fall. I'm from the village of Keur Simbara and I am 13 years old.

[Title] *Walk On My Own*
A film by Ndèye Fatou Fall

Ndèye: From this rooftop you can see my whole village. Here is the water spigot. She is the person who sells the water. Hey Kumba Ndiyaël! She is the one who braided my hair.

Children: [Singing] In the palace of Cissé, it's a good place. All of the young girls were married off. Mademoiselle Lizzy preferred Mr. What's-His-Name? Yes or no to marry?

Ndèye: This film is about the changes that have occurred in my community. Today, these social changes are of great importance, especially for children. If I'd been born in 1990, I would be married by now.

[Captions]: In 1998, the village of Keur Simbara, Senegal, abandoned the traditions of child marriage and female genital cutting (FGC). FGC is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. They made this decision after taking classes given by Tostan, a human rights-based education organization. Ndèye Fatou was born after these changes came to her village.

Ndèye: That's my grandparents' house. This is where I live. This is my family. I live with my grandma, father, aunts, uncle, and older and younger siblings. 'we all live together. This is my auntie, Rokhaya Diop, who is doing the washing. And this is my youngest sister, Maymouna Konate. This is my grandma, Maymouna Ba. She is good to all of us.

Maymouna Ba: We do everything together. We are one being. There is no discrimination.

Ndèye: I am 13 and I am at peace. At my house, I feel welcomed by everyone. Everyone is kind to me. After I wake up at 7 a.m., I pray and then go to Koranic school. My formal schooling is at the French school. When it closes in the summer, I go to the Koranic school.

Peace be unto you.

Teacher: And unto you peace.

Ndèye: Learning is very good. Everyone helps each other with their studies.

How old are the children who study here?

Teacher: The older ones are around 13 or 14 years old. The younger ones start around six years old. So for you, this is what we pray. We pray for you to be helpful to your community, and eventually to the world.

Ndèye: I am a part of a theater group that puts on plays here in the community. And we perform plays about child marriage.

Actors: [Singing] Our tears have stopped flowing, democracy is here to stay. Everyone has their human rights respected, democracy will be here to stay.

Ndèye: Many communities still do harmful practices like child marriage. Tradition is very strong, and to abandon these practices is difficult. When people see our plays, they wake up to the need to abandon these traditions.

Actress 1: We took very young girls who were not even 15 years old, and we married them off.

Actress 2: Her body could not handle childbirth and she could die. These practices greatly hurt society. Today, we no longer practice harmful traditions. We want men to love their wives.

Actress 1: We Senegalese girls know that it is never too late to learn.

[Drum Music and Applause]

Mame Marietta Diara: My name is Mame Marietta Diara. I live in Diebougou. We just thought it was God's will. They did it to us, and we did it to our children. Forced marriage was here. Child marriage was here. Female genital cutting was here. My first child was a girl. We brought her to the village and my mother took her to the initiation ceremony. They did the traditional practice to her and she died. I raised my second daughter by myself. They said there was an initiation ceremony and they said the children are going to have the traditional practices done to them. I said, "My child is absolutely not going." When I was absent, they took my daughter and carried her to the initiation. Just like last time, when they did the traditional practice on the child, the child left this world. Out of 100 babies who die, female genital cutting is done to 99 of them.

At that time, if you had not had the traditional practice done, you would not have a husband. People would think that you were unclean, what you cooked and washed was unclean. It was our tradition. That's why we did it.

Aunt Mamie: Yes, how are you? I missed you. How is school?

Ndèye: It's going well.

Aunt Mamie: I am a victim of FGC and child marriage.

Ndèye: Aunt Mamie, can you tell us about your experiences?

Aunt Mamie: You are asking me something I only talk about with my friends. I will tell you

because you are a child and you will be grateful to God for knowing about this. After they offered me for marriage, they first took me to the cutter and had the traditional practice done to me. Ndèye Fatou, I was a girl when I was married. I bled for the first time when I had my first child. My breasts weren't even fully developed. I was only 12 years old. My father passed away when I was very young. My mother remarried and my stepfather wanted to give my hand to one of his friends. They forced me to get married when I was so young, and I became pregnant right away. But with this work that I am doing, I am taking responsibility of my mother, my younger ones, and my children. Education is important. With all this that I have passed through, it is because of education that gives me work, and because of the work that gives me dignity. That I am respected and at least can solve my problems on my own. If I'm not educated, I have to rely on people, begging, doing whatever that I like or dislike. And I am advising Ndèye Fatou to be a strong girl. What men do, I can do it. Put that here. Merci.

[drum music and singing]

Ndèye: Father Demba Diawara is the head of our village of Keur Simbara and our imam

Father Demba Diawara: We used to marry young girls ages 12, 13, and 14. You asked also about the traditional practices we did to children. Many girls died. They had problems we did not understand. People would see the traditions, but they closed their eyes. People would rather die for their beliefs than be forced to abandon their practices.

Ndèye: Grandfather, do children now have freedoms and rights?

Father Demba Diawara: Times have changed. We have awakened. It took courage. We have made progress. Indeed, children now have rights. In the old days, you wouldn't have had the freedom to question me because you are a child, and because you are a girl.

[drum music]

Father Demba Diawara: I studied what the Prophet Muhammad said in the Koran. We learned these practices came from our traditions, not from our religion. We brought this knowledge home. The discussion opened things up. I helped raise awareness for 16 years, spending 15 days at home and 15 in the bush. God gave me luck. I went to 347 communities and did 6 public declarations to abandon the traditional practices, including female genital cutting.

[drum music and singing]

[Captions]: FGC has impacted an estimated 200 million girls and women in 30 countries worldwide. And more than 700 million women living today were married as children.

[string music]

Health Hut Owner: I have used my health hut to raise awareness. We raise awareness about female genital cutting with men, women, and girls.

Ndèye: Is making it illegal enough?

Health Hut Owner: Spreading the word is more effective than having a law against it. You can

tell people it is illegal, but they will do what they want when you are gone. When you hold discussions to raise awareness, anyone can get involved. They might say, "I went to the village meeting and learned about child marriage and FGC. I didn't know these practices were harmful to women." I have worked hard for this, and now the practice has ended. But forced marriage is not only in our country. We must help our countries to abandon forced marriage.

[string music]

Ndèye: Can you talk about the importance of the social changes for young girls from your point of view as young women of Keur Simbara?

Interviewee 1: Keur Simbara is a role model. We are grateful to God because, when we were born, our parents had already abandoned the practices

Interviewee 2: You should only marry someone if you love him and he loves you. Then, your union will be good. Life is painful when you marry someone you don't love. I'm 23 years old, and my parents have let me walk on my own so I can understand the world and find someone I love.

[music and talking]

Community Member 1: If a woman didn't love a man, she wasn't allowed to say it. Women had no freedom to refuse marriage. Now, you marry who you love and continue your studies.

Community Member 2: Potato, potato! White people call it potato. Potato!

Ndèye: Ami Collé, my dear friend, decided to leave her regular school last year to get training and a job working with a tailor, and here in Keur Simbara, we will share in her success.

Ami Collé: My name is Ami Collé, I am 16 years old. I stopped school because I knew I wanted to work with the tailor and that I could do that best. I live in Keur Simbara and travel here to work in the workshop. This is my teacher, Ousmane.

Ndèye: I am going to attach the microphone to you.

Ousmane: My name is Ousmane Diop, and I am the head of the workshop. Ami Collé is hard-working, and she is doing well. After three months, everyone who works here starts sewing. Traditionally, only men could sew and be tailors. Times have changed, and now women have the right to learn how to be tailors and to open their own workshops.

Ndèye: Is the dress that you are sewing difficult to make?

Ami Collé: Yes, it is a little difficult, my friend. I will keep learning little by little from him until I master it.

Ndèye: What do you hope this job will bring you?

Ami Collé: I want to keep learning until I am as good as the tailor and then be able to train my own students.

[string music and talking]

Ndèye: Up there is the solar panel that belongs to my uncle.

Mame Doussou Konaté: This is the solar workshop. This is where we repair the circuit boards that are from India, and I change the light bulbs

[Captions]: Many Senegalese women have little formal education and are rarely allowed to travel outside their villages. In 2009, Doussou Konaté went to Tilonia, India to the Barefoot College to study solar engineering. She was already a grandmother and had never attended school. She came home after six months armed with the knowledge of how to light Keur Simbara and the surrounding communities.

Ndèye: Mame Doussou Konaté is a strong woman and a role model. She could have just kept her knowledge to herself, but instead she opened up and shared it with others. This is the reason our community has light. We are no longer in danger anywhere at night. We now have light to study and learn our lessons.

Mame Doussou Konaté: There are still some parts of the community that do not have solar units. But 32 houses do have them. Sometimes, at sunset, people will come to tell me that their lamp is broken and that I should come and fix it. So, I give the children the tools, and they go and fix it. My hopes are many and very far-reaching. Today, I am praying for children to have what I have and more.

Children: Elizabeth, she preferred Mr. What's-His-Name? Yes or no to marry? In the palace of Cissé, it's a good palace. All of the young girls were married off. Mademoiselle Lizzy preferred Mr. What's-His-Name?

Ami Collé: I am fortunate to live in a community like Keur Simbara because we are like one family.

Interviewee 2: Today, if I got married while I was working, would I continue or would I stop? I would continue because, if that is the case, my husband would help me. He would encourage me and help. This is the reason I would continue.

Ndèye: When I finish my studies, I can start doing work that is good. I can be the president.

Community Member 3: I would like to join the police force.

Producer: When do you think is a good time to get married?

Interviewee 2: Only when I have my diploma.

Community Member 4: I would like to open a school and become the principal.

Ndèye: I am happy because I have never held a camera or done anything like this and had the opportunity to film whatever I see and whatever I want. I now have the skills to be able to film whatever I want. When people from other countries watch the film, if they are still practicing child marriage and female genital cutting, they will wake up after they see this film and will want to stop doing those things. I want to see Keur Simbara develop.

[children singing]

Ndèye: Thank you for watching my movie, and have a good night!

[Credits roll]