



ANALYTICAL REPORT
on the
PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT OF
THE HEALTH AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS OF RURAL GIRLS
IN THE VILLAGE OF MÉOUANE
Senegal
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Family Care International
588 Broadway - Suite 503
New York, NY 10012
Tel.: +1 (212) 941-5300
Fax: +1 (212) 941-5563
E-mail: fcipubs@familycareintl.org
www.familycareintl.org

I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In French-speaking Africa, as on many other continents, the disparities and inequalities between urban and rural areas are also reflected in the respective treatment of young people. Numerous national statistics and situation analyses show that as far as education, health, and socio-economic prospects are concerned, young Africans living in rural areas are greatly disadvantaged in comparison to their urban counterparts . These figures also reveal the great disparities between boys and girls in all social milieus, but particularly in rural areas.

In a desire to improve the status and situation of girls in rural French-speaking Africa, Family Care International (FCI) has undertaken to formulate an intervention strategy that will serve as a beacon and catalyst to a new generation of sweeping long-term programs and projects aimed at girls. Faithful to its working philosophy, the organization makes every effort to develop strategies “from the bottom up,” reflecting the real concerns of rural girls.

To this end, FCI organized a series of activities, beginning with reflection workshops on the issues facing girls in rural areas. These workshops, held in September and October 2002 in Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso, were attended by some fifteen key local partners in each country working in the areas of education and literacy, reproductive health, and the promotion of civil rights and financial independence of girls in rural and urban areas. These workshops made it possible to map out and analyze local efforts and initiatives to benefit rural girls, and to identify problems and factors of primary importance if these girls are to develop and succeed. These workshop findings will be taken into account in formulating strategy.

The second activity consisted of in a series of participatory needs assessments (PNAs) in the countries in which the workshops were held. They were directed toward the girls themselves and toward persons having authority and influence over them, specifically, parents, husbands, and traditional and religious leaders.

The PNAs examined the needs, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of the girls and the people close to them, for the purpose of gathering direct, detailed information about (i) the overall situation of girls in a rural environment, (ii) the principal aspects and problems that may impede their development and success, and (iii) strategic provisions and resources for improving their situation.

II. PRESENTATION OF THE ASSESSMENT

A. LOCUS OF THE STUDY

The study's geographic setting was Méouane, a village in the rural community of Méouane, *département* of Tivaouane, region of Thiès, in Senegal.

The population of Méouane consists chiefly of Wolofs, who form the majority, followed next by the Peuls, and, finally, the Sérères. Other Senegalese ethnic groups are also present. The entire population is Muslim.

Agriculture and livestock production are the two principal economic activities of the population.

B. THEMES

The study focused on seven themes:

1. General information about the community.
2. The education of rural girls: schooling attendance/literacy.
3. The reproductive health of rural girls.
4. Means of livelihood available to rural girls.
5. Rural girls' access to power and decision-making spheres.
6. Forms of violence against rural girls;
7. Social mobilization in favor of rural girls.

C. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

1. PURPOSE: To gather systematic information that can be used to develop a program aimed at improving conditions of girls in rural Senegal.

2. GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

- a. To understand the needs, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of girls and the people close to them.
- b. To understand the main problems and factors preventing personal development and growth of girls in rural settings;
- c. To determine strategic resources and conditions contributing to the personal development and growth of girls.

3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

Education/Literacy/School attendance:

- a. Assess the availability of the various forms of education/literacy/training/schooling.
- b. Identify the structural and economic barriers to the education of girls.
- c. Identify the ideological, cultural, religious, and personal barriers to the education of girls.
- d. Identify the advantages/disadvantages of education perceived or stated by girls and those close to them.
- e. Identify factors favorable to the promotion of education in the community.

Reproductive health:

- a. Assess the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of girls with respect to their own bodies and those of the opposite sex.
- b. Identify the sources and the content of reproductive health information sought and obtained by girls.
- c. Analyze adolescents' use of available reproductive health services.
- d. Identify the factors attitudes (of girls, the people close to them, and medical personnel) and the rules and customs that have a positive or negative influence on the use of "modern" reproductive health services.
- e. Identify the traditional practices having a positive or negative impact on girls' reproductive health.

Means of livelihood available to rural girls:

- a. Assess the girls' perception of the scope, attractiveness, and advantages of the existing economic development support structures and the existing links between girls and these structures.
- b. Identify the structural, socio-cultural, and individual obstacles that prevent girls from benefiting from the opportunities offered by these development structures.
- c. Determine new trends in girls' participation in economic development structures.
- d. Define possible strategies for creating, strengthening, diversifying, or expanding current or future livelihood opportunities that benefit girls.

Girls' participation in public power and decision-making spheres:

- a. Identify power and decision-making structures in the community and the persons involved in allocating power.
- b. Identify the obstacles and limitations affecting girls' access to power among the people and mechanisms that determine who has power.
- c. Determine the rights of girls to participate in religious, political, and legal activities, including rights they currently enjoy and rights of which they are deprived.
- d. Identify, in girls' life cycle in the village, the existing or potential windows of opportunity for increasing their participation in the community, civic, economic, and political life of the village.

Protection of girls against various forms of physical and psychological violence:

- a. Describe girls' attitudes of toward the forms of physical and psychological violence they experience.
- b. Identify the resources and people girls can turn to, depending on the type of violence they experience.
- c. Determine links between violence experienced by girls and the girls' rights .

Social mobilization on behalf of girls:

- a. Assess community and political will to encourage girls.
- b. Identify the strategies and activities for strengthening community mobilization around girls' interests.

D. METHODOLOGY

1. METHOD

This is a qualitative study that is evaluative, participatory, descriptive, and analytical. It targets girls, and takes all aspects of economic and social development into account.

2. TOOLS

The “conventional” evaluation tools used were:

- Individual interviews
- In-depth interviews with very small groups (two to four people)
- Focus group discussions (six to 12 people).

The main participatory research tools used were:

a. *Social map*

The purpose of this map is to depict the social, spatial, and economic organization of the community. Its objectives are to:

- Generate general information about the community in terms of infrastructure (or lack thereof), number and composition of households;
- Serve as a basis for other exercises during the research process.

The social map is a visual representation of the surrounding environment (infrastructure, houses, roads, schools, places of worship, government offices, public health and social welfare services, etc.). It is used to generate discussions about the factors of diversity in a given community and can sometimes bring to light social, economic, and political disparities within that community for which solutions can be proposed.

b. *Household map*

The purpose of this map is to facilitate the collection of quantitative and qualitative data about girls and boys. It is used to gather information about the boys’ and girls’ literacy/school attendance and marital status. It is developed by the adults of the community, after which it is validated by the young people.

c. *Body map*

This visual aid is a schematic diagram created by the young people. It serves to facilitate the gathering of information about certain aspects of reproductive health.

d. *The Problem Tree*

Like the body map, this is a visual aid is used to facilitate discussions of various study themes in order to identify the causes and consequences of problems. It is a drawing of a tree with roots representing the causes of the problem, trunk representing the problem itself, and the branches representing the consequences.

e. *The various ranking techniques, with or without scoring:* These are methods for ranking and assigning scores to factors or criteria taken into account by members of the community during decision-making processes. Ranking consists in arranging the various options and factors in increasing or decreasing order of importance. Scoring is a exercise in weighting, through which a score is allocated to each option/criterion/factor based on its relative importance.

3. PARTICIPANTS IN THE ASSESSMENT

Three categories of individuals were included in the assessment: girls between the ages of 10 and 22, boys between the ages of 10 and 22, and key informants.

Girls 10-22: Girls between the ages of 10 and 22 living in the village were included in the demographic survey (social and household maps) and in certain quantitative assessments of literacy and school attendance, whether or not they were present on the survey days.

During the evaluation, the girls were divided into two sub-groups for the purposes of the exercises: the younger group, between the ages of 10 and 15, and the older group, between the ages of 16 and 22.

Boys 10-22: Their treatment was identical with that of girls. They too were divided into two sub-groups: younger and older.

Key informants: These included parents, spouses, adults with a strong knowledge of the community, government officials, religious and traditional leaders, professional educators, healthcare professionals, and financial service providers. The sole selection criterion was that they had to live or work in the community.

E. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Two types of tools were used: “conventional” qualitative information gathering tools and participatory research tools.

Three “conventional” tools were used: individual interview guides, in-depth interview guides,, and focus group discussion guides.

1. *Individual interview guide:* This consists for the most part of open-ended questions, administered to isolated individuals.
2. *In-depth interview guide:* This consists of open-ended questions, administered to small groups of two to four people.
3. *Focus group discussion guide:* This consists of open-ended questions, administered to groups of six to 12 people.

Specific participatory research tools included matrices, diagrams, maps, and classifications.

1. *Matrices:* These are double-entry tables for collecting information used in comparing two variables.
2. *Diagrams:* These are used to determine the role played by various institutions or individuals in the community. They facilitate an understanding of how people perceive these roles and their relative importance in their lives.
3. *Classifications:* These are two-column tables used to classify problems according to frequency and severity, or certain variables, such as literacy, level of education/school attendance at the Arabic school, by degree of importance and value.

F. HUMAN RESOURCES

The study was supervised by the director of the Khombole IPS and the program supervisor for ASRADEC (*Association Sénégalaise de recherche et d'appui du développement communautaire*, Senegalese Association for Research and Support of Community Development), with coordination by the program supervisor of Family Care International New York. The team of facilitators/researchers was composed of three sociologists and three students in applied economics.

G. ANALYTICAL METHOD

The procedure used to analyze the data collected included three steps: compilation of questionnaires, analysis, and drafting of the report.

1. *Questionnaires*: Questionnaires with response grids were prepared for each topic. The responses to these questionnaires were compiled and analyzed by the members of each team.

2. *Analysis*: The responses collected in all the exercises were analyzed. The people who conducted the exercises participated in the analysis. Their participation made it possible to supplement and clarify responses where necessary.

3. *Drafting of the report*: To ensure optimum understanding of the results and allow other analyses, the report includes for each sub-topic a descriptive report, a summary and an analysis (in context). Thanks to this presentation, it becomes possible to prepare a synthesis by combining the various summaries by topic.

III. INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The general information about the community was collected by means of a social map (annexed to this report) developed in collaboration with the communities as required by the methodology. Use of this map and the related supports revealed the infrastructures existing in the village. They can be presented in six sectorial categories: government, education/literacy/training, the economy, health, agriculture and livestock production, water and electricity, sports and leisure, organization, and non-governmental associations. These structures are presented as follows:

1. *Government*: The village of Méouane has three government structures: the *sous-préfecture* (sub-prefecture), the community hall, and the rural expansion center. The general offices of the rural community government are located in the sub-prefecture. The community hall contains the rural council, a decentralized local government agency. The multi-purpose rural expansion center serves as an interface between the government technical offices and the communities, and provides training and management in various sectors of economic and social development.
2. *Education/literacy/training*: The village has a primary school, Koranic schools (*daraa*), and a literacy class.
3. *Health sector*: A medical center maintained by a nurse and two midwives provides public health coverage for the village of Méouane and the neighboring villages.
4. *Agriculture and livestock production*: The village has three relevant infrastructures: a local association hall, an animal vaccination station, and an animal pound with a silo and a watering-trough.
5. *Water and electricity*: There are four public street fountains and wells: one public general-use street fountain in each of the three village districts, and one for trucks in Thiounène. All the village wells serve as garbage dumps. Méouane obtains its electricity from a power plant in the center of the village. A few land grant areas have solar cell panels. The community has ten power distribution lines.
6. *The economy*: Can be divided into three sub-sectors: commerce, skilled trades and crafts, and the informal sector. Commerce is represented in Méouane village by one market in the center of the village, one general store near the market, and eight shops in the village districts (four in Ndiop, three in Mbayene, and one in Thiounène). Skilled trades and crafts are represented by two mechanic's shops in Ndiop and two tailor shops.
7. *Informal activities*: Two millet mills, one in the center of the village and the other in Ndiop.
8. *Roads and telecommunications*: One north-south paved street, running practically through the center, connects the village with the national road. Twenty-four dirt paths crisscross the village. In

Thiouène, community members preparing the social map identified three unlighted streets, which are perceived as unsafe areas. There are three public telephone centers, two in the village center and one in Ndiop. A telephone call costs 100 CFA francs per unit. Four telephone lines serve the land grant areas.

9. *Sports and leisure*: A soccer field is the only sports and leisure structure identified.
10. *Places of worship*: There are three neighborhood mosques, one large mosque in the village center, and one cemetery, located in Ndiop.
11. *Organization and Non-Governmental Associations*: Méouane village is serviced by three Non-Governmental organizations and associations: the ASRADEC (*Association Sénégalaise de recherché et d'appui du développement communautaire*, Senegalese Association for Research and Support of Community Development), the GEC, and the SOS.
12. *Special spaces*: The girls and boys socialize in the evenings on three benches, one in each neighborhood. A baobab tree in Ndiop said to be inhabited by spirits is considered a dangerous place.

B. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE GIRLS AND BOYS

1. *Demographic composition of the girls and boys*

Following preparation of the social map, the demographic composition of the girls and boys was evaluated by preparing a map of the households. It was developed for a sample of 100 land grant areas with adults who know the community well, and was then validated by a group of girls and boys. Analysis of the instruments filled out with the help of this map shows that the 100 land grants in the sample contain a total of 631 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 22. Tables 1 and 2 show the breakdown by sex and marital status.

Table 1: Breakdown by sex

	Number	%	
Girls 10-15	210	33.28	
Girls 16-22	58	9.19	
Total girls	268	42.63	
Boys 10-15	234	37.08	
Boys 16-22	129	20.45	
Total boys	363	57.37	
Total	631	100	

2. Marital status of young people

Table 2: Breakdown of girls by marital status

Total number of girls = 267

Age group	Single, no children	Single, with children	Married, no children	Married, with children	Engaged
10-15	208	0	1	0	0
16-22	44	1	7	4	2
Total	252	1	8	4	2

Table 3: Breakdown of boys by marital status

Total number of boys = 363

Age group	Single, no children	Single, with children	Married, no children	Married, with children	Engaged
10-15	234	0	0	0	0
16-22	123	0	5	0	1
Total	357	0	5	0	1

Summary of general information about the community:

1. *General information about the community:* Méouane village is fairly representative of the villages of Senegal in terms of its ethnic and religious composition, its administrative organization, and the representative nature of the various socio-economic development sectors. Noteworthy factors include the lack of industry, the small number of organizations that support development, and the almost total absence of leisure facilities.

2. *Demographic distribution of young people:* The figures show that:

- The percentage of girls is close to the national average (around 51%);
- There are more boys than girls living in land grant areas. There are almost four times as many girls in the 10-15 group, which accounts for two-thirds of the adolescents, as in the 16-22 group.

3. *Marital status of young people:*

- Proportionally, there are almost four times as many married or engaged girls as boys (1.64% of the boys are married or engaged, compared to 4.52% of the girls);
- No boy in the sampling is a parent, while 1.88 girls are mothers. That is, proportionally almost two times as many girls as boys are parents.

IV. LITERACY – EDUCATION – TRAINING

A. TYPES OF EDUCATION AVAILABLE

1. *Existing establishments:*

All respondents of both sexes, parents, spouses, and leaders concurred on the existence of three types of education: the French school, the Arabic school, and the Koranic school.

2. *New establishments:*

According to girls' parents and husbands, all the organizational and training establishments in the community are old. There are no new establishments.

The girls mentioned the *Case Foyer des jeunes* [Community Youth Center] as a recent establishment. The adults made no mention of this center.

The teachers mentioned the sewing workshops as a new establishment.

3. *Abandoned establishments:*

According to the parents and spouses, there are no abandoned establishments, but mention was made of the disappearance of the Koranic schools (*daraa*), a trend for which two reasons were given: the arrival of the French school, and the excessive length of the *daraa* training.

The teachers mentioned the disappearance of the dyeing center.

The girls described the SOS continuing education center as an abandoned establishment; this was not mentioned by the parents. A belief that the female adolescents have not noticed the trend toward disappearance of the *daraa* schools, something on which the attention of parents and spouses seems to be focused, is warranted.

B. INCREASE OR DECREASE IN TYPES OF EDUCATION

1. *Types of education:*

The parents and spouses noticed a trend toward disappearance of Koranic education, something that was not noticed by the girls. For the parents this could mean a reduction in the types of education available in the community.

The teachers indicated lack of funding as the reason for the disappearance of training in dyeing. Despite the disappearance of the *Case Foyer des jeunes* (*Community Youth Center*), girls found that there are now more types of education. The girls explain this increase as the result of the fact that the village authorities (the village chief, associations of students' parents) and the government now recognize the importance of education for girls.

2. *Literacy education for girls:*

The literacy class teacher says that attendance has increased because, she says, literacy education is the type most suitable for "women at home." It requires less time (three days a week).

Three types of education are available in the community. A community center for youth and a sewing shop are recent establishments. The dyeing center has been abandoned. Respondents unanimously agreed that there has been an increase in education and training establishments. The reason given for the increase is the interest in literacy demonstrated by women engaged in homemaking and a desire by local and central government authorities to strengthen all types of education, particularly the education of girls.

C. PREFERENCES FOR AND VALUE ATTACHED TO VARIOUS TYPES OF EDUCATION

1. *Preferences:*

The girls prefer the French school, the Arabic school, and literacy training in the national language, in that order. Parents and spouses prefer the Arabic school, the French school, and literacy training, in that order.

2. *Value ranking:*

Girls give the French school top ranking, which they justify on the grounds that this type of education enables them to read and write in the official language of their parents. Parents say the Koranic school provides greater knowledge of the Muslim religion.

The gradual disappearance of the *daraa* Koranic religious schools in favor of the French school and literacy training is confirmed by teachers, and is a matter of concern to parents, a concern explicable in terms of their educational background. The *daraa* is the first type of structured education experienced by parents and spouses. Moreover, this type of school provides a Moslem religious education in addition to basic education. Little importance seems to be attached to continuing education centers by parents, spouses, and the girls themselves, who do not take the disappearance of this type of education into consideration when evaluating changes in types of education. The girls do not appear to be concerned about the trend toward the disappearance of Koranic “religious” education.

D. CURRENT LEVEL OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND LITERACY TRAINING

1. *Current status of school attendance and literacy training:*

The social map shows the current level of schooling for boys and girls in the 10-22 age group, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of students in school, by age, sex, and educational status

Explanation of table: “Never attended” designates girls and boys who have never attended school. “Dropped out” designates girls and boys who attended school for a time but had dropped out by the time of this study. “In school” designates girls and boys who were attending school at the time this study was conducted.

Sex	Age group	In school	Never attended	Dropped out	Total
Girls	10-15	165	25	20	210
	16-22	23	07	28	58
Males	10-15	195	11	28	234
	16-22	52	08	69	129
Total		435	51	145	631

2. *Current level of school attendance, by sex:*

Table 5a: Distribution of girls by age and academic status:

Girls 10-15 = 210

Girls 16-22 = 58

Total = 268

Categories	Number in school	Percentage (of girls in same age group)
Girls 10-15	165	78.5
Girls 16-22	23	39.6

Table 5b: Distribution of boys by age and academic status:

Boys 10-15 = 234

Boys 16-22 = 129

Total = 363

Categories	Number in school	Percentage (of boys in same age group)
Boys 10-15	195	83.3
Boys 16-22	52	40.3

The analysis of the various tables shows that the overall number of pupils attending school in Méouane village is low in the 16-22 age group. This indicates that there is a high drop-out rate. Despite improvements in girls' school attendance reported by parents, spouses, and teachers, there is a clear disparity in favor of the boys.

3. Current level of school attendance by girls: The proportion of girls 16-22 attending school in Méouane village is low overall. Despite the improvement in girls' school attendance noted by parents, spouses, and teachers, there is a clear disparity in favor of boys. Overall and in all age groups, illiteracy is much more widespread among girls than among boys.

The girls see as the primary reason for this disparity the fact that it is as if instruction for girls is considered less important than instruction for boys. Girls must give priority to household duties, while boys are free to go to school if they wish.

E. CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF LOW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AMONG GIRLS

1. Roots of the problem:

The roots of the problem of low school attendance among girls were studied with the girls by means of two problem trees. The participants identified the roots as lack of funds, girls' lack of interest in school, corporal punishment, and abusive parental authority.

- Lack of funds, that is, the difficulties faced by parents in paying for schooling once their children have to start secondary school in Tivaouane, a city approximately 30 kilometers from the village;
- The lack of interest in school shown by some girls, explicable by the fact that schooling no longer offers any certainty of employment;
- Corporal punishment inflicted on pupils by teachers;

- Abusive authority of parents, who enroll their children in the school of their choice , or choose to remove them from the school or training center without consulting them.

2. *Consequences of girls' lack of schooling:*

The consequences of girls' lack of schooling were identified by means of problem-tree exercises with the girls and discussions with parents and spouses based on the results of these exercises, which show that:

- Respondents in every type of group unanimously identified the following consequences: the handicap associated with illiteracy, inability of an uneducated girl to engage in well-paid activities and responsibilities (social success), low level of awareness among uneducated girls, and the risk of prostitution.
- Parents and spouses also identified two other consequences: inability of uneducated girls to assume their role as parents in a changing society where education is one of the foundations of social success, and the feeling of regret experienced in adulthood by women who never went to school.
- The girls identified another consequence not taken into account by parents and spouses: the bad influence of uneducated girls on younger girls, especially if older, uneducated girls seem to have "succeeded socially."

The identified causes of the low level of schooling among adolescents are situational and individual. The situational causes include low socio-economic status and lack of a secondary school. The individual causes were found to include abusive authority of the parents, who choose the school for their children, or choose to remove them from school at will without consulting them, corporal punishment, and adolescents' lack of interest in school.

F. BARRIERS TO SCHOOLING OF GIRLS

1. *Safety barriers or constraints:*

All groups (girls, parents and spouses, religious and traditional leaders, teachers) said that they had not identified any safety barriers to school attendance by girls.

2. *Structural barriers:*

The girls and parents all felt that the existing classrooms are obsolete and inadequate. The lack of a secondary school creates both economic problems (supplies, lodging, transportation) and problems of continuing girls' schooling and education in general. The teachers did not mention any structural barriers.

In discussions, the religious and traditional leaders said that any training program during the winter, the season of work in the fields, would have little chance of success.

3. *Socio-cultural barriers:*

All groups of respondents (girls, parents and spouses, teachers, and religious and traditional leaders) feel that the domestic chores imposed upon girls starting at age 14 constitute a barrier to their proper schooling. Girls said that the housework is most onerous starting at age 14. Confirming the girls'

statements, parents and husbands say that “At the age of 14, girls should become more involved in domestic chores for two reasons: to help their mothers and to prepare for their role as wives.”

The girls emphasize early marriage and parents’ power to withdraw them from school. Girls emphasize that everything seems to indicate to them that girls should no longer be taught after the age of 14. No mention is made of these factors by parents, spouses, or religious leaders.

The teachers emphasize what they call the beliefs of the parents: “Girls’ schooling isn’t important”; holiday festivities are lengthy and the girls are more involved in them than the boys; the movies; lack of commitment on the part of the parents because, they say, the modern school offers few chances for social success.

4. *Cultural and religious barriers:*

In in-depth discussions, the traditional and religious leaders say that any program that is not long-term or that offers instruction that could lead to corruption of girls will be rejected.

5. *Personal barriers:*

The girls and the teachers emphasize girls’ lack of desire to participate in long-term education that offers little chance of social success, and girls’ lack of interest in school.

The girls mention only one personal obstacle: the commencement of menstruation. This barrier is taken into account only in the Arabic and Koranic schools.

No security barriers were identified in the community. The lack of a secondary school, which creates problems financially and with staying in school, and the need to work in the fields, would hinder the development of programs during the winter season.

The socio-cultural barriers identified were: the domestic chores imposed on girls, early marriage, the abusive authority of parents, and a gender problem.

Domestic chores are imposed on girls to provide assistance for their mothers and as a way of teaching them their role as women. More such duties are imposed on them after the age of 14.

Almost 50% of girls marry before the age of 23. Parents withdraw their children from school at will. It is as if schooling is for boys, while girls must give priority to their role as women.

G. FACTORS FAVORABLE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOLING FOR GIRLS

Reasons for schooling girls

Parents and spouses mention two reasons for educating girls and keeping them in school or in a literacy class: It gives the girls opportunities to succeed socially and opportunities that their mothers did not have. According to the same respondents, there is seemingly no reason not to register girls in literacy classes and schools. Boys and girls have the same rights to an education, they say.

Parents, spouses, and religious and traditional leaders acknowledge that education for girls has the same priority as education for boys.

Religious and traditional leaders say that schooling for girls is completely accepted by the Muslim religion. However, they add that Koranic education facilitates a better understanding of the religion. When it comes to learning a trade, the leaders say that “an uneducated woman without a trade is harmful to Islam.”

No reason for not educating girls was identified. The reasons mentioned in favor of educating girls and keeping them in school were in complete conflict with the causes connected with the reasons given for not educating girls: “Education of girls is just as important as education of boys,” “Boys and girls have the same right to an education.” This contradiction may be ascribable to growing awareness of the gender issue and to changing attitudes.

V. STRATEGIES – ACTIONS TO PROMOTE SCHOOLING OF GIRLS

A. ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM THAT CAN BE ELIMINATED

The strategies or actions to be undertaken to improve the literacy training, education, and schooling of girls must take into account the roots of the problem that can be eliminated. Five modifiable causes were identified by the girls: girls’ lack of desire, lack of money, household chores imposed on girls, late enrollment, and parents’ choices.

B. STRATEGIES – ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:

Strategies and actions to promote schooling for girls were identified through problem trees followed by discussions with girls in the 10-15 and 16-22 age groups, and in-depth discussions with parents, spouses, and teachers.

The strategies and actions identified were classified in two categories: those already under way and those yet to be undertaken.

1. Parents and spouses and girls in the 10-15 age group say that girls’ schooling is best monitored by the parents. The local authorities purchase school supplies and participate in remodeling of classrooms.
2. Parents and spouses note that the Non-Governmental Organizations and Associations are investing in girls’ schooling by building classrooms.
3. Girls in the 10-15 group and teachers say that teachers and the government authorities are making community leaders and parents aware of the need for proper schooling of girls. The parents have made a commitment to invest more in better schooling of girls. Corporal punishment in schools must be stopped.

C. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS YET TO BE UNDERTAKEN:

1. All girls in the 10-15 and 16-22 groups, parents and spouses, religious and traditional leaders, and teachers agree that it is necessary to lighten the load of domestic work imposed on girls, to increase awareness, and to advocate for girls’ schooling.
2. The strategies and activities suggested by the girls include finding domestic helpers to replace or assist girls attending school. The other respondents suggest developing income-generating projects to help mothers find the funds needed in order to pay for domestic helpers. The economic pump-priming projects proposed to benefit women include small businesses, a credit union with low interest rates, and pasturing of sheep and cattle.

3. The girls suggest increased participation by the authorities in the purchasing of supplies; getting parents to take girls' choices and preferences in terms of schools and training facilities into account; reorganization of the Arabic school along the lines of the French school, with large classrooms and equally well-structured instruction; and establishment of a continuing education school to train girls in sewing, dyeing, and embroidery. Lastly, the girls find it necessary to organize in order to bring pressure on the authorities and parents through advocacy or demands for proper long-term schooling of girls.
4. Parents and spouses suggest the construction of a secondary school in the community, which in their opinion would give girls greater opportunities to continue their studies.
5. The teachers suggest the introduction of job apprenticeships in the school. The Arabic schoolmaster recommends the organization of an annual recital of the Koranic.
6. The religious and traditional leaders support any action aimed at providing information and raising awareness with respect to better schooling for girls, and promise to participate. They say they are willing to provide a location for any action aimed at promoting schooling and education in the community. The teachers are committed to organizing and continuing better awareness-raising and information activities aimed at obtaining better schooling for the adolescents of the community.

Two campaigns are under way to strengthen education for girls. Particular attention is being paid by parents to education of girls and the establishment of literacy classes for them. The strategies suggested are based on four approaches: individual, collective, economic, and Information-Education-Communication (IEC).

The individual approach suggests lightening the workload of girls in school by finding domestic helpers. The economic approach calls for development of income-generating projects to facilitate the payment of such helpers. The IEC approach calls for advocacy efforts directed toward parents and the authorities in favor of better schooling for girls. The collective approach suggests greater financial involvement of local authorities to strengthen structures, and organization of the girls to bring pressure to bear on parents and local authorities.

VI. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

A. KNOWLEDGE OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The evaluation of the girls' knowledge of reproductive health covered their knowledge of the reproductive organs and their functions, family planning, sexually transmitted infections, and information sources. The evaluation was carried out by means of problem-tree exercises followed by discussions, rankings in order of priority and severity, and the Venn diagram.

1. *Knowledge of the reproductive organs and their functions*

- Girls in the 10-15 age group listed the principal female reproductive organs. The list of male reproductive organs was incomplete. The girls provided a good description of the changes in both the male and the female genital organs during maturation.

The group members did not have a good knowledge of the functions of the female reproductive organs. For example, all the participants thought that urine is excreted through the vagina and that the breasts maintain pregnancy. One-third of the participants thought that the newborn is expelled from the mother's body through the anus.

The participants made an accurate connection between the absence of the menstrual period and pregnancy, but could not explain why menstruation occurs. They viewed the first menstrual period as a marker signaling that they had reached marriageable age. Periods represent an inconvenience that prevents them from praying and fasting, but does not constitute a major impediment to schooling.

- Girls in the 16-22 age group had good knowledge of the female and male genital organs, and also of the functions of the various organs. They made a connection between the absence of menstrual periods and pregnancy, but could not explain the reason for the connection. They said that menstruation did not constitute a major impediment to activities, training, or education, but did prevent them from fasting and praying. They regard painful periods as a predictor of difficult births and difficult sexual relations.
- Boys in the 16-22 age group listed the male genital organs and provided good descriptions of the functions of the various organs. They were also well aware of the principal changes that occur in these organs during maturation. They thought that urine is excreted through the vagina.

The boys felt that menstruation does not constitute a danger or limitation on girls' schooling, that it is a temporary inconvenience, and that the absence of the menstrual period is an indicator of pregnancy. The group of boys felt that painful periods presage difficult births and difficult sexual relations.

Girls and boys in both age groups are very knowledgeable about the genital organs. The changes that occur during maturation are also well-known to both groups. For all groups, menstruation does not constitute an obstacle to training or productive activity.

Overall, however, the girls and boys, and particularly the youngest girls, have relatively poor knowledge of the genital organs and their functions. This is evident in the conviction of some of the girls in the 10-15 age group that the newborn is expelled through the anus, and of the boys that urine is excreted through the vagina. No group was able to explain the why and the how of menstruation, and all of them were certain that painful periods presage complicated parturition and difficult sexual relations.

2. Knowledge of pregnancy and contraception

- Girls in the 10-15 age group cited the principal physical signs of pregnancy: amenorrhea, increase in the size (weight) of the body, increase in the size of the abdomen, changes in the breasts, and such symptoms as nausea and vomiting.

They were aware of two ways of preventing pregnancy: abstinence, and avoidance of sexual relations during menstruation.

They cited as contraceptive methods the “retroversion of the uterus” by a doctor, use of condom by the man, and amulets to be worn starting at the age of 15. No girl in the group practices contraception.

- Girls in the 16-22 age group were thoroughly aware of the various physical signs of pregnancy. The contraceptive methods and means cited were: avoidance of sexual relations during menstruation and for 15 days following the period, “surgical procedure by the doctor,” the pill, and condoms. No woman in the group practices contraception.
- Boys in the 16-22 age group interpreted nocturnal emission of sperm during sleep as a sign of puberty. They did not find this unclean, but said it was an act that pollutes (religious connotation).

To avoid impregnating a girl, they use condoms and practice withdrawal. They also chose the “right” time in the menstrual cycle.

The various groups are well aware of the signs of pregnancy, and are able to enumerate the various conceptive methods. Yet the level of knowledge of contraception can be considered poor or average, because:

- The withdrawal method is known to the boys but not to the girls.
- The insertion of an IUD (surgically placed by a doctor) is interpreted as a retroversion of the uterus.
- The rhythm method was poorly understood by all respondents (explained as avoidance of sexual relations during the menstrual period and for 15 days thereafter).

3. Causes and consequences of lack of information about reproductive health

The roots of the lack of information about reproductive health were explored by means of two problem trees developed with each type of group.

The two groups found the roots of the problem of lack of information about reproductive health to be girls' lack of interest in this type of information, illiteracy, and "lack of awareness."

Older girls added shyness and the lack of sex education meetings (opportunities to obtain more information and learn more). With respect to consequences, both groups expressed the opinion that sexually transmitted infections are one result of insufficient information about reproductive health. The younger group listed sterility and ignorance of contraceptive methods, in addition to sexually transmitted infections, as factors that could result in undesired pregnancies and pregnancies spaced too closely. They added clandestine abortions, infanticides, and premature births.

The identified causes of insufficient information about reproductive health are illiteracy, lack of interest, shyness, and the absence of Information-Education-Communication (IEC) on the subject of reproductive health.

The consequences enumerated by the various groups are relevant and pertinent. However, the list of consequences prepared by the older participants showed a higher level of information than that of the younger participants.

This indicates a higher level of information of the older boys and girls on the consequences of lack of information about reproductive health, their greater awareness of this type of information, and the need to give priority to the information given by the youngest members.

B. INFORMATION REQUESTED AND FURNISHED - SOURCES

- Girls in the 16-22 age group seek information about diseases and problems from five types of persons: boys, girls in the same age group, mothers, fathers, husbands, and healthcare providers. The information sought covers sexually transmitted infections, abortions, leucorrhoea, pre-natal care, painful menstrual periods, and sterility.

They turn to parents for information only when menstruation begins and in case of problems, and only when the girl is worried. Parents say they refuse to give their daughters information about contraception because they think it would encourage them to have extra-marital sexual relations.

- Boys 16-22 are told about the functions of and changes in the genital organs by girls of the same age in intimate conversations, by friends exchanging experiences, in the *daraa* (Koranic school), and through sex education in school.
- Recourse to healthcare providers depends on the marital status and age of the girls. Unmarried girls 15-19 ask for information about menstruation. Married women ask about the IUD and sexually transmitted infections. Healthcare providers supply this information in health education sessions and during pre-natal visits. These providers say that an unmarried woman who asks for information about contraception is not well regarded in the community. They refuse to give information about contraception to unmarried girls.

Girls request information about various aspects of reproductive health. Information is sought from various sources: people of the same age, mothers, and healthcare professionals. The sources themselves are equally selective, with the selection being based on type of information, sex, and marital status of girls seeking information. Parents are approached only for information about menstruation when the first period occurs, or when the event is perceived by the girl as an illness or a problem. It is clearly evident that contraception for an unmarried girl is viewed unfavorably by parents and healthcare providers. Reproductive health is a taboo subject between parents and children. The girls emphasize the lack of Information-Education-Communication (IEC) sessions about contraception, whereas the providers claim that they organize periodic IEC meetings on the subject.

C. FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROBLEMS AND DISEASES

1. Frequency

- The girls listed seven diseases or problems related to reproductive health: AIDS, cancer, difficult pregnancies, abortion, *sothiète*,* *napp*,** and abdominal cramps. They cited in order of frequency abortion, difficult pregnancies, and abdominal cramps.
- The boys listed seven diseases or problems: AIDS, “hot piss” (gonorrhea), scabies, scrotal hernia, *sothiète*,* impotence, and infertility. The order of frequency was scabies, *sothiète*,* and scrotal hernia.

2. Severity

The first three problems listed by the girls in order of seriousness were AIDS, abortion, and cancer. The boys listed, in order of seriousness, AIDS, gonorrhea, and impotence.

The girls’ priorities in terms of diseases or problems appear to be AIDS, difficult pregnancies, and abortion. For the boys, the ranking is AIDS, impotence, and gonorrhea.

D. RECOURSE IN CASE OF ILLNESS OR PROBLEMS

- .The first recourse of girls 16-22 in case of illness or problems is the healer, whom they consult to determine if the illness is caused by spirits or evil fate. Their second recourse is the health center. They return after initial consultation.
- The first recourse of boys 16-22 is the health center. Like the girls, they return after a consultation. They say that in certain cases they consult a traditional healer, such as the *marabout* psychic (*taak xala*).

In case of reproductive illnesses or problems, both girls and boys consult the formal healthcare systems (medical center) and the informal healthcare system (healers). In all cases the informal system is consulted for illness or problems perceived as not within the competence of modern medicine. Girls’ first step to obtain treatment begins with the healer. The boys prefer the care provided at the health center.

*Sothiète**: A problem commonly evoked by parents in situations that are often special (first night of the honeymoon, sterility). It is described as pimples on the genital organs. This problem is not validated by formal medicine.

*Napp***: Explains all joint pains in the lower limbs. It is often correlated with *siti* (syphilis). Generally, *siti* is the explanation given for any health problem of unknown origin, regardless of the organ involved.

E. EVALUATION OF REPRODUCTIVE-HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDED

- Girls 16-22 say they are very satisfied with the quality of the reproductive health services provided by the staff at local medical offices. They emphasize the limits of competences of these services: “Some problems are beyond the capability of the health center, which refers people to the hospitals.” They want better equipped medical facilities for their community.
- Boys 16-22 also have a good opinion of available reproductive health services. They did not indicate any limitation on using modern reproductive healthcare services and obtaining condoms or information on reproductive health.
- Parents and husbands have a positive view of the services offered by the local healthcare facilities with respect to the various aspects of reproductive health, with the exception of the IUD service. They feel that contraception encourages extra-marital sexual relations.
- Service providers believe that the service provided adequately meets the needs of the people.

The quality of reproductive health services offered is viewed positively by the girls who use them. The providers maintain that the services offered meet the needs, while the users say that certain requests cannot be met by the available services. Parents and husbands view family planning as a reproductive health service activity that encourages sexual behavior that is perceived negatively in the community.

Despite the general satisfaction with the quality of the services provided, there are two problems. First, the providers believe that the services provided meet the needs, while the users note an imbalance between supply and demand. Second, contraception, a major public health factor in reducing maternal morbidity and mortality and ensuring the well-being of mothers, is practically rejected by the people with decision-making authority.

F. LIMITATIONS

1. Limitations on access to information

- Girls 16-22 say that only married women have access to information in their community. The boys say that they do not discuss reproductive health with their parents, while parents and husbands regret that girls prefer to discuss reproductive health with their women friends rather than with them.

- Service providers noted no limitations on reproductive health information. Yet they say they refuse to give information to an unmarried woman. The providers apparently perceive this behavior as normal.

2. Supply and demand limitations

- Girls 16-22 note that the medical services operate only in the morning. Health centers are very crowded at this time of day, and girls need discretion for this type of service. Boys in the same age group note the non-existence of services encouraging the use of female contraception.
- Parents and husbands perceive female contraception as an incitement to extra-marital sexual relations.
- The service providers noted two limitations. The first pertains to approval by guardians, the second concerns the community personnel.

They say that the indiscretion on the part of the midwives limits access to female contraception, or makes such access difficult. Approval by the guardian is necessary for female contraception services.

All the limitations identified concern the use of female contraception services. They spring from a certain provider misreading of female contraception standards, parental perception of contraception, and the community perception of a woman who practices contraception.

According to parents, contraception encourages a girl to be promiscuous. A woman who uses contraception services is viewed by the community as a loose woman.

Because of these two perceptions, girls need to be discreet when they use a contraceptive method. This discretion is required of service providers. That is why the morning and peak hours are not suitable for girls, and midwife indiscretion poses a problem.

In addition, service providers feel that family planning requires permission from the guardian. In Senegal, this is required only for tubal ligation.

VII. STRATEGIES/ACTIONS TO PROMOTE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The strategies and actions suggested by the participants in the evaluation fall under two categories. The first concerns better information, the second concerns supply and demand with respect to services.

A. BETTER INFORMATION

- Girls 16-22 suggest two strategies. The first is to establish parent/child/leader communication. The second is raising awareness, informing, and educating members of the community, including young people.

For implementation of this strategy, they suggest the following community Information-Education-Communication (IEC) activities:

- Educational talks in the market during youth meetings and at school.

- Showing of films and skits.
- Use of town criers and the media before, during, and after the IEC sessions.

They suggest periods and times for these activities:

- Winter, which is the school vacation time, and which coincides with the return of other community members from the city.
- Week-ends (Saturday and Sunday), which are days of rest.
- Late afternoons between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m., because they have fewer activities.

These recommendations are based on daily and seasonal schedules as produced during the exercise. The schedule is found in an attachment to this report.

- Boys 16-22 suggest that the ICP and the ASCs hold the evening community education meetings. Like the girls, they suggest the showing of films.
- Parents and husbands suggested organizing mixed-group awareness sessions for parents and children. The purpose of mixing the two groups is to overcome constraints linked to the sexual taboo. They also recommended educational talks in literacy classes and the participation of leaders, such as the village chief, in the awareness sessions.
- The service providers suggested that the local health service managers be involved and associated in any reproductive health education and information program.

B. IMPROVEMENT IN SUPPLY AND DEMAND

- Girls 16-22 suggest that reproductive health services be made available in the afternoons. Boys in the same age group suggested that reproductive health services be offered in the evening, after dinner. This suggestion is based on the need for discretion.
- Parents and husbands did not propose any solutions for improving reproductive health services.
- The service providers reiterated their suggestions that they be involved and associated in the implementation of reproductive health programs.

The proposed strategies for improving reproductive health services are based on four approaches. The first aims to establish parent/child/leader communication; the second, to increase adolescent and adult awareness of reproductive health, a subject that is almost taboo; the third, to ensure confidentiality; and the fourth, to adjust schedules to the routines and concerns of the individuals served. These strategies are translated into the following activities:

- Mixed-group informal talks at meetings attended by both parents and children.
- Increasing the awareness of everyone in the community (children, parents, and local authorities) by means of meetings at which films and skits are shown.
- Changes in the health center's hours of operation, so it will be open at the times below:
 - During the winter, which coincides with the school vacations and the return of other community members from the city.
 - Weekends: Saturday and Sunday, the days of rest.
 - Late afternoons, between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m., a time of day when the girls have less to do.

VIII. MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

A. EXISTING STRUCTURES

The structures providing services related to sources of livelihood in the community are the socio-cultural, economic, and administrative infrastructures. Specifically, the participants in the evaluation listed the *Case Foyer* [Community Center], the millet mill, shops, telephone centers, wells, the warehouse, the market, the animal vaccination yard, ASRADEC (*Association Sénégalaise de recherché et d'appui du développement communautaire*, Senegalese Association for Research and Support of Community Development), ARM (*Association des Résidents de Méouane* (Méouane Residents' Association), the CRP, and the CER.

B. INVOLVMENT OF GIRLS IN SERVICES

The girls use the following establishments:

- The telephone center, for communication needs.
- The shops, for household equipment.
- The mills, to lighten the load of housework.
- Financial services, for loans and tontine fund services.
- Administrative services.

C. BUSINESSES ENGAGED IN BY GIRLS

The business activities most often chosen by the girls are domestic helper, sewing, and hairdressing.

D. PREFERRED AND HIGHLY REGARDED ACTIVITIES

The girls ranked activities according to a system based on preference and regard.

- Sewing had the highest ranking. It is highly regarded in social terms, and is of great interest to the girls.
- Hairdressing ranks second.
- Management of the telephone center is third.

These three choices are followed by sales and domestic work. The latter does not interest the girls and is not highly regarded by the community.

E. BARRIERS

1. Structural barriers:

The girls pointed to lack of money as a major limitation on their involvement in the economic life of the village. Other limitations included limited job opportunities, lack or inadequacy of support organizations of older women, and lack of support from the NGOs and groups of older women.

Poor management of loans allocated to women is a limitation noted by the leaders as likely to compromise effective participation by girls in economic life.

2. *Socio-cultural barriers:*

The perception of “woman’s place” makes it more difficult for girls to become involved in activities that are not an extension of their work in the home. Work outside the home or the village is perceived by parents and husbands as a limitation on the performance of household duties, which is perceived as the girls’ primary role and obligation. Parents and husbands are opposed to activities that oblige girls to be away from the parental or marital home, because of the risks of perversion and deviance. This means that participation by the girls in training sessions and seminars is viewed unfavorably by the girls’ guardians (parents and husbands).

3. *Individual barriers:*

Domestic work proved to be the only individual limitation experienced by Méouane girls. The numerous duties imposed upon them mean that generally they do not have enough time to engage in economic activity.

4. *Gender-related barriers:*

The girls emphasize the existence of a gender-based disparity in access to economic activities, which they say are allocated according to sex, with the girls being relegated to tasks that are related to their status as “women at home” and which do not require leaving the community. For this reason, those who do engage in an economic activity are for the most part hairdressers or seamstresses in the village.

The boys are involved in field work, mechanics, and wood-working.

F. FAVORABLE AND EXACERBATING FACTORS

1. *Favorable factors:*

The leaders are willing to support any initiative involving assistance for girls’ economic activity. Advice and orientation on how to achieve their goals will be given to the girls.

2. *Exacerbating factors:*

Two aggravating factors were identified by the girls: one social, the other economic.

The social factor is their status as women, which obliges them to take part in numerous ceremonies. This social role causes them to be less available than the men, who have little involvement in festivals.

The economic factor is a lack of equipment and financial and technical support.

G. STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS TO PROMOTE MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD

The proposed strategies for increasing women’s level of involvement in the economic sphere are based on improving their knowledge and skills, psychological support, and financial aid.

According to the girls, literacy and other training would improve their knowledge and skills. The psychological support, which they called motivation, is couched in terms of “increasing financial support during the winter season.”

The best financial support, according to the local authorities in this sector, is promotion of income-generating activities and partnership with development support organizations, such as ASRADEC (*Association Sénégalaise de recherché et d’appui du développement communautaire*, Senegalese Association for Research and Support of Community Development), DIEG/Femmes, and PLC.

1. *Existing structures*

There are few services in the community that can facilitate girls' access to means of earning a living. The view that there is a serious discrepancy between supply and demand for such services is warranted.

2. *Girls' level of involvement*

The girls are involved essentially in the informal sector represented by sewing, hairdressing, telephone center management, and sales.

3. *Preferred activities*

The girls' preferences reflect their ambition, which is limited by the scarcity of choices available to them and by their level of knowledge and skills. They say they prefer the trades of seamstress, hairdresser, and telephone center manager, in that order.

4. *Roots of poor access by girls to income-generating activities*

The causes can be grouped in three categories: economic, socio-cultural, and individual.

- Economic causes:

This is a relatively poor economic environment supported by structures with limited financial resources facing high social demand. In this environment, the internal and external supports are inadequate.

- Socio-cultural causes:

- Low level of training and instruction.

- A perception of women that confines them to "women's work" (homemaker, hairdresser, seamstress, sales clerk), and which limits their opportunities by barring any attempt to look for paid work outside the village.

- The gender problem, which creates a disparity in favor of boys' access to means of livelihood. Overall, girls have less freedom than boys.

- Lack of time because of household chores and the numerous ceremonies in which girls are obliged to participate.

- An important individual cause worth mentioning is the poor management of allocated resources.

5. *Favorable factors*

- Existence in the village of several women who can serve as role models for girls.

- The existence of a financial service and several organizations supporting development.

- Commitment by local authorities to support any activity aimed at strengthening women's access to means of livelihood.

6. *Strategies for reinforcing women's access to means of livelihood*

The strategies proposed are pertinent to two of the causes identified: increasing girls' level of training and literacy, and increasing financial support.

The proposed strategies do not take the socio-cultural causes into account. It would be advisable to construct a strategy aimed at more freedom for women and elimination of the disparity related to the gender problem.

IX. PARTICIPATION IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING SPHERES

A. POWER AND DECISION-MAKING SPHERES

The following spheres are listed by the girls and the leaders: the rural council, the sub-prefecture, the *case foyer* community center (bank, kindergarten, sewing room), the dispensary, ASRADEC (*Association Sénégalaise de recherché et d'appui du développement communautaire*, Senegalese Association for Research and Support of Community Development), CLAC, the telephone centers, agriculture, commerce, livestock production, the water borehole management committee, and SOS Sahel.

B. INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN

1. *Involvement in the decision-making and power structures*

Girls 16-22 say that women are involved in the *case foyer* community center, the dispensary, and ASRADEC. They identified five women who occupy positions of authority: a secretary, an ASRADEC manager, a credit union employee, GPF president, and midwife.

2. *Positions and Responsibilities*

The community leaders cited five positions and responsibilities held by women: director of the micro-finance section of the local SOS Sahel unit, GEC managers, manager of the *case foyer* community center, and CERP director. The community leaders say that girls are involved in the water borehole management committee, ASRADEC, SOS Sahel, and the *case foyer* community center.

3. *Women's activities*

The girls' activities are governed by a daily schedule and a seasonal schedule (both attached to this report) that they themselves have drawn up. They show that the day of a rural Senegalese girl begins when she wakes up at around 8:00 a.m., and ends at 10:30 p.m. Her various activities during the day pertain to household duties. The morning is devoted to cleaning, dishwashing, sweeping, and preparing lunch (going to the market, preparation, cooking). Dinner is prepared between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. The schedule indicates two free periods for the girls: between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m., and from 7:30 p.m. to bedtime.

Women are involved in financial services, associations, and technical and health services. They have management duties in the NGOs and in financial services. The activities of a Senegalese rural girl, based on the seasonal calendar, can be described as follows:

Girls' activities during the year are organized around the four seasons: *nawet* (winter, June to October); *noor* (October and November); *lollo* (December to March); and *coroon*, March to June).

- During *nawet*, girls perform both domestic work and field work. Some girls leave for vacation. They attend *navétanes*, soccer matches often organized in the villages by vacationing pupils, and the *fourel* or popular dances often organized by the boys.
- During *noor* the girls are busy with harvesting. This period coincides with the end of vacation for French school and Koranic school pupils. Domestic workers return to the village at the same time as the vacationers.
- - During *lollo* and *coroon*, household chores are girls' main activity.

An analysis of the seasonal calendar shows that rural Senegalese girls are very busy in every season. Domestic work and Arabic school or French school form the basis for the girls' activities.

C. GIRLS' RIGHTS

The rights of girls were identified through discussions with the girls and with the leaders. There are two: the right to form women's organizations and choose a director from among their number, and the right to participate in mixed organizations.

Two rights are denied to women: the right to lead mixed organizations, and the right to participate in the top decision-making and power spheres. "It's not normal for a woman to be a leader of an organization in which men are members," said the community leaders.

D. BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING AND POWER SPHERES

Girls 16-22 mentioned barriers having to do with gender, lack of organization of women, and low level of schooling for girls.

The community leaders believe that the sources of the obstacles to women's involvement lie in the type of social organization and in the belief system.

E. CHANGES IN PROGRESS

The community leaders acknowledge that the women have become more dynamic, more competent, and better organized. They are increasingly active in power and decision-making spheres from which they were more or less absent a few years ago.

In this community, women have two rights: the right to form women's organizations, and the right to participate in mixed-sex organizations. Two rights are denied to women: the right to lead mixed-sex organizations, and the right to participate in the top decision-making spheres.

The obstacles to women's access to power and decision-making spheres are connected with gender, the low level of schooling for girls, and lack of women's organizations. There is a noticeably greater involvement of women in power and decision-making spheres. This trend goes hand in hand with the dynamism of the women and their improved level of organization and skills.

F. PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The strategies recommended are based on the integrity and perseverance demonstrated by the women, and the support and backing of NGOs to improve women's access to power and decision-making spheres. These strategies are translated by the girls into the following proposals for action:

- Strengthen the level of organizing by women so they will be lead to participate more in power and decision-making spheres.
- Improve level of information about women's rights to have access to power and decision-making spheres.
- Bolster women's training to increase their skills, in order to change men's disabling perception of women.

The community leaders add to these suggestions:

- Provide advice to women;
- Involve them in managing community activities.

The suggested strategies are based on support by the NGOs and recognized attributes of women (perseverance and integrity). They are aimed at improving women's levels of organization and information about their rights, and raising their level of skills.

X. VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

A. FORMS OF VIOLENCE

The forms of violence are classified in two major categories: physical violence and psychological violence.

1. Physical violence

Girls in the 10-15 age group listed seven forms of physical violence: corporal punishment, rape, physical assault, abduction, stoning of adulterers, tattooing, and excision.

Girls in the 16-22 age group listed five forms of physical violence: rape, corporal punishment, abduction, excision, and ear-piercing.

Parents and husbands mentioned fights between husbands and wives and parental opposition to girls' marriages as the two forms of violence suffered by women.

Religious and traditional leaders cite defrauding of wives by their husbands as the only form of violence. Their explanation for this behavior was the difficult economic conditions experienced by heads of households in supporting their families.

2. Psychological violence

Girls 10-15 identified verbal abuse and insults, rape, abductions, tattooing, and excision as forms of psychological violence.

Forms of psychological violence mentioned by girls 16-22 were rape, refusal to acknowledge paternity, forced marriage, conjugal neglect, unequal treatment of multiple wives, abductions, tattooing, and excision.

3. Types of violence

Acts of violence can be classified in three types: traditional, justified, and no recourse.

a. Traditional acts of violence:

The younger girls identified stoning of adulterers, tattooing, and excision as violence relating to traditions.

The older girls identified forced marriage, tattooing, excision, certain household tasks (pounding and grinding), and raiding for women as traditional acts of violence.

b. Justified acts of violence:

Girls 10-16 found stoning of adulterers a justified act of violence.

The older girls felt that tattooing, excision (which is not practiced in the area), ear-piercing, defloration, and childbirth are justified acts of violence.

c. Acts of violence without recourse:

Girls 10-15 classified verbal abuse/insults, corporal punishment, stoning of adulterers, tattooing, and excision as acts of violence without recourse.

Younger girls include verbal abuse/insults, corporal punishment, tattooing, excision, and stoning of adulterers among acts of violence without recourse.

B. SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The scope of violence was evaluated by means of a classification system based on frequency.

Girls 10-15 ranked, in decreasing order of frequency, verbal abuse/insults, corporal punishment, tattooing, physical assaults, and rape. They pointed out that stoning of adulterers and excision are not practiced in their village.

Girls 16-22 offered the following ranking: ear-piercing, tattooing, rape, boyfriends' refusal to acknowledge paternity, forced marriage, and abduction, which is quite rare. They too claimed that excision is not currently practiced in their village.

Parents and husbands consider spousal fights as the most frequently occurring form of violence in the village. They emphasize that it is rare for parents to oppose a child's marriage.

C. ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

By means of a problem tree, girls 16-22 listed only one pertinent cause of violence against girls: their youthful status, which obliges them to submit to parents and adults.

D. CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROBLEM:

Girls 16-22 listed as consequences of violence a closed mind in girls, difficulties in life, poverty, and absence of decision-making.

The religious and traditional leaders say there are no consequences of violence against girls because, they claim, no violence of any kind is practiced in their village.

E. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE; LOCATIONS

1. Persons responsible

Girls 10-15 indicated uncles, boyfriends, and themselves as the persons responsible for acts of violence committed against them.

Uncles insult and verbally abuse the girls and inflict corporal punishment. Boyfriends commit rape and refuse to acknowledge paternity. In cases of rape and pregnancy without acknowledgment of paternity, the girl is perceived by the community as the person responsible. Girls feel responsible for corporal punishments administered when they engage in improper or wrong behavior, and also when they are assaulted while frequenting unsafe areas at certain hours.

The older girls hold men in general and husbands in particular responsible for acts of violence committed against them. The girls consider themselves responsible for rape. The community considers the girls responsible for pregnancies involving refusal to acknowledge paternity.

Parents and husbands did not indicate responsible parties.

Religious and traditional leaders, like the other adults, did not indicate the parties responsible for acts of violence.

2. Locations

Girls 10-15 said that acts of violence are generally perpetrated in the home, teachers' lodgings, and the market square during dances at night.

Girls 16-22 cited the home as the primary location of violence, along with the school (corporal punishment), roads (physical assault, rape), and the bush (physical assault, rape, abduction).

The acts and situations defined by girls as forms of violence are numerous and pertinent. The numerous forms of current violence in the village are varied. The participants in the evaluation established six traditional forms of violence: stoning of adulterers, tattooing, excision, forced marriage, certain household duties, and raiding for women. Excision and raiding are not current in this community.

Verbal abuse and insults, corporal punishment, tattooing, ear-piercing, refusal to acknowledge paternity, and rape appear to be the most frequent forms of physical violence. The only pertinent cause of acts of violence against girls is their youthful status, which obliges them to submit. These acts of violence are committed in dwellings (homes, teachers' lodgings), public places (dance halls), and institutions (the school).

Forms of violence related to traditions are not recognized as acts of violence by the religious and traditional leaders.

Without exception, the girls classify all the traditional acts of violence as both justified acts and acts without recourse. Men in general, husbands, and boyfriends in particular, as well as girls themselves, are the parties responsible for acts of violence.

All acts of violence for which uncles are deemed responsible are committed by the uncles out of a desire to educate.

Acts of sexual violence have a strong socio-cultural connotation based on the perception of male/female relations. In these cases a girl who is victimized by men and accused by the social group feels guilty.

The leaders sanction acts of violence on socio-cultural grounds by simply denying they exist.

G. EVALUATION OF FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Perception of violence

Girls 10-15 perceive sexual violence as the most serious of all forms of violence. “It’s not comparable to any of the others,” they say. They also consider excision to be very serious.

Girls 16-22 find that corporal punishment and certain cases of sexual violence are not perceived as such in their community.

H. RECOURSE AVAILABLE TO GIRLS IN CASE OF VIOLENCE

1. Types of recourse

Girls of all ages cited family mediation, police mediation, and mediation by the sub-prefect as types of recourse. The only type of recourse recognized by parents and husbands is family mediation. While denying the occurrence of any type of violence in their village, the religious leaders suggest the council of elders as a form of recourse, if such were necessary.

2. Evaluation of recourse

The forms of recourse are evaluated on the basis of frequency of use and effectiveness.

a. Frequency of use:

According to the girls, the types of recourse most frequently used in case of violence are mediation by the family, mediation by the sub-prefect, and mediation by the police, in that order. The girls’ discussion indicates the following ranking, in order of use: family mediation, mediation by the local government authority (the sub-prefect), and, lastly, mediation by the judicial authority (the police).

b. Effectiveness of the recourse used:

The judicial authority/the police is the most effective recourse, according to all groups of girls.

The least effective recourse is considered by the younger girls to be mediation by the sub-prefect; by the older girls, non-recourse.

Parents and husbands say that only one type of recourse is used: family mediation. The religious and traditional leaders say that no violence of any kind exists so there is no recourse.

I. SANCTIONS

The girls described corporal punishment and imprisonment as responses to acts of violence against girls. The discussions with the girls showed that a rape committed by a family member may go unpunished. The girls think that imprisonment too mild a punishment for a rapist.

The youngest girls perceive rape as the most serious form of sexual violence. Corporal punishment and domestic sexual violence are not perceived as forms of violence. The first recourse used is mediation by the family, followed by mediation by the sub-prefect, and lastly mediation by the police. Police mediation is the most effective, mediation by the sub-prefect the least effective. Two types of punishment are currently used: corporal punishment and imprisonment.

J. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO COMBAT ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS

1. *Favorable factors*

Two factors that can contribute to combating violence against girls were identified during the discussions: the Muslim religion, and the commitment by the leaders to support any initiative aimed at wiping out acts of violence perpetrated against women.

According to respondents in the focus group discussions with adults and leaders, Islam recommends forgiveness and urges self-control.

2. *Strategies and actions*

a. In the short term:

The actions suggested in the short term by girls 10-15 and parents and husbands primarily address rape and forced marriage.

Perhaps because of the effect of maturity engendered by questions being asked during the group discussion, the youngest girls felt a need to take charge individually. "Girls have to protect themselves from violence by providing for their own safety," they said. "On the individual level, girls should anticipate violence and avoid dangerous places." "Girls have to try to know their partner better in order to minimize the risks of rape or corporal punishments," was the opinion of girls 16-22.

Parents and husbands recommended ending forced marriages, with religious support to mobilize the public. They also made specific recommendations, including an improvement in the level of girls' literacy and a search for solutions aimed at lightening the burden of domestic chores.

b. In the medium and long terms:

Girls 10-15 said that at the collective level, places girls perceived as dangerous should be identified and made safer, and the media should be used to increase awareness on the part of parents and males, who are chiefly responsible for acts of violence.

Girls 16-22 suggested that girls should be allowed to choose their husbands. To resolve the problem of rape, complaints should be filed with the competent authorities. Stoning rapists to death should be instituted as a punishment. The girls felt that in order to develop effective programs in this regard, it would be necessary to involve the judiciary, the local authorities (sub-prefect, village chief, president of the rural council), and the girls and boys. Awareness-raising marches could be organized. The girls should organize in groups to better assume control and to be able to request outside support.

Parents and husbands said that improvement in the economic conditions of the girls and the involvement of men in the implementation of development programs for women could contribute to resolving the problem of violence against girls.

The proposals for strategies and actions to combat all kinds of violence clearly show that the major concerns of the girls are rape and forced marriages. This concern warrants a belief that these two forms of violence are common and affect the girls deeply. The leaders seem not to have the same vision or the same feeling. For this reason the community consciousness-raising proposed by the girls should be preceded by discussions with the leaders and traditional leaders.



XI. SOCIAL MOBILIZATION IN FAVOR OF GIRLS

A. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO ENCOURAGE GIRLS

1. Evaluation of activities to benefit girls

Girls 16-22 believe that literacy is the best way of increasing knowledge. They suggest that priority be given to health, followed by economics, and then literacy.

The community leaders are favorable to initiatives to benefit girls. They recognize that girls are not taken sufficiently into account in community development initiatives. The leaders feel that priority should be given to education, then to health, and lastly to the economic aspect. "Education makes it possible to obtain information about health. It creates abilities that can be used in creating income-generating activities," according to the leaders.

2. Desire to participate

Girls 16-22 want to mobilize in support of such initiatives.

The community leaders intend to engage in community education to support initiatives to benefit girls.

B. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Girls 16-22 suggest the use of the media to increase awareness. In their opinion, the persons to be targeted for any campaign are the presidents of GPFs and the village chief.

Community leaders have proposed the use of audiovisual aids to raise the awareness level of the women in literacy classes. They feel it is important to forestall and fight moral decline. The solution they recommend is the establishment of a trade (sewing, dyeing) apprenticeship center. From their point of view, the persons to be targeted are the village chief, the persons in charge of the GPFs, the water borehole committee, the sub-prefect, and the chairman of the rural council.

The activities developed for the benefit of women in the community are viewed favorably by the various participants in the evaluation. The leaders seem to be paying attention to the situation of the women. This concern is revealed in their findings acknowledging that the women are not sufficiently involved in community development campaigns.

The leaders have often stated and reiterated that they intend to support any development initiative.

The proposed campaigns focus on raising awareness, education, and training of women.

The women give priority to health, while the men give priority to education. The reasons evoked by both groups are pertinent. A belief that education and health can constitute good points of entry for activities involving other aspects of development seems justifiable.