

[sports / basketball](#)

MSU basketball player Mady Sissoko helps build school in African home village

[Bella Johnson](#)

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Courtesy image from outside the Mady Sissoko Foundation School –

When Michigan State University basketball player Mady Sissoko left his home of Tangafaya, Mali at 15 years old to play basketball in the United States, he knew he wanted to eventually give back to the people in his village.

Seven years later, Sissoko is a starting forward for Michigan State Basketball and has the platform to do just that.

In the newest era of college athletics, student-athletes have the

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money through the use of their name, image or likeness, or NIL. However, due to Sissoko's student visa, he is not able to receive those funds directly.

By creating the Mady Sissoko Foundation, the Malian is able to give all the money he earns directly back to his home village and the people in it.

Before the start of last season, Sissoko sat down with his guardian and discussed the possibilities of what his NIL money could be used for. One of those ideas was to build a school with running water in his village, with the help of donors.



Courtesy image from outside the Mady Sissoko Foundation School

"There (are) a lot of smart people in the village, but they don't have a lot of chances because they're way far from the school, and (have) to wake up every single day—to go walk for like an hour-and-a-half to go to school," Sissoko said. "Even (if) you like school, it is gonna discourage you ... now, they have school right there. You can just wake up, brush your teeth, eat breakfast and just walk five minutes to go to school."

Growing up as someone who walked over an hour to get to school, Sissoko said, he knew firsthand what having a school directly in his village would mean to its children.

Construction on the school began in February and Sissoko traveled home to Mali at the beginning of May for its opening.

But what he thought would be a small village affair turned out to be a

“I wasn’t a big crying guy, but I almost did, to be honest,” Sissoko said.

“I thought it was gonna be just my village thing, but the rest of the villages—closer villages—everybody came to celebrate with us ... It almost felt like it was magical stuff.”



Courtesy image from inside the Mady Sissoko Foundation School

Sissoko said he was never the kind of person who liked to talk about himself. Being able to see the collective celebration was gratifying for him. But despite his request for the school to be named after his village, it was aptly named the Mady Sissoko Foundation School.

“I don’t think he realizes what an impact he’s had. Which makes the story even cooler,” MSU basketball head coach Tom Izzo said.

“Because he didn’t do it for you guys (the media) to be here, or me to be here—get pats on the back. He did it because he’s got people back there that are trying to do what he did and get out of there and live a real life. And man it’s cool.”

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Courtesy image from inside the Mady Sissoko Foundation School

The Mady Sissoko Foundation School has four classrooms that fit 60-70 students each. Even with the current capacity for hundreds of kids, the plan is to continue expanding the school to give as many children as possible access.

Donations are still being accepted on the [Mady Sissoko Foundation website](#) and Tom Izzo encouraged all Spartan fans to donate—even if it is just \$1.

“He's giving people a chance to actually survive ... you know, we sometimes do things (and) people are living better,” Izzo said. “He's doing things—people are living and getting educated and God it's so cool. You know, like, I feel like I haven't done anything compared to what he's done.”

