

Grandmother Project – Change through Culture

Grandmother leaders: A resource to improve the lives of adolescent girls

Final report – July 30, 2016

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With the other grandmother leaders, we went to see the village chief after the training to discuss the education and development of our girls. We talked about the reasons why many girls don't do well in school and why they can't do anything other than marry early and stay at home. We all committed ourselves to work together to promote the development of young girls.

Grandmother Diabou

Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.

The goal of the project, *Grandmother Leaders: A resource to improve the lives of adolescent girls*, was to strengthen the knowledge and leadership role of grandmothers, building on their traditional advisory role, to promote improved adolescent girls' health and well-being, with specific emphasis on early/forced marriage (EFM), teen pregnancy and female genital mutilation (FGM). All of these problems are prevalent in the Velingara area of Senegal where the project was carried out.

The objectives of the project were to:

- increase grandmothers' knowledge of the risks of EFM, teen pregnancy and FGM;
- empower grandmother leaders to play an active role in promoting community-wide change in favor of girls' health and well-being;
- strengthen communication between grandmothers and adolescent girls.

What was accomplished in connection with this project? Please address each stated objective. If any project objectives were changed, please also explain the circumstances leading to the modification of the objective(s).

To accomplish project objectives, activities focused on training grandmother (GM) leaders, given their influential role within families and communities regarding the health and well-being of girls. The innovative "**Under-the-tree Leadership Training for Grandmothers to Promote the Well-being of Adolescent Girls**" included four two-day training sessions, or modules. For each module, a set of participatory learning activities was designed specifically for use with

illiterate GM leaders, including role plays, discussion of case studies describing typical situations and problems, and discussion of drawings, photos and testimonials from grandmothers in other communities. All sessions were facilitated by female community development workers (animatrices) and adolescent girls participated in some activities during after-school hours. The following summarizes our global accomplishments:

- training sessions with GM leaders were carried out in 23 different sites;
- 230 GM leaders each participated in 8 days of training;
- GM leader participants represented 43 different villages/communities;
- a total of 184 days of training were completed;
- interviews were carried out with grandmothers before and after the training to assess pre- and post- knowledge, attitudes and community action by GM leaders.

Based on principles of adult learning, all activities involved 2 steps: (1) new information/ideas were presented and discussed; and (2) the new information/ideas were applied to real life situations. This approach challenges participants to reflect on past knowledge/attitudes and to discuss how new information could be integrated into their daily lives.

Training modules were developed to improve the knowledge/capacity of GM leaders in 5 thematic areas: strengthening self-confidence; improving the capacity of GM leaders to strengthen solidarity and understanding between grandmothers; increasing knowledge of physical and psychological development of adolescent girls; strengthening skills in communicating with teenage girls; and increasing communication and collaboration between GM leaders and other community actors to take action in favor of girls, and children in general.

Specific accomplishments for each objective follow, including some select examples of the various training activities carried out.

Objective 1: Increase grandmothers' knowledge of the risks of EFM, teen pregnancy and FGM

The topics of EFM, teen pregnancy and FGM were integrated into various activities throughout the training. For example, GM leaders listened to a 'story' about a group of grandmothers who organized to block the marriage of a 13-year old girl. This story elicited dialogue among

IN A GRANDMOTHER'S WORDS

From now on, if a girl marries in a village when she is still in school, the grandmothers will rally together and go talk with her father. And no father can resist a group of grandmothers who have come to speak with him, in purely objective terms, about his own daughter.

Grandmother Maimouna

participants, who agreed that they must act collectively and proactively to protect girls under 18 from being given away in marriage. Participants also played *The Wisdom of Grandmothers board game*, which promoted dialogue on FGM, teen pregnancy, EFM and girls' education, exploring both 'traditional' and 'modern' ideas about these issues.

Various learning activities increased GM leaders' knowledge of the physical and

psychological health and development of girls, which also directly addressed this objective. Topics included:

- the influence of hormonal changes on adolescent girls' behavior;
- how to educate girls on bodily changes and risk associated with menstruation;
- myths and truths about family planning/birth control;
- causes of teen pregnancy and strategies for avoiding it.

IN A GRANDMOTHER'S WORDS

Before this training, I'd never talked with girls in detail about menstruation. I used to just tell them, "avoid the boys to avoid getting pregnant" because we didn't have enough knowledge to fully explain to them. Now we are well-equipped to prepare girls for menstruation.

Grandmother Ami

All of the GM leaders lacked knowledge about these topics. They had never learned about girls' sexual/reproductive health, but were very open to learning and excited to acquire new information to help them better understand puberty, and to better educate mothers and girls. Now they feel more comfortable talking with girls on sensitive topics, including the risk of pregnancy, and are more patient and supportive of them as they go through adolescence.

Objective 2: Empower grandmother leaders to play an active role in promoting community-wide change in favor of girls' health and well-being

All of the training modules contributed to empowering grandmothers by strengthening solidarity among GM leaders, and increasing their knowledge and leadership skills. Activities aimed at strengthening their self-confidence and understanding of their leadership role, and encouraging solidarity and collaboration, directly contributed to building their capacity as leaders, preparing them to effectively engage others in families and communities, including other grandmothers, parents, and other community actors (traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, health workers, etc.).

IN A GRANDMOTHER'S WORDS

Like the grandmothers in the role play from Saré Yéro Méta village, we have met with the village chief, other grandmothers, teachers, as well as girls' mothers and fathers. We have discussed the situation regarding girls, particularly in regard to matters of upbringing, schooling and child marriage. Everyone is in agreement that girls' education and development has become one of the biggest priorities in the community.

Grandmother Khadidiatou

One aspect of the training focused on teaching participants about **leadership styles**, i.e. directive/dictatorial leadership and participatory/democratic leadership. Through various exercises, the GM leaders identified the characteristics of each, discussed the two styles, and participated in role plays about a meeting of GM leaders to plan a village clean-up day, depicting the two types of leadership.

GM leaders learned about **collaboration** by playing the *Broken Circles game*, in which each participant received an envelope containing several parts of a circle, but not all the pieces needed to make a full circle. The goal was for each GM to construct a complete circle. They had to collaborate with others who had pieces that they needed to complete the task. The Participants were then led through discussion about the importance of collaborating to accomplish their objectives within their communities.

Objective 3: Strengthen communication between grandmothers and adolescent girls.

Activities covering this topic focused on differentiating between the traditional approach to communicating with children/girls based on “fear and scolding” and an alternative approach based on “listening and dialogue”. For example, following discussion on the two communication styles, GM leaders applied their knowledge in 2 role plays about different ways of communicating with a girl who attended a dancing party in a dark place. This real life situation, that puts a girl at risk of teen pregnancy, allowed the GMs to put the new ideas into practice. In late afternoon sessions with girls, the girls observed the role play and discussed their feelings about the two communication approaches used by the GMs to discuss this risky situation with the girls involved.

IN A GRANDMOTHER’S WORDS

How we communicate with girls needs to change. Communication can no longer be based upon threats and harsh words, or on isolating girls. We need to be close to them, listen to them, empower them, advise them and guide them as best we can. This will only be possible once we understand what they’re thinking and what they want to do with their lives.

Grandmother Ansarou

What challenges did you face in connection with this project? How did you address these challenges?

Our biggest challenge was that we significantly underestimated the transportation costs for the community development workers/animatrices. Given that GMP does not own a vehicle, we must hire cars for visits to communities, which can be quite costly. The original budget did not adequately account for these costs. Since we were under-budget on several activities/line items, we were able to apply these savings to cover the additional costs.

With regard to the structure of the training, we were faced with finding a way to adapt the format to accommodate girls’ availability, which was limited to after-school hours. To address this issue, we obtained additional resources from the UK Embassy for the animatrices to conduct supplemental activities with girls in the evenings. This was an added benefit of the change in training format to 2 days for each module, which resulted in the animatrices spending more time in each community.

Lastly, we did not include adequate resources in our budget to enable us to collect quantitative data. However, we were able to collect significant qualitative data that demonstrate the positive impact of the project. This is an ongoing challenge for us as a very small organization, as in-depth evaluation of programs requires significant time and resources.

Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

We have no significant changes to report.

What were the most important lessons learned?

The following are the key lessons learned from this project:

1. Grandmothers are interested in learning and open to change. The GM leader training provides additional evidence of grandmothers' interest in learning, their willingness to re-examine their previous beliefs and practices, and to increase their commitment and involvement in their communities to promote the well-being of girls, and of children in general.
2. Promoting change in community norms requires ongoing dialogue. To bring about sustained change in community norms related to FGM, girls' education, EFM and teen pregnancy, those norms need to be discussed within and between peer groups of men and women, older and younger. Respected GM leaders can play a key role in catalyzing such discussion between these different segments of the population.

IN A GRANDMOTHER'S WORDS

These training sessions are the most meaningful and important of any I've ever attended. All of the topics we discussed will help us to do a lot in our communities to better support girls. Each one of us will return with lots of ideas that will allow us to strengthen our collective work, and also to rethink our methods of doing things, particularly concerning how we communicate with young girls.

Grandmother Coumba
3. Games and exercises for adult learning and change can be used effectively in Senegalese culture. In Senegal it is often said that, "games are only for children". The experience with the GM leader training clearly showed that older adults also enjoy engaging in games and exercises that are both fun and educational. For example, the *Wisdom of Grandmothers* game was very much appreciated by the grandmothers, but also by men, other women and adolescents in communities.
4. The leadership capacity of GM leaders can be strengthened. The GM leaders were playing a leadership role in their communities prior to the training. However, it is through the participatory training activities, which challenged them to reflect on their role in communities, that their sense of empowerment and commitment to playing a more active role to protect girls and promote their well-being has increased.
5. Building on culturally-rooted communication channels between grandmothers and adolescent girls increases support for girls. One of the culturally-dictated roles of grandmothers is to serve as advisors and confidants to young girls. Girls themselves insist

that they are more comfortable talking with their grandmothers than with their own mothers, especially on sensitive topics like sexuality. The training with grandmothers, and in some instances including girls (based on their availability), helped to strengthen those culturally-rooted ties which are contributing to increased support for girls.

6. *Under-the-tree modules and exercises promote active involvement/participation.* All of the exercises used in the training sessions proved to be effective at eliciting the active participation of GM leaders. The fact that attendance at the training activities was over 95% suggests that the GMs were highly motivated to attend and interested in the different learning activities.

What has changed within your organization as a result of this project?

The ***Grandmother Leaders Training Program*** has become one of our hallmark programs. This project enabled us to develop and pilot a curriculum to train GM leaders that was very successful and we will continue to improve on and expand this program to address these and other issues, including maternal and child health/nutrition. It has allowed us to once again demonstrate that grandmothers are eager to learn, open to learning new information and to changing their own attitudes, and committed to influencing the attitudes of others regarding the health and well-being of girls. This is not a change within our organization, but a welcome affirmation that GMP's approach is indeed effective in promoting positive change for girls.

Describe the unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits.

While a grandmother-inclusive strategy is the cornerstone of our work, we cannot help but be amazed by the impact of the training reported by the GM leaders. Their openness to learning and commitment to being at the forefront of change for girls is remarkable, and we were moved to hear in their own words about the personal changes that they underwent, and the actions that they have already taken in their communities as a direct result of their involvement. At GMP we like to say that "empowering grandmothers, empowers girls" and these wonderful senior women have once again proven us right.

Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles you encountered? How will you address these challenges in the future?

Noted as one of our challenges, we did find it difficult to have adequate time with adolescent school girls given their limited availability. With the overnight village stays, the animatrices were able to organize evening sessions with girls. However, there was very little time during which we could meet with grandmother leaders and girl leaders together. In the future, we will promote grandmother-organized meetings/discussions with girls.

Approximately how many lives have been touched, both directly and indirectly by the program?

Direct beneficiaries include 230 grandmother leaders who participated in the under-the-tree sessions. Additionally, 210 adolescent girls benefitted directly by participating in training

sessions. The training has had a multiplier effect as GM leaders have organized meetings with girls, their mothers, and with other influential actors in their own communities. It was not possible to document the exact number of those indirect beneficiaries who were involved in the under-the-tree sessions, but we estimate that at least 500 mothers and 500 girls participated. The impact of the training is such that the GM leader participants have acknowledged feeling empowered and inspired to engage in continuous action for the benefit of girls, so we expect that entire communities will benefit from their leadership.

What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured (e.g. surveys, observation)? Be specific and include measurable results.

We conducted interviews with grandmothers both before and after the training was completed. Interview questions addressed the five themes covered in the training curriculum:

1. self-confidence in their leadership role and benefits of democratic leadership;
2. the importance of solidarity and understanding between grandmothers;
3. knowledge of physical and psychological development of adolescent girls;
4. approach to communicating with teenage girls based on listening and dialogue;
5. communication and collaboration with other community actors to take action in favor of girls, and children in general.

Qualitative data collected from the interviews conducted with 100 grandmothers demonstrate that:

- grandmothers' knowledge of the risks and optimal practices related to teen pregnancy, EFM and FGM have increased;
- grandmothers feel more confident and empowered as leaders and have increased their community-wide efforts to protect and support girls, including:
 - meeting with girls, individually and in groups, to talk about their health, development, and pregnancy prevention, and to help them think through their options related to school, marriage, childbirth, etc.
 - organizing meetings with village chiefs, grandmothers, teachers and boys to discuss girls' development and protection, including EFM, teen pregnancy and girls' schooling;
 - teaching their new communication skills to mothers to improve mother-daughter relationships, and educating mothers on girls' reproductive health;
- grandmothers have changed the way they communicate with girls, listening to them and engaging them in dialogue, rather than threatening or scolding them as they did in the past;
- grandmothers' knowledge of adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health has increased;
- grandmother leaders are in agreement that grandmothers should organize and take action, if needed, to stop EFM of girls.

We expect that the impact of the training on the GM leaders who were involved will continue

to have a ripple effect in communities as they mobilize other community actors, including other grandmothers, mothers, fathers, traditional community leaders, teachers, and health workers, to work together to take action to support and protect girls to ensure their full physical, emotional and intellectual development.

If the program is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.

We have begun to seek funding to expand the GM leaders training to other areas of Velingara, as well as to develop a related methodology for use in infant and child nutrition/health. While no funds have yet been secured, the success of this project will assist us with finding appropriate resources.

Provide a detailed list of all expenses incurred during the grant cycle which have been paid for with the Dining for Women grant.

See financial summary on following page.

Did this grant and relationship with DFW assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity?

The final activity in the project, a workshop to present the project strategy, results and lessons learned, was attended by 20 other NGOs working on issues related to girls' education and protection. This was an excellent opportunity to increase visibility of our work, which was carried out far from the capital city (10 hours' drive). Participants in the workshop included UNICEF, UNFPA and Action Aid, which are all large NGOs concerned with the priority issues addressed in the project. Discussions are continuing with them and we are hopeful, but have no assurance, that they will be able to provide additional funding. We are also hopeful that the Canadian Embassy in Senegal will be interested in funding expansion of this very successful program.

Final Financial Report

Activity Costs	Total budget based on modification 1-14-16	Total funds spent	Variance
Activity 1. - "Under the tree" leadership exercises design/development			
Participatory methodology expert	2,000	2,000.00	-
Gender and Leadership expert	2,000	2,000.00	-
Artist for drawings	750	684.00	66.00
Printing (digital) + plastification/binding of exercises	600	482.00	118.00
Subtotal Activity 1.	5,350	5,166.00	184.00

Activity 2. - Training of the Trainers (TOT) workshops			
Training Room rental	500	76.97	423.03
Participatory Methodology Expert	4,097	4,097.00	-
Experienced Facilitator & Local Coordination	2,800	2,078.40	721.60
Running costs TOT (per diems, catering, transport)	1,920	1,016.96	903.04
Subtotal Activity 2.	9,317	7,269.33	2,047.67

Activity 3 - "Under the tree" leadership sessions with grandmothers from 43 villages			
Local coordination of activities & supervision	3,600	3,600.00	-
Supervision of animatrices - Professional Facilitator x 1 trip = 15 days	1,500	1,500.0	-
Experienced Facilitator Travel Thies-Velingara RT	300	384.86	(84.86)
Experienced Facilitator Food & Lodging Velingara (15 days)	400	224.07	175.93
5 animatrices x 6 months work in 6 villages each	5,600	5,171.09	428.91
5 animatrices x 6 months overnights/meals in the villages	4,500	688.46	3,811.54
Transport of animatrices to villages (cost per animatrice x 6 months)	2,400	9,437.51	(7,037.51)
Transport of grandmother leaders (per diem)	1,840	1,640.34	199.66
Catering for training sessions	1,380	1,217.43	162.57
Cola nuts (1/2 kg x session x 12 sessions x 30 villages)	400	412.39	(12.39)
Office supplies + photocopies for sessions	480	74.92	405.08
Phone cards	480	376.30	103.70
Subtotal Activity 3.	22,880	24,727.37	(1,847.37)

Activity 4 - Documentation/evaluation			
Community Expert (pre- & post- activity interviews)	2,600	3,097.54	(497.54)
Community Expert Dakar/Velingara 2 Round Trips	600	51.31	548.69
Community Expert Food & Lodging Velingara (per diem)	800	570.58	229.42
Local transportation for interviews (pre- & post-interviews)	1,200	1,317.06	(117.06)
Documentation Assistant	600	1,009.79	(409.79)
Subtotal Activity 4.	5,800	6,046.28	(246.28)

Activity 5 - Dissemination of Lessons Learned report			
Graphic Design and page layout	350	900.00	(550.00)
Printing of lessons learned report	400	-	400.00
Meeting for dissemination of lessons learned	40	37.63	2.37
Catering (25 participants)	100	182.34	(82.34)
Local transportation for participants	60	51.31	8.69
Journalist	45	25.66	19.34
Radio coverage (local radio)	100	94.08	5.92
Website updating of report	58	-	58.00
Subtotal Activity 4.	1,153	1,291.02	(138.02)

TOTAL	44,500	44,500.00	(0.00)
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