PASSAGES PROJECT

GRANDMOTHERS PROJECT-CHANGE THROUGH CULTURE: PROGRAM FOR GIRLS' HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Qualitative Research Report

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This document presents the results of a qualitative study carried out in September 2018 with the Grandmothers Project (GMP). This study is the product of a partnership between GMP and IRH, established with the goal of using a practical evaluation approach towards understanding the processes of change and the effectiveness of Girls Holistic Development/Développement Holistique des Filles (GHD), intended to improve adolescents' well-being. We are grateful to the participants in this study, who have given us their time, their reflections and their personal experiences. We are also grateful to GMP for their support with their review of the research tools, their assistance in facilitating access to the communities in which they are working, and their support throughout the duration of this research and this partnership. This report was written by Mathilde Guntzberger, Mohamadou Sall, and Anjalee Kohli, and translated from French and validated by Frederique Marty for GMP.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GHD	Girls Holistic Development (Développement Holistique des Filles)
GMP	The Grandmothers Project
IRH	Institute for Reproductive Health
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VYA	Very Young Adolescent Girls
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Grandmothers Project – Change through Culture (GMP) is a non-governmental American and Senegalese organization that develops innovative community change strategies that build on the specific structure and values of non-Western, collectivist cultures. In 2008, GMP developed and continues to implement the Girls' Holistic Development (GHD) Program in rural and urban areas in the Vélingara Department in Southern Senegal. GHD promotes change in culturally embedded social norms and practices related to girls' education, child marriage, extra marital teen pregnancy and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) by both empowering girls and creating an enabling environment where family and community actors support change for girls. GMP uses a *Change Through Culture* approach, which builds on culturally-defined values, roles, and resources to preserve positive cultural elements that are beneficial to girls while discouraging harmful ones.

In Vélingara, family and community systems are characterized by age, generational and gender hierarchies. Decision-making related to girls' development and wellbeing is collective in intergenerational families and girls have limited voice. Often decisions related to girls' education and marriage are made by adults and elders, and girls' opinions are not seriously considered. Elders in this setting include respected community members, men and women, who are considered sources of wisdom. In this setting, parents of adolescents have a high degree of authority over adolescents' mobility, social interactions and choices including whether to stay in school and when and whom to marry. Both parents and elders often use directive, top-down communication with adolescents. Compounding these generational divides, educational programs that ignore cultural values, new technologies, and social media all contribute to a growing rift between adolescents, adults, and elders. Traditionally, grandmothers and aunts had primary responsibility for the socialization of adolescent girls, but today their role and influence has diminished in spite of their strong commitment to girls' development and wellbeing. This breakdown in communication between generations and the limited communication between sexes creates a barrier to communication and decision making in general and for adolescent girls specifically.

To reduce child marriage, teen pregnancy, and FGM/C, and increase girls' school attendance, GMP's Change Through Culture methodology uses an inclusive and participatory approach. The approach requires strong respectful relationships between GMP staff and community actors to increase community confidence and engagement in the program. It involves adolescents, parents, elders, traditional community and religious leaders, local health workers and teachers in various dialogue-based activities to strengthen relationships and communication both between generations and between men and women. It increases social cohesion between community leaders and members, a prerequisite for collective action for girls. It restores the role of elders in communities and empowers grandmothers to be active allies of young girls. It strengthens relationships between girls, mothers, and grandmothers.

As part of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Passages Project, the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) at Georgetown University provided technical assistance through a Realist Evaluation approach to guide understanding and scale-up of GHD. GMP was beginning an expansion of GHD into seven villages in 2017, when the Passages/GMP collaboration began. This presented an opportunity to assess GHD impact using a mixed method, quasi-experimental design to explore how norms change processes work. Included in the program evaluation was an endline qualitative study that sought to understand the contextual characteristics and mechanisms of change that influence whether and how GHD achieves its objectives related to child marriage, early pregnancy, FGM/C, and girls' education. This English Executive Summary and accompanying French report focus on the qualitative inquiry in four of the intervention villages.

The qualitative study sought to answer four research questions:

(1) How did GHD influence behavior and intentions, individual and collective efficacy, and social norms related to project outcomes?

(2) How did GHD influence inter and intra-generational communication, and the role and respect community members give to grandmothers?

(3) How did GHD influence girls' efficacy, the collective agency of grandmothers and communities, social cohesion, and collective action for GHD?

(4) How did the program mechanisms of change vary by village, participant type and exposure to the intervention?

METHODS

As part of the Passages/GMP collaboration in Vélingara, an endline qualitative study was conducted in four of the seven intervention villages. The four villages were selected to capture variation in population size. The study consisted of in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) in each site, with very young adolescent girls (VYA) (total: 16 IDI; 4 FGD), grandmothers that represented leaders in the community (total: 16 IDI; 4 FGD), mothers and fathers of VYA (total: 16 IDI; 4 FGD) and community leaders and influential community members (total: 4 FGD). Participants were purposively selected to include those with a range of engagement with the program. The number of interviews and FGD per site were selected to capture a range of experiences, perceptions and behaviors. Given the size of the villages and their proximity, one FGD per village was considered sufficient to reach saturation. IDI and FGD included discussion on GHD activities and explored the role, relationships and communication within and across generations and the changes in social norms and practices related to adolescent girls early marriage, extra marital teen pregnancy, FGM/C and girls education.

Interviews were conducted by trained interviewers managed by the Université Cheikh Ante Diop in Dakar, Senegal. All interviewers participated in a 5-day training that included research ethics, consent, confidentiality, study protocol, and IDI and FGD guides. The study was reviewed and approved by Georgetown University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Senegal Ministry of Health IRB. Interviews were conducted in Pulaar, the local language. All IDI and FGD were audio recorded, and simultaneously transcribed and translated into French. A different interviewer and the supervisor performed quality checks comparing the audio recording to the transcription.

Thematic analysis was used to understand the contextual characteristics and mechanisms of change related to the GHD theory of change. Analysis started with a full review of a subset of transcripts and documentation of key themes identified during this reading. Key themes were those discussed in interviews or FGDs that were considered important (e.g., by being raised across transcripts, emphasized in the interview/FGD), where there was consensus or disagreement. Following this, key themes were reviewed and further developed to reflect the research questions and mechanisms of change described in the theory of change. Coding and analysis took place in NVivo.

RESULTS

Community view/perception of Girls' Holistic Development approach

In the Vélingara area where the GHD program is implemented, in Halpular culture, collectivist values orient family and community life. Interviewees expressed their profound concern with the rise of individualism and their enthusiasm for GHD which has acknowledged the experience and influence of traditional leaders, revived positive cultural values, created stronger bonds, and increased social capital in their communities. Communities expressed strong appreciation of the participatory and dialogue-based approach, which involves all segments of the community and is respectful of everyone's opinions. All ages and leadership expressed support for the culturally-grounded approach of GHD, in particular women who appreciated the approach and how it created space for discussion and to have their opinions heard. They noted the value GHD placed on local cultural roles and traditions and described this as an entry point for establishing community trust in and engagement with the GHD team. They compared the GHD approach to other interventions that impose foreign values and do not consult communities on their project approach.

The goal of the dialogue-based approach was to promote change in social norms. Many participants described the approach as a platform for the community to discuss problems, including norms and practices that are harmful for VYA and to identify their own solutions through consensus building, for example, on how to prevent child marriage. According to interviewees, decision-making in both families and communities has become more inclusive, more participatory, and more gender-equitable.

Changes in relationships in families and communities

Adolescents, parents, and grandmothers frequently stated that the GHD dialogue approach has improved various facets of relationships and communication within families and communities. They particularly pointed out increased understanding in families between parents and adolescents, guided by mutual respect and the use of more open, non-violent communication even when there is disagreement. Fathers have changed their approach to decision-making and listen to the opinions of other family members, including VYA— for example, those related to marriage of their daughters and their schooling. Girls stated that they now have more confidence to express themselves, and to advocate for their desires, and that their fathers consider their opinions before making decisions on their behalf.

Prior to GHD, community members and grandmothers themselves considered grandmothers as outdated elders who promoted conservative values and did not understand present day life. Through the GHD approach that considered grandmothers as agents of change, community members, including VYA, gained newfound respect for grandmothers. The value of grandmothers in the community and within families was uplifted with many interviewees referring to them as counselors, advisors, and guardians of history and culture. Grandmothers also reported feeling more confident in their relationships with parents and adolescents, feeling more valued and able to contribute to adolescent education, both in communities and in schools. Grandmothers regained their privileged role and trust in their relationships with young girls by spending more time with them, using their cultural knowledge, storytelling, riddles, and songs, to increase communication with them on topics including reproductive health.

The training received by grandmothers improved their knowledge of adolescent development, including reproductive health, and increased their confidence to discuss these topics with young girls and with mothers. Girls are often more comfortable talking with grandmothers than with their mothers and reported seeking advice from grandmothers who then advocate in families on their behalf on issues like child marriage. Grandmothers have used this newfound role to advocate for girls having fewer domestic chores so they can spend more time on homework, staying in school for longer, and not getting married before finishing school. Relationships between young girls, mothers, and grandmothers have been strengthened through the intergenerational dialogue creating alliances between three generations of women.

Changes in Social Norms and Behaviors

Child Marriage

When asked to describe the decisions to support early marriage for girls, parents and community members explained that it was linked to a desire to prevent girls from being sexually active before marriage and, particularly, to prevent pre-marital pregnancy. Family honor and respect in the community is directly tied to their daughters being seen as honorable, defined in part as a respectable girl who protected her virginity and had limited interactions with boys and men. Social norms to protect family honor and respect include expectations that parents will restrict girls' time in public spaces where they may encounter boys including school settings and social sanctions for the girl and her family when she deviates from expected practice. Early marriage and taking post-puberty girls out of school are parental efforts to avoid pre-marital pregnancy, even when girls are doing well in school and are not pursuing intimate relationships. In addition, social norms typically, limit the voice of women and girls in deciding when and whom girls should marry. Fathers are the ultimate decision makers for this, often in consultation with older male family members. As communication increased across age and gender groups due to GHD, mothers, fathers, grandmothers and girls described having

conversations about girls' marriage, including being able to state when they disagreed with the timing of the marriage. Grandmothers and girls were able to voice and advocate for their opinion with the girls' father on when and with whom girls should marry and to seek support from others family members in favor of delaying marriage of young girls. Fathers maintained their role as final decision makers, but are now more willing to listen to the opinions of other family actors, particularly women, and in many cases to shift their decision accordingly.

Through participation in GHD, grandmothers stated that the community perception and practice of child marriage is changing for the better (towards delayed marriage), with many people raising concern of reproductive health risks associated with girls' pregnancy at a young age. Other participants agreed that parents have become concerned about the health risks of pregnancy at young ages for girls but thought that child marriages had not yet decreased. Instead, some describe a shifting practice whereby parents agree to the marital engagement of their young daughters and only finalize the marriage and send them to their marital home once they complete their schooling. Families in this community do not register marriage unless the child is 18 years or older at marriage. As a result, it is difficult to know precisely if child marriage is continuing when we look at these marriage registers.

Extra marital teen pregnancy

According to Peuhl traditions, girls who become pregnant out of marriage are considered disrespectable, as are their families. Due in part to GHD activities and a national government campaign to keep girls in school, many parents, grandmothers, and girls described support for the idea that girls should complete their schooling and wait to marry when they are older. Yet they also described a tension between shifting norms on girls' education and child marriage and existing traditions that value girls' virginity. School was seen by families as a place for girls to meet and spend time with boys, risking their sexual purity. In order to reconcile their increased support for girls' education and delayed marriage with concerns of preserving girls' sexual purity, parents and grandmothers now exert greater control over girls' mobility to prevent interaction between boys and girls. From girls' and grandmothers' descriptions, this control on girls' mobility is not experienced negatively, as girls are motivated to stay in school and they enjoy spending more time with their grandmothers sharing stories and doing homework. Parents expressed relief in a perceived decline in early pregnancy with girls increasingly continuing their schooling and postponing marriage.

Girls Education

Participants of all ages described increased belief in the value of education for children and specifically for girls. Previously, it was normal for children to miss school when parents needed help harvesting crops. Parents described their own transition from dismissing school as unimportant and not necessary for girls to seeing the value of girls' education as a road for them to have access to better jobs and income. As a result, though girls were traditionally expected to be heavily involved in housework, mothers have decreased domestic tasks assigned to their daughters to allow them to have more time for studying. Parents most often perceived the value of school when their children were doing well in school.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

In Vélingara, after a 1999 law was passed outlawing FGM/C, many communities that practice FGM/C continued the practice using strategies that kept it hidden from public view. For example, before the law, most girls underwent FGM/C during adolescence; now the ceremony is performed during infancy as it is easier to keep it secret. Therefore, though GHD works to shift community norms on FGM/C, it would not be possible to see this change in this study because girls are cut as infants. When asked about FGM/C in the community, some participants noted that FGM/C had started to decline as people were concerned about the negative consequences of FGM/C, including health consequences for babies who undergo the practice, and the longer-term

complications for women who have been cut during childbirth. By working across generations with men and women, GHD engaged both those who influence decision-making on FGM/C – men, religious and community leaders – and those that participate in or conduct FGM/C ceremonies – grandmothers. Though participants described some shift in attitudes and norms on FGM/C, the qualitative interview did not focus on this outcome as extensively as on other issues and cannot validate whether a decline in FGM/C or norms shift has in fact taken place.

CONCLUSION

The GHD approach is grounded in local cultural roles and values. The cultural dimension of GHD was very significant to communities in a time when these communities are acutely concerned about the loss of cultural values and identity. Throughout the qualitative research, community members expressed deep appreciation for the GHD approach, describing it as reflecting the values and traditions that are important to communities.

The GHD approach is working to build social cohesion a prerequisite for collective decision-making for change in favor of girl's development and wellbeing. GHD aims to create an enabling environment around girls where positive traditions are preserved and harmful ones are changed. The GHD strategy creates spaces for dialogue and consensus building between elders, adults, and adolescents, as well as between men and women to promote community-wide change in social norms related to girls' education, child marriage, extra marital teen pregnancy, and FGM/C. This inclusive strategy has contributed to increased communication, understanding, and respect between gender and between age groups. Participants expressed that their opinion and values were considered by adult men and women individually and in community forum. Their opinions were considered important to discussing and making decisions including girls' education and marriage. Girls expressed increased confidence to express their ideas in family and community contexts and noted the importance of the increased support they are now receiving from grandmothers. The study suggests that grandmothers can leave behind old norms and adopt new ones that promote the well-being of girls.

The effects of GHD, according to respondents, are that attitudes and actions towards girls are shifting. This study demonstrated progress in shifting norms, especially norms related to girls schooling and child marriage. This results in girls staying in school and marrying later, though they still may be engaged to their future husband during adolescence. The value given to girls schooling has increased, though parents and elders expressed concern about girls becoming pregnant at young ages due to increased exposure to and time with boys at school. Qualitatively, parents perceive that rates of pregnancy outside of marriage as stable or decreasing even as girls remained in school for longer. Spending time at home with grandmothers and in the family was considered protective for girls. Finally, parents and grandmothers perceived a decline in FGM/C. Overall, the qualitative data provided strong support for the GMP mechanisms of change described in the program theory of change. There was evidence of attitudes, norms, and behavior change. Exploring these findings in conjunction with the quantitative study findings will enhance understanding of whether and how GMP achieves change on social norms and behaviors. The study has important learnings for programming to advance girls' development and wellbeing globally. Analysis of the GHD intervention supports the idea that programs seeking to advance the well-being of VYA girls should consider how to strengthen intergenerational and gender relations. Development programs seeking to advance the well-being of VYA girls may benefit from considering how to strengthen intergenerational and gender relationships.

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

African societies in general, and Senegalese societies in particular, have always been based upon hierarchical structures which consider age, gender, and social status. In most cases, elders have authority over younger family members, older children over younger children, men over women, and nobles over commoners, although, over time, this tradition has been progressively declining. This hierarchical system defines obligations and accords power and rights to some family and community members over others. This authority includes the power to give a girl away for a pre-arranged marriage, and to decide whether to send a child to school or to take her/him out of school. Similarly, the right to speak is noteworthy. Roulon-Doko (2008) has discussed the right to speak in African societies: "Speech, when used as a manifestation of power relations, results in avoidance procedures, limitations to the right of speech, and even a ban on speaking at all."; “Within a very hierarchical society, the more power one has, the more powerful one's words become.”

However, in their march towards modernity, these societies are undergoing far-reaching changes that call into question the hierarchical bases on which they were built. This has resulted in a serious dilemma.

This is because, on the one hand, these societies have always valued or even venerated birthright. Attané (2011) discusses the works of Claude Maillassoux (1994), who illustrated how birthright is an institution that establishes a link between authority and age. She explains that, "West African societies have long been characterized as being gerontocratic. For example, men from the oldest generations and some of the older women made many decisions which concerned the younger members of their society” (Attané, 2011).

In these societies, an elder is the custodian of age-old knowledge, which is transmitted, sometimes jealously, from generation to generation. Amadou Hampathé Ba, a well-known man of Peuhl culture, said that in Africa, "when an old man dies, it is like a library that has burned down" (A.H. Ba, personal communication, n.d.).

In Peuhl societies, it is often said that "an elder who is sitting down can see what a younger person, who is standing, cannot see." In other words, an elder is a culmination of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that can protect and promote the health and well-being of children and adolescents.

At the same time, the transformations brought about by urbanization, education and the popularization of new technologies, which have affected Senegalese societies, have progressively isolated elders and diminished their influence. In his doctoral dissertation about the elders, Lamesse (2013) evokes the erosion of the prestige or status that was formerly accorded to an elderly person: "In this regard, the elder was given a privileged position for the services he or she had provided to the community. Today, however, it is clear that the privileges enjoyed by the elders have been put to the test by the weakening of the foundations of Senegalese society.”

At the heart of this dilemma lie the questions regarding the position that should be reserved for elders, the social status they should be given, how their knowledge and know-how can be used effectively, and which mechanisms can be used to transmit this knowledge and know-how.

It seems that in order for these elders to carry out their roles in sharing their knowledge and using it for the benefit of children and adolescents, they need to be recognized, valued, and given social legitimacy.

There is, in fact, a discrepancy between the recognition of a person's wisdom and virtues, and the fact that he or she is given a certain degree of legitimacy to carry out certain actions within the community. Moreover, one of the greatest specialists on Peuhl culture, Daniele Kintz (1999), discusses this aspect of gerontocracy: "Gerontocracy can be just as formal as democracy. The power of elders can be manifested, glorified but not implemented. This is what often happens with chieftainships based upon lineage."

Before the arrival of the Grandmothers Project (GMP), the Peuhl communities of the Nemataba area were typical examples of where people recognized the virtues, experience, and wisdom of a gerontocracy which

was unable to play its full role in society because of certain perceptions associated with it. The gerontocracy in question is that of the grandmothers.

The challenge faced by GMP was to unleash this potential by building on the cultural lever that grandmothers represent, in order to change the social norms by putting them in charge of protecting and promoting the health and well-being of children and adolescents. This was a huge challenge, both in terms of its objectives and approach.

Indeed, success is not guaranteed when using this cultural lever to carry out changes in societies such as those in Nemataba, because these societies, made up of two sub-groups of Puelh, Peulh Foulbé, and Peulh Foulacounda, both which are very rigid and attached to their traditions and customs, in the same way as are other Peuhl societies in Senegal. It is through the use of these traditions and customs that they preserve and protect themselves, by maintaining and transmitting their authenticity and their identity - to put it in a nutshell, their philosophy called *pulaagu*.[1] The *pulaagu* is the art of being Peulh. In many socio-anthropological works (Dupire, 1970; Breedveld & Bruijn, 1996), the *pulaagu* is described as both a moral and social code.

GMP, in seeking to promote certain cultural values and practices, identified those that it considers to be beneficial, and those that that are not. Furthermore, GMP's approach involves asking community members themselves to select the beneficial and not beneficial values and practices. The adopted approach is far from being an easy endeavor.

In addition, GMP's approach involves using grandmothers as agents of change in order to bring about certain changes related to adolescent health and well-being. Traditionally, grandmothers played an important role in the education and protection of adolescents and helped to establish channels of communication between parents and their children.[2] They are usually the strongest defenders of traditions and customs concerning women's and children's issues, among others. The traditions and customs valued by these communities include socio-demographic factors such as early marriage, early fertility, high parity, and FGM/C. In addition, as agents of change, their legitimacy may be questioned, especially by adolescents. Indeed, even if it is recognized that they have experience, knowledge, and know-how, and that they are affectionate towards their grandchildren, grandmothers are nevertheless not often considered as being the right people to communicate with teenage girls for two reasons. First, grandmothers can be considered to be old-fashioned and unable to understand the ambitions of teenage girls and young people in general. Second, grandmothers were traditionally feared because of their association with witchcraft, and children were often advised to avoid their grandmothers (Baliguini). Therefore, marginalization started within the family. The accusation of witchcraft often means that the accused person prefers to maintain his/her distance from other people. This has resulted in self-marginalization and means that grandmothers may not dare to approach their granddaughters. This marginalization has been observed in other Sahelian societies. In his thesis entitled, *Yaab-rãmba: an anthropology of ageing people in Ouagadougou* (Burkina Faso), Rouamba (2015) discusses "social exclusion following the accusation of witchcraft."

The importance of culture in improving living conditions and the physical and mental well-being of individuals has been clearly acknowledged. During the World Health Organization (WHO) conference in Ottawa in 1986, priority attention was given to the importance of communities' cultural values as a critical element in the promotion of good health.

It is assumed that within the cultural context in which GMP is working, there are valuable endogenous socio-cultural structures and mechanisms which promote the well-being and health of adolescent girls, as well as the overall development of the villages concerned. These structures and mechanisms can be considered to be protective factors.

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[1] In the literature, we also find the term *Pulaaku*. However, the appropriate term is *Pulaagu*.

[2] In Cheikh Hamidou Kane literature, the Ambiguous Adventure that talks about the role of GMs within the family and community as being "guardians of the temple."

In West Africa, Peuhl societies are among those which are the most attached to their traditions and cultures. In Senegal, they are characterized by certain highly valued socio-demographic factors such as early marriage, high parity, endogamy, polygamy, and the perpetuation of certain types of marital union such as levirate and sororate marriages.[3] According to a report by the 2017 Continuous Demographic and Health Survey (ANSD & ICF, 2018) the nuptiality calendar shows that the earliest marriages take place in the Kolda Region, which includes Némataba Commune, and Kédougou Region. In this region, among married women between 20 and 49 years of age, the median age for first marriage was 17, as compared with 19.9 years for Saint-Louis Region in the north. Similarly, in the Kolda region there is the highest proportion of women aged from 15 to 49 who have a co-wife (34.7%). The national average is estimated at 25.6%. In other words, one in three women of reproductive age have a co-wife. Fertility is also high: the total fertility rate (TFR) is 5.5 children per woman, compared to a national average of 4.5 children per woman. Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a common practice in the Kolda region. Two out of three, or 63.6%, women have undergone FGM/C, as compared to the estimated national average of 24%.

Traditionally, in Peuhl societies, women's place was at home, and the future of any girl depended on her finding a husband, preferably at a young age. These socio-demographic realities were not compatible with girls pursuing an education, with schools considered to be an institution that promotes anti-values. The perpetuation of these attitudes and practices was ensured by the social norms that would need to be changed if the holistic development of girls and of their communities is to come about.

It should be noted that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government programs have promoted changes in social norms related to girls' rights and well-being, however, the strategies and methods used to do so have often not been very effective, because there was not strong support for them from the communities they aimed to help. It appears that one of the major reasons for this lack of support for many community change strategies is that they have not sufficiently taken into account socio-cultural realities. In reference to this limitation of development projects in black Africa, Assogba (1993) notes that: "In general, the orientation and practices of rural development in Africa most often reflect ignorance of the social realities within the interventions sites and, above all, a misunderstanding of the social, economic, or technical reasoning prevalent in the communities that one wants to 'develop.'"

Another reason is linked to the fact that certain paradigms can compromise the success of the intervention from the start. These compromising suppositions include the idea that culture is often a barrier which prevents programs from achieving their objectives.

Moreover, some projects have been criticized as being somewhat sectarian by neglecting certain categories of community members, such as older people, who are considered to be obstacles to program implementation. Friedman (1999) discusses these approaches, which he maintains can, in fact, contribute to further reinforcing divisions within communities: "This risks diminishing the respect young people have for the primary source of their cultural heritage - their families. This, in turn, can drive a wedge between younger and older people and result in a loss of self-esteem in both groups - the older because they are made to feel inadequate, and the younger because they feel they are inherently disadvantaged."

For example, grandmothers in Nemataba have always felt marginalized by the various projects implemented there, one after the other. For example, they did not appreciate programs where field workers only work closely with "bama jjis" (young girls) and "cemedallis" (women), while leaving them out.

GIRLS' HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM – THE GRANDMOTHERS PROJECT (GMP)

GMP is an American and Senegalese NGO that promotes change in social norms by building on existing

[3] Marriages where, respectively, a widow is expected to marry her husband's brother, and a widower is expected to marry his wife's sister.

culturally designated roles and values. It assumes that culture is the foundation of all community life and that it constitutes the frame of reference for all individual and collective practices and actions. It is, therefore, a legitimizing framework on the basis of which individuals and communities think and act. GMP also postulates that in African cultures, there are very positive values, elements, and structures that should be acknowledged and that can contribute to solving societal problems that affect communities. It is a question of reconciling tradition and modernity: "These educational practices do, indeed, uphold tradition and modernity. The supervision of children and young people remains restricted on grounds relating to ethnicity and lineage; schooling incorporates traditional parameters of education: awareness of belonging to a group, acceptance of the community and its expectations; early and lifelong learning of one's occupation and social status, knowledge of history, legends, and myths" (Vieille-Grosjean, 1999).

Girls Holistic Development/Développement Holistique des Filles (GHD) began in 2008 as an implementation-research project in Velingara, Senegal, to improve the community's ability to promote the health and well-being of girls. Target outcomes include reducing the rate of child marriage, early pregnancy, and FGM/C, and increasing girls' school attendance rate through GMP's culturally grounded methodology. GMP's Change through Culture' approach explicitly involves elders, and grandmothers, thereby elevating their traditional role while creating opportunities for dialogue and reflection.

This fosters the creation of an environment in which ideas and solutions identified by the community may be discussed in order to promote the health and well-being of adolescent girls. The intervention begins with a quick assessment of the roles, cultural values, traditions, and communication within the community, followed by a series of activities in communities and schools. The majority of these are based on inter-generational dialogue with the following objectives: to strengthen social cohesion and cultural values (for example, through inter-generational forums, Days of Praise of Grandmothers, and training of grandmother leaders); to foster the holistic development of girls (for instance, via discussion sessions between women, girls, and grandmothers and girl-grandmother 'under the tree' non-formal education sessions; and reinforcing positive cultural and educational values and teachings (by means of teacher-grandmother workshops, grandmothers giving presentations to classes, and using books on positive cultural values). The activities of the GHD program are designed to be participatory and bottom-up, and if social mobilization works well, activities will also be initiated by the community. Previous examples of community-based initiatives include traditional games for boys and men, as well as storytelling-evenings for boys and girls.

A REALIST EVALUATION

Under the Passages Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) at Georgetown University provides technical assistance using a Realist Evaluation approach to analyze two normative change interventions in the area of reproductive health. The GHD program under the GMP was one of the two programs chosen in 2006 by Passages' Technical Expert Group to benefit from Passages technical support for two years. GHD is a community-based intervention which aims to strengthen social cohesion and community mobilization centered on normative change. Strategies to achieve this include the capacity building of grandmothers and inter-generational dialogue for the health and positive development of adolescent girls. The intervention employs various activities, including training grandmother leaders, inter-generational dialogue forums, grandmother and teacher training and days paying tribute to grandmothers, in order to foster an environment in which detrimental social norms that affect Very Young Adolescent Girls (VYA) - child marriage, FGM/C, teenage pregnancy and prioritization of boys' education - can be discussed and challenged. In so doing, the intervention aims to instigate normative changes within the community with the potential abandonment of harmful practices.

Realist Evaluation involves developing and testing the program's theory of change through an iterative process that includes repeated program analysis and data reviews. The objective is to evaluate existing evidence that can support the theory of change. Although focused on the expected results of the program,

this approach places emphasis on the implementation process and the context in which the intervention is implemented. A theory of change was developed with the GMP program team and stakeholders, as illustrated in Figure 1.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of the proposed study was to qualitatively examine the key contextual underlying features and mechanisms by which GHD interventions are expected to influence outcomes, including child marriage, early pregnancy, retention of girls in school, FGM/C, and girls' autonomy. In this regard, we think of girls' autonomy as a collective notion grounded in family and community relationships, not simply in terms of individual independence. This is intentional and in line with GMP's perspective on autonomy; to be precise, this is defined by how collectivist cultures view the concept of autonomy. The findings of the study are to be used to confirm and/or refine the theory of change brought about by GHD intervention (Figure 1) and, in a related way, to ensure that normative change mechanisms are controlled for implementation fidelity at the time of implementation during the extension phase of the GHD intervention. The results will guide the questions used in the planned end-of-extension study, a quantitative study to measure the impact of the GHD intervention on expected outcomes of the program. They will also form part of the global knowledge of the influence of social norm interventions at the individual and community levels on individual health-related behaviors.

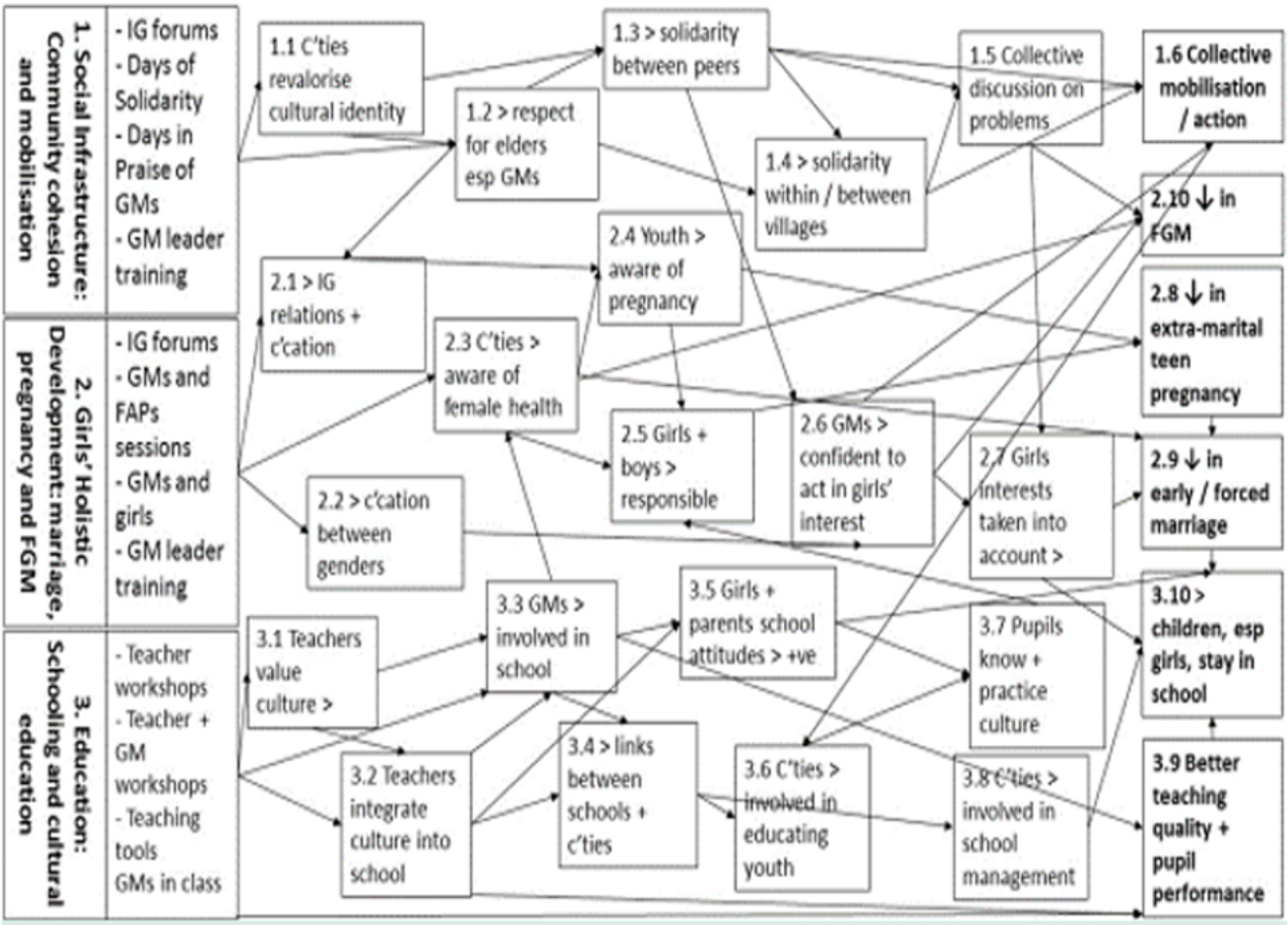

Figure 1 | A theory of change brought about by GHD

The objectives were as follows:

Objective 1: To provide qualitative data to corroborate/fine-tune the theory of change in the GHD approach, especially by highlighting key contextual features and mechanisms of change related to outcomes of the program;

Objective 2: To contribute to the efforts of the GHD approach by monitoring implementation accuracy during the extension phase;

Objective 3: To determine questions for a quantitative study at the end of the extension phase in order to measure the impact of the GHD intervention on the anticipated outcomes of the program;

Objective 4: To contribute to global knowledge on the influence of social norm interventions at individual and community levels on individual health-related behaviors.

The following research questions address the context and mechanisms of change related to the GHD's target behaviors, including: child marriage, teen pregnancy, retention of girls in school, and girls' autonomy.

1. How does the GHD intervention influence individual behaviors, intentions, and self-efficacy, as well as social norms linked to key social and health outcomes targeted by the intervention?
2. **(a)** How does the GHD intervention influence communication?

   (b) How does the GHD intervention influence the value and role of grandmothers within the community?
3. **(a)** How does the GHD intervention influence girls' individual autonomy, the collective agency of grandmothers and the community, social cohesion, and collective action?

   (b) How does social cohesion in the community influence social norms?
4. Do the mechanisms of change (study questions 1-3) vary according to local contexts, target populations, and/or the level of exposure to GHD intervention? How do they vary?

METHODOLOGY

This is an interdisciplinary, qualitative and descriptive study conducted in four of the seven villages in which the GHD intervention is currently being implemented. Individual interviews and focus group discussions, related to the research questions, will be conducted with persons and groups representing various target groups and perspectives, including:

- VYA;
- Grandmothers who have been identified by their peer groups as leaders in the community;
- Parents of VYA;
- Community leaders and other influential members of the community.

These different targets groups were also divided according to whether they were involved in GMP. For example, one grandmother involved is a respected grandmother, well-known among her peers, who volunteers and actively engages in various activities and is also tasked with relaying information to the village. Such individuals are chosen based on their leadership in the village and/or the fundamental values society idealizes, and which they embody.

A total of 20 focus groups and 48 individual interviews were carried out during this study, which can be sub-divided as follow

Table 1. Size of the sample by participant group			
Technical Research	**Target Population**	**# total of the 4 sites**	**# total participants**
Individual Interview	* VYA (between 10 and 14 years old) (engaged with directly and indirectly)	16	16
	* Grandmother Leaders/Grandmothers (engaged with directly and indirectly	16	16
	* Parents of VYA (between 10 and 14 years old (engaged with directly and indirectly)	16 (8 mothers/8 fathers)	16
Groups for Focused Discussion	VYA	4	25
	Grandmother Leaders	4	23
	Mothers of VYA Leaders	4	26
	Fathers of VYA Leaders	4	15
	Community leaders	4	25
* The participants of the individual interviews did not make up any part of the focused discussion groups.			

The study was conducted in four of the seven villages targeted by the GHD intervention: Némataba, Kouméra, Saré Yira, and Bagayoko. At the time of the study, Némataba was the largest of the intervention villages. Kouméra is equally large but much less densely populated than Némataba. The two smallest villages are Saré Yira and Bagayoko, both on the Gambian border.

The issues researched in the study deal with implementation of GHD and the effects of the program, i.e. the mechanisms of change described in the program's theory of change (Figure 1) and the assessment questions. The topics for investigation were as follows: social norms; individual and collective behaviors, attitudes, self-efficacy, and individual and collective communication; and the relationships between these parameters and how they relate to the expected outcomes of the program concerning child marriage, teenage pregnancy, keeping girls at school, FGM/C, and girls' autonomy. These topics of interest were identified through the available literature, by those responsible for the implementation of the GHD program and through results of several earlier studies carried out by GMP.

The target groups for the study, listed in Table 1, included those directly and indirectly involved in and affected by GHD activities. Through individual and focus group interviews the interviewees responded to questions related to the different research topics, thereby providing multiple perspectives on those topics. Community leaders provided additional information on the community dynamics that were supposed to

influence and be influenced by the intervention. In addition, the results of the qualitative methods were used to formulate and fine-tune the subsequent quantitative assessment of program impact.

Individual interviews (with young girls, grandmothers, mothers, fathers, and leaders) addressed the following issues:

- Their perceptions of grandmothers' activities and their degree of involvement in them
- The role of grandmothers with young girls
- Changes in grandmothers' perceptions since the start of the program
- *Perceptions of grandmothers compared to other adults* (fathers, mothers, teachers) using index cards describing the characteristics of people (attentive, wise, intelligent, judgmental/punisher, a little frightening, cheerful, includes girls my age, strong, kind, trustworthy). Blank cards are available to note down additional characteristics).
- Vignettes (fictional stories to demonstrate):
  - a) the self-efficacy of young adolescent girls at school; and
  - b) the reduction of social pressure to marry early.

Vignette A. Khadiatou's story

One pleasant Wednesday afternoon, Khadiatou comes back from school. She finishes helping her sister with chores. Then, she and her brother begin doing their homework. Khadiatou has a math test tomorrow. She is a bit uncertain about division and really needs to study. However, her mother asks her to go shopping for some oil to prepare dinner. This takes her at least an hour to do because the only shop in the village is a considerable distance away and she does not have the chance to prepare for her test. She really wants to get a good grade for this assessment.

Questions

1. What does Khadiatou feel when she is asked to go to the pharmacy? What is her initial reaction? What does Khadiatou do in this situation? What could she do differently (Try to find out if she will talk about it with someone/who? What other courses of action could be taken?)
2. Before the GHD activities were undertaken (whose formulation is defined by the staff of GMP), do you think that Khadiatou would react differently? What would she have done?
3. What do you think you could do yourself? If you would react differently from Khadiatou, can you explain further?

Vignette B. Khady's story

It is a Friday afternoon after prayer and Khady is relaxing at home. Her older sister, who is visiting, is braiding her hair. She starts talking about the month in which she got married and all the preparations involved. She was only 15 at the time of the marriage. She had hoped to have reached a more mature age. She asks Khady when she wants to get married and start a family. Likewise, she says that she has heard their father say to a neighbor that it is time that Khady got married.

Questions

1. How does Khady feel when she hears this information?
2. What would she have said to her older sister? What would she have said differently? (Try to find out if she will talk about it with someone/who? What other courses of action could be taken?)
3. Before the GHD activities (whose formulation is defined by GMP staff), do you think that this story would have had a different ending? What would have Khady done?
4. What do you think you would be able to do yourself? If you would react differently from Khady, can you explain further?

The interviews and focus groups were conducted by five female investigators/research assistants holding at least a master's degree in sociology. Of these five, one was completing a PhD in sociology, another a master's degree in population, development and reproductive health and another, a degree in social work. All spoke fluent Pular.

In preparation for this study, a protocol was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Health of Senegal and concurrently to the Ethics Committee of IRH. Both Committees issued a favorable opinion. Obtaining consent from adults (grandmothers and parents) was standard practice. In the case of adolescent girls, their parents or guardians had to provide prior consent for their children to participate in the study. This authorization was supplemented by consent given by the girl interviewees, even though the Ethics Committee of the Ministry of Health of Senegal only deemed parental consent necessary. The consent forms were read to the individual by the investigator. After agreement, they were signed in duplicate. One of the forms was given to the participant and the other retained by the investigator who would return it each evening for archiving.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the interviews and focus group discussions were fully transcribed, verbatim and anonymously, the researcher carried out an initial exploratory examination of the data on a first sample of interviews in order to identify the main themes (thematic analysis) pertaining to the stated research questions. Categories emerging from the data were first listed descriptively (using NVivo) and compared to elements of the (initial and revised) Theory of Change of the GHD program. Secondly, the researcher coded the data utilizing certain themes stemming from the analysis grid developed for the program (ToC), which were ranked and grouped into 4 broad sets, as follows:

- Components and elements of the GHD program strategy
- Observed changes in norms and practices in force
- Individual changes: skills, knowledge and abilities
- Collective changes

The data analysis focused primarily on understanding the change processes described by the interviewees in order to determine the different factors, interactions and conditions that contributed to those changes.

RESULTS

THE PROJECT STRATEGY

Strengthening social cohesion

Dialogue has brought unity to the community.

> "*If only one person wants to knock down a large tree, he will be tired before cutting it down. But if they are numerous, if each person goes to one side, in no time, the tree will fall. This shows the value of agreement, solidarity, and social cohesion" (Mother, Bakayoko).*

Intergenerational dialogue, one of the central components of the program, and which was received with great enthusiasm by communities, enabled participants to feel a stronger bond with their group and led to an increase in participants' social capital: "Now we are close and no one is afraid of other anymore." The main benefit of this intervention, focused on bringing individuals from the same community together, was to strengthen family and community ties, a significant consequence in the context of a rural society characterized by a collectivist way of doing things. In this cultural context, the fate of individuals is inextricably linked to that of the group. The approach adopted by the program to build solidarity and social cohesion responds to a strong aspiration held by the people interviewed. They expressed considerable regret regarding the disintegration of the social fabric in society which they attributed to the rise of individualism:

> "*Before, if there was a wedding or baptism, we informed the whole family, but today, with modernity, it's everyone for themselves. With the arrival of the project, there is no longer that, we involve everyone, young people, grandmothers, we give thanks to God" (Father, Koumera).*

> *"With the divisive behaviors which were rampant in our village, we saw people who didn't communicate with each other for four or five years. We didn't think the situation could improve, but thanks to God and to this project, it did. It has been a breath of fresh air! Through discussion, people have remedied a lot of misunderstanding in these villages" (Grandmother, Koumera).*

Participants noticed a change both in their own behaviors and in those of others; they also appreciate having better neighborly relations where they can more easily approach their neighbors:

"If a member of the village has concerns, the whole village helps that person and each in his own way" (Father, Saré Yira).

"Since the project arrived, it has brought us development and understanding, strengthening the ties, solidarity, and love of our neighbor; it also motivated us to visit one another and be more aware of the situation of others" (*Father, Bakayoko*).

The various gatherings arranged by the project made it possible to instill a sense of conviviality which seemed forgotten before:

"*The people of the village have become more courteous because they visit each other now, they meet and discuss" (Teenage girl, Bakayoko).*

The Days of Praise of Grandmothers have brought the community together:

"But now (...) if there is a ceremony, everyone is called to it. Everyone is there; grandfathers, grandmothers, teenage girls, teenage boys, married or single, children. When everyone comes to attend, you feel that a communal sense of honor is responsible. Before, we didn't have that honor, but now we know that things have changed, and it is the Grandmothers Project that brought us this change. Yes" (Grandmother, Kouméra).

Some participants also mentioned the difficulty of meeting without financial compensation. The program was able to overcome this obstacle.

"The most dreaded thing here in this village was to get together to discuss. This is something we really missed. Whenever we were called for a meeting, if there was no payment, we refused to attend" (Community leader, Bakayoko).

Some participants stated that the program has revived genuine social relationships in the community:

"That is to say that before, when a guest came to see us, we hoped that he would bring us something like money, otherwise, we would not engage in discussion" (Community leader, Nemataba).[4]

Intergenerational dialogue promoted by GMP has increased communication within families and between neighbors.

The GHD dialogue-based approach has promoted respect for the opinions of all community actors

Interviewees especially expressed praise for the participatory approach, based on dialogue and respect for everyone's opinions, used by the GHD team members. They stated that this has contributed to both communities' acceptance and sense of ownership of the program. Women interviewees specifically pointed out that in GHD their opinions were really taken into account in the program, and that in this sense it differed from the approach used in other programs in which ideas, coming from elsewhere, were imposed on them.

"*In the past, when other projects came to our community, their field workers would explain the reason they had come. If you agree, that's it, and if not, they would get up and leave. But with these people (of the GHD team) they ask us to meet and to discuss. They sit with us and they use a soft tone of voice and we discuss. This is why we no longer are fearful. This is not the same as in past projects where they would come just to tell us what they wanted" (Mother, Saré Yira).*

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4 Per diems given by NGOs in exchange for voluntary mobilization of community members for a project.

The participants describe the benefits they have derived from sharing ideas with others during the various dialogical gatherings organized by the program. They also explained how these gatherings provided an opportunity for community members to find solutions to the problems affecting them. In many interviews participants explained that these discussions led to a consensus on what should be done:

> *"I attend meetings or gatherings in order to improve people's lives. People discuss until they arrive at a consensus" (Grandmother, Nemataba).*

> *"During the gatherings, someone can raise their hand to add something to the discussion and then their idea is discussed. If it is agreed that this is a good idea, if all agree, we then seek consensus on how the idea can be put into action" (Father, Bakayoko).*

Putting matters into perspective and engaging in dialogue while respecting everyone's opinions helps everyone to find common ground on subjects that were traditionally not the subject of debate, such as, for example, issues affecting adolescent girls:

> *"It is because there is understanding between the members of the extended family that we now have the right to talk about pregnancy or marriage for girls" (Father, Saré Yira).*

An approach involving dialogue is even more valuable when it is used in a program whose ultimate goal is to promote change in social norms, which are defined and produced collectively (see following sections on harmful practices). It is, therefore, the establishment of community dialogue that has made it possible to revisit certain social norms deemed harmful to adolescent girls and boys, and to introduce new types of social practices. From this point of view, the program modified the community's existing social infrastructure.

Strengthening of family ties

Intra-family relationships are strengthened

Participants commented extensively on the benefits of the GHD program related to improvements in family relationships, especially between parents and adolescents. The dialogical approach promotes communication based on mutual respect and non-violence (psychological and physical).

> *"There is understanding between them (mothers) and adolescent girls. There is good understanding with their children, and all this is thanks to the Grandmothers Project program" (Father, Bakayoko).*

> *"Now our parents are accessible and open to everyone" (Adolescent girl, Nemataba).*

Change is also observed in fathers' behavior, as now they are more open to communication with their spouses and with their daughters:

> *"Our fathers chat with us and with our moms" (Teenage daughter, Nemataba).*

As for the girls, they value the fact that now there is less confrontation with their parents and that more peaceful communication exists between them:

> "*We also discussed how to respond to parents, to speak to them gently without making naughty gestures or inciting them to raise their voice... The way we used to respond to our parents has changed. Now, when we talk to our parents, we speak softly" (Adolescent girl, Saré Yira).*

> *"They (adolescent girls) have started to be interested in the advice given to them by their parents. You find a young girl who is talking with her mother without arguing or anything. Then, the mother guides her on what she should do to live better. Therefore, children have benefitted by changing their behavior since the arrival of Grandmothers Project" (Father, Nemataba).*

Reconditioning seniors

The project helped to reduce the negative stereotypes formerly conveyed about grandmothers.

The revival of traditions through elders, and in particular, grandmothers, is a center piece of the theory of change developed by GMP. By mobilizing grandmothers as change agents, the program has helped to modify the perception that communities and families had of grandmothers (sometimes considered to be witches) and allowed them to play a new role within their families and in the wider community.

The program helped break down some of the negative stereotypes that were promulgated about grandmothers, sometimes accusing them of being witches:

> "*They (the children) said that their grandmothers were witches, and that they were not going to get close to them. The daughters-in-law did not take care of their mothers-in law, they did not encourage their children to get close to their grandmothers, telling them that if they did the grandmothers could eat them alive. But now all of that is gone. Now you dare to embrace your grandchildren, to take care of them, to spend the night with them, eat with them, as you know that all of that has changed" (Grandmothers, Bakayoko).*

This change is reflected in the fact that grandmothers are now closer to their grandchildren, and their relationships are more intimate:

> *"Grandmothers must negotiate with their grandchildren and bring them closer to their knees, tell them riddles and stories, and teach them their traditions until they sleep" (Adolescent girl, Kouméra).*

The role of grandmothers is enhanced

Thanks to the program, the importance attributed to grandmothers increased in communities. The program helped communities to reconsider the role played by grandmothers in the past, particularly related to the beneficial role they played strengthening social cohesion:

> *"The situation has changed. Before people didn't get along with each other but now there are good relationships between everyone in the village, thanks to the grandmothers" (Adolescent girl, Nemataba).*

> *"Before, each grandmother stayed in her own house. The grandmothers did not meet together to discuss the past" (Adolescent girl, Nemataba).*

The strengthening of relationships within families is also largely attributed to their central involvement in the program:

> *"I can confirm that it was often said that grandmothers were of no use. I say that that is not so! The grandmother is very useful in the family" (Grandmother, Nemataba).*

Reinforcement of grandmothers' role and of their collective responsibility in children's upbringing

The program has acknowledged the active role that grandmothers played within families by giving them an increased sense of importance: the program has restored grandmothers' confidence in their capacity to contribute to the upbringing of girls. Parents and grandmothers feel strengthened in their collaborative endeavor to support children's upbringing:

"The grandmother plays a very important and useful role. It is she who takes care of newborns and who helps new brides. In reality, it is the grandmother who ensures the upbringing of children" (Father, Saré Yira).

"You see a woman can have a baby, she is working, and the baby is continuously crying. The grandmother takes the crying child so that the mother can continue her work" (Father, Nemataba).

"They (the grandmothers) play a very important role in the home, in children's schooling, and in their moral and cultural education in general" (Young girls, Bakayoko).

Within communities, the elders are now recognized as having responsibility for being involved in children's upbringing.

"... (before) you couldn't scold or correct someone else's child, and no one could scold or correct your child either, but now everyone in the village has the right to discipline other children" (Grandmother, Bakayoko).

The fact that a grandmother can teach at school as teachers do is indicative of the change in mentality. First, this reflects the recognition that grandmothers are able to transmit knowledge and skills. More significant than the fact that they are transmitting knowledge and skills to children is the place where the passing on of knowledge and skills is taking place. If, in the past, the role of grandmothers and elders as teachers was acknowledged, that teaching took place at home. The fact that now the place where this teaching takes place includes schools, demonstrates the potential and the capacity of grandmothers.

And so, with the involvement of grandmothers in schools, the barriers which artificially separated modernity from tradition and cultural values have been broken down. And grandmothers' perception of schools has also changed.

Grandmothers' increased involvement in childcare is also identified as a benefit of the program. This is not a new practice (the role of grandmothers in the care of small children in rural societies is well-documented), however, the recognition of the importance of other family members and the strengthening of family ties has contributed to greater recognition and renewed confidence in grandmothers' informal role watching after and caring for young children, while their parents are busy working in agriculture or with livestock:

"If you have a wife, she works hard. If she has a child and she wants to go work in the fields, she leaves her child with the grandmother. Upon her return, she will find that the grandmother has taken good care of the child. And when the father returns he, too, will see that the grandmother has taken good care of the child. She is really a big help" (Father, Saré Yira).

"The Grandmothers Project has shown us what the role of grandmothers really is. If my child is living with me at home, if there is no grandmother, I can't go out to go to work, but if there is a grandmother in the house, she will watch over the children and she will give them advice until I get home from work. So, this is a good seed" (Community leader, Bakayoko).

Young girls have a special relationship with their grandmothers

The program has contributed to creating bonds between grandmothers and their grandchildren and has strengthened their ability to listen to children. It has provided grandmothers with new methods of play and of dialogue to gain their trust.

"The teenage girls say that they feel free, that the communication between them is good. They make jokes with each other, and the teaching takes place because the teenagers express their thoughts and the grandmothers express themselves while teasing them. Because there are a lot of things that mothers can't say to girls, while grandmothers can talk about them" (Father, Nemataba).

Grandmothers sometimes have a special way of discussing matters of the heart. As such, we can see that this strengthening of ties between grandmothers and young girls has resulted in greater mutual understanding and trust. When it comes to talking to young girls, grandmothers have acquired a special place, thanks to improved communication through the use of educational stories and riddles and humor to get messages across, particularly in the area of reproductive health:

> Interviewer: *"What can't mothers discuss with their daughters?"*
>
> Interviewee*: "Some mothers can't talk about menstruation with their daughters. They can't explain to teenage girls what to do when their periods start, and how to behave so as to avoid various problems" (Father, Nemataba).*

Indeed, the presence of teenage girls alongside grandmothers at night is proof of the fact that the notion of the 'witch grandmother' has been eliminated, because in Peuhl society, certain places and times of day are strongly associated with the misdeeds of people who are considered to be witches. Concerning the significance of certain places, large empty spaces (*bowé*), certain trees (*jabi/jujube* and *boki/baobab*), and garbage dumps (*jiteere/jindé*) are considered to be particularly popular with witches and, therefore, are forbidden areas. Similarly, time is strongly associated with the risk of attacks from those said to possess powers of witchcraft, namely: noon, when the rays of the sun are piercing; twilight, which marks the transition between day and night, a transition conducive to metamorphoses; and finally, night. Indeed, night is considered to be one of the three mysterious places among the Peuhl who say that "God created three things whose contents he does not know: the waters, the night, and the woman." This saying perfectly illustrates the mystery associated with the night and the fear it inspires. In the representations associated with sorcery in Peuhl contexts, witches transform themselves and fly at night. Consequently, if in the evening, after doing their schoolwork, teenage girls come and listen to stories told by their grandmothers, this proves that the fear that they have inspired in teenage girls, their parents, and the community at large has disappeared.

REVIVAL OF CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

> "*Tradition is back*" (*Teenage girl, Koumera*).

The GHD program puts culture and tradition at the center of the strategy. The culturally grounded approach has been very enthusiastically received by community actors, and appears to have directly contributed to the establishment of trusting relationships between community actors and GMP team members.

In this sense, the GHD program is very different from other programs in which community members feel that a new normative framework is being imposed on them from the outside, from the West, and based on a human rights orientation. In this case, it is a question of acknowledging and valuing local endogenous knowledge and values that enrich people's lives.

> *"... it (the program) started by going to the roots of the problems in order to solve them. If the program continues to operate like this, Africa will become truly African" (Father, Koumera).*

The revival of storytelling has enabled everyone to have access to a forgotten heritage, based on traditional knowledge passed down through word-of-mouth, sometimes in a fragmented way. The promotion of storytelling by GMP has contributed to the process of reviving what was lost. The GHD program has won the support of communities, as it has helped them to reconnect with their past. Reviving key elements of the culture, like storytelling, allows communities to reclaim elements of their tradition that were lost, and thereby enables them to pass them onto the younger generations.

> "*The activities of the project are very important, because we are talking about the importance of children's upbringing, the importance of African values and how to keep them from disappearing, how to combine children's education at school with tradition*" (*Father, Koumera*).

"They (the grandmothers) teach them culture; if young people know their culture, they will not be uprooted. Culture must not disappear, it is passed on from generation to generation, and this generation must also pass culture on to future generations. This is very satisfying to me" (Father, Koumera).

The GMP approach grounded in cultural values and identity responds to a profound sense of loss that has developed with the rise of individualism:

"In the past, if there was a wedding or baptism, we would inform the entire extended family. Now, with modernity, people think only of themselves. But with the arrival of GMP that is no longer the case, and everyone is involved: young people, grandmothers. We give thanks to God" (Father, Koumera).

CHANGES OBSERVED IN EXISTING NORMS AND PRACTICES

Child marriage

The practice of child marriage

Community participants state that before the GHD program, early marriage of girls was a widespread practice that was widely accepted by communities. As soon as a girl reached the age of puberty, she was considered eligible for marriage:

"With a teenager, if her mother notices that her daughter starts growing and developing breasts, she'll say that she will give her give her away in marriage. And if she is to be married off and she refuses, she is forced to marry (by her parents), and if she is forced, she will move to the marital home" (Teenage girl, Koumera).

Early marriage as a strategy to protect girls

Marriage is closely linked to the social norm concerning virginity before marriage, specifically concerning girls, and related to parents' fear regarding pre-marital sex, extra-marital pregnancies, and the shame that ensues. Marriage at puberty is the traditional practice to ensure the chastity of girls before their conjugal union:

"It's because girls tend to stay out at night, and so their mothers fear they will get pregnant. To avoid this shame, they would prefer that pregnancy occurs within the context of marriage, and so they arrange marriages" (Teenage girl, Koumera).

For parents, therefore, early marriage serves to prevent pre-marital sex and pregnancy for young girls. By taking them out of school at puberty, parents seek to control their exposure to emotional relationships that could be established while attending secondary school. The issue of controlling the girls' bodies is an issue of honor for the entire family:

"The father, if someone comes to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage and he sees that his daughter goes out every night, the father will say that his daughter is a delinquent and he will withdraw her from school and give her away in forced marriage, and she'll move to the marital home" (Teenage girl, Koumera).

In a vignette dealing with an early marriage scenario, grandmothers are asked to imagine the reactions of various family members to this situation.

A grandmother in Koumera explained that she can say to her son:

"We ask you by the grace of God to stop your plan to marry her off. Your child is intelligent, don't marry her off right away. Today's marriages are problematic. If you marry your child off when she is not old enough, it will only bring her problems. Let her stay in school."

The father replied: *"I would like to marry her off because it's difficult to manage a teenage girl. I cannot be watching over her, that's why I want to marry her off."*

A father in Koumera explained the grandmother's reaction:

Participant: *"A grandmother who is conservative as regards culture and tradition might tell the father: you know that teenage girls can't resist, you should marry her off now."*

Interviewer: *"What does that mean, they can't resist?"*

Participant: "*They don't abstain. They become sexually active very early, and that can lead to dishonoring; you know, with us, if a girl is living in her father's house and she falls pregnant, that really causes great dishonor in our culture. (...) it means shame."*

One grandmother, however, stated that the concept of marriage is changing. This suggests the emergence of new ideas to replace the old norm which defined pregnancy outside of marriage as a shameful thing:

"(...) marriages in the past and today - in the past, when a girl reached a certain age, we would say to ourselves, right, I'm going to marry her off before she gets pregnant, if she gets pregnant now, she'll bring shame to men and to women. But now, none of that exists" (Grandmother, Nemataba).

The economic factor was also mentioned by some grandmothers, and it would be interesting to further delve into the matter to determine its real importance. Marriage can, in fact, be considered as offering a form of protection: it provides the guarantee of financial security in a society where girls are considered a burden. The prospect of a "good marriage" can comfort families when it comes to the future of their daughters. From this perspective, the problem is not the girl's age or her situation, but rather the opportunity to find a husband. Marriage is seen as an opportunity to "succeed," a means of survival and material security in an isolated rural context where opportunities for economic success are fairly limited.

Change in the perception of the appropriate age for girls to marry

The community dialogue and the actions taken by grandmothers have led to the reassessment of the social norm regarding the ideal age of marriage for girls. All interviewees (fathers, mothers, grandmothers, teenage girls, and community leaders) stated that there has been a definite change in attitudes. Marrying girls before 18 is no longer desirable, and family practices related to marriage have started to change:

"When she is 18, he can give her away in marriage. This is our thinking nowadays. It's when she is 18 that she will be married off" (Father, Bakayoko).

"Marriages in the past and today – in the past, when a girl reached a certain age, we would say to ourselves, right, I'm going to get her married off before she gets pregnant. If she gets pregnant now, she'll bring shame to the men and women, but none of that exists now" (Grandmother, Nemataba).

"Before, as soon as the girl turned 13 or 15, she would be married off. It was enough for a man to show up and ask for our daughter's hand, and we'd agree without hesitation. We gave our daughters away in marriage without thinking! Then they showed us that it was causing problems for girls, and we realized that it was true. In the end, we followed their advice, and since then we wait until girls are 18 or 19, and we've observed that it's better than what we did before, because by then their bones are mature, and that's the right age for them to marry" (Community leader, Bakayoko).

However, the evolution of this norm will need to be followed over time and checked with other data sources (marriage registers, data on traditional practices, etc.), because this data is based on self-declared statements and, therefore, must only be accepted with reservations.

Early marriage is now seen as detrimental to the health of young girls

The weight of economic factors on decisions related to marriage (mentioned above) is difficult to grasp, because few participants mentioned these factors during the interviews. However, there was almost unanimous agreement on the health-related risk factors that are associated with adolescent marriage (marriage is detrimental to the reproductive health of girls). The health risks associated with child marriage are a major concern with directly observable consequences namely, complications during childbirth, premature death, etc.

> *"We told them not to marry their young daughters too young, that they should leave them in school. If a very young girl gets married, she can get pregnant, and during childbirth she can experience complications, which is not good. If she is not fully developed physically, during childbirth she can even die" (Grandmother, Koumera).*

Nevertheless, some participants state that in reality child marriage has not decreased, because parents continue to promise their daughters in marriage, even though the marriage is not consummated before they have finished their studies.

Excerpt from group discussion *(Koumera community leaders):*

> Participant 1: "*The other practices have stopped, but early marriage still persists …"*
>
> Investigator: "*Oh, you mean that young girls continue to be married off when they are too young?"*
>
> Participant 1: "Yes."

There is no clear consensus on this issue, some state that it is difficult to prevent husbands from taking away their young brides:

> Participant 1: *"If you have given your daughter away in marriage, if the husband says that he wants to take her with him, you cannot refuse … Therefore, we must find a solution to keep girls in school."*
>
> Participant 2*: "We do not agree with that! We refuse! When my daughter, listen to me, when she was married off, when the husband came to take her, I said no! Did she leave? No, she did not leave. We said to ourselves that since she is at school, she will not be able to leave, and after that? She did not go with her husband" (Koumera community leaders).*

A community leader, meanwhile, insists that he himself denied a husband from taking away his wife. There is also talk of arranged marriages with foreign nationals. During a group discussion, he said:

> Participant 1*: "He (the husband) came this year, I told him that she going to school, you can go back home! And he left (…)."*
>
> Participant 2: *"I said, when they came to ask for her hand, I told them, the girl is going to school. She will not be able to go live with you after the wedding. They came back this year. Before I went to Spain they came here, I told them that what was said was that first she must go to school, she cannot leave, she is studying. And she still hasn't left!" (Koumera community leaders).*

Some in the group note that keeping the girl in school in this case depends on her intelligence:

> Participant 1*: "But you cannot continue to prevent her from joining her husband if she goes onto*

secondary school ..."

Participant 2: "*It depends on the girl's intelligence"* (Koumera community leaders).

Draft attitudes towards forced marriage

If nearly everyone involved in a child marriage expresses a common protest against the marriage of underage girls (which is favorable to a postponement of marriage for most people), there is very little need to ask the girls' opinion, and for the consent of those responsible for choosing the spouse. However, two of the parents maintain that there is an inclination to change attitudes at even this level as well:

> *"We must marry the girl to whom she has chosen, and not marry her to someone she does not love. We must not marry her by force. All that we have stopped now. Forced marriage no longer exists and neither do early marriages" (Father, Bakayoko).*

> *"We must not have forced marriage.... Today the girl must be married to the person she wants. If she does not want to, you, the parent, you should not force her. If you do not love the person, you can suffer from it, but if you love her you have joy in your heart" (Mother, Koumera).*

> *"Before, it was the father who gave his daughter in marriage without asking anyone's opinion. Now he asks permission, from the girl first and foremost. Otherwise, before, the boy and the girl see each other and do what they want together so that the parents marry them, since they love each other. All this is changing thanks to the Grandmothers Project" (Community leader, Bagayoko).*

The decision to give away a young girl in marriage is no longer just up to the father

Traditionally, the father's role has been considered central, and he alone is able to make decisions concerning the home unilaterally, notably that of his daughter's marriage.

By involving the grandmothers and the community in debating on the issue of the well-being of girls, a reconfiguration of roles and decision-making mechanisms has been observed, which now allows other members of the family and community clan to be able to give their opinion and intervene if necessary:

> "*Before the project arrived, if we wanted to give your daughter in marriage, we just do it. The men gave in marriage without knowing if she wants or not, it is enough just that the son of such person comes to say that he loves your daughter. They did not say ask the girl if she likes this man or not. They were just saying, such and such a gentleman came to ask for the hand of our daughter, we discussed, and we agreed.... It was only the mother and the father, it was only the father who forced it, he alone" (Mother, Saré Yira).*

> *"Before it was only the father and the mother who decided on marriage, but now it's everyone, so the grandmothers became close to the teenage girls, and to their mothers, in the community everyone talks with everyone else" (Teenage girl, Bakayoko).*

Although the father exerts strong influence on decisions concerning the marriage of his daughter (he remains the ultimate holder of authority), the project opened a breach in the system of patriarchal authority by allowing other members of the family to oppose his will.

During an interview, the interviewer asked a father what he would do before the project if he were in the situation to give his daughter in marriage (Thumbnail B). The answer shows a unilateral decision by the

father: “before [the project] the mother has no say. Whatever the husband decides, she obeys.” However, when the father talks about what he would do in this same situation after the project, he puts forward a consultative (but not shared) decision process:

> *“I’m going to chat with my family and ask for their advice. If my family members say that the decision is mine, I will give her away in marriage. If they oppose, I will do what they want” (Father, Saré Yira).*

Furthermore, it would be interesting to know more about the role of women in the transmission of the feminine ideal of marriage. Marriage is indeed an important outcome and enhancement for a woman in Senegalese rural society, and since their childhood, girls have been educated for this purpose. The entry into marriage gives a woman access to a new status, essential and valued in the eyes of other women.

Teenage pregnancies

Affectionate and sexual relationships outside marriage are not tolerated

If we can observe a very clear change in norms within the group involved in the project concerning attitudes towards girls’ marriage and the appropriate age, the current norm which prohibits emotional and sexual relations outside marriage considered to be “illegitimate” remains preponderant. Delaying girls’ marriage means giving more opportunities to transgress this norm through coeducation and going out at night. There is, therefore, a conflict between the two standards, because if it is no longer acceptable to marry girls before the age of 18, it is also not acceptable that they have a sex life before getting married:

> *“For the difficulties faced by adolescent girls, we talked about their early marriage before age 18. We have prohibited this here. But we have found that if we apply that, the teenagers will meet up with other teenagers and they will bring you home what you feared [pregnancies]” (Father, Saré Yira).*

By observing the value system of a given group, it is interesting to analyze how a norm fits into a larger set of injunctions. The observation of the disappearance of a negative standard should be accompanied by an analysis of the effects produced on the related standards: in our case, the standard which consists in parents protecting girl’s virginity (synonymous with honor and purity) prevails, and it is accompanied by “social sanctions” (disapproval of those around them):

> *“If you get pregnant early, everyone will say you can’t find a husband anymore…. But if she was promised to someone else, she follows the boys until she gets pregnant. When she goes to see her husband, she will be ashamed and also in front of her peers. She will put shame on her parents and friends. She herself will be ashamed, especially in front of her friends. That's my opinion!” (Adolescent girl, Saré Yira).*

In case of violation of the norm (virginity), the social sanction is strong (rejection of families, shame):

> *“When she is married, she will shame her parents, if she is not a virgin, she will shame her parents” (Adolescent girl, Saré Yira).*

One of the consequences of the tension between the emergence of new norms (delay in the age of marriage, schooling of girls) and the persistence of old norms (value placed on the premarital virginity of girls) is the creation of new strategies. It is observable in the data that the desire to comply with this standard will give rise to greater control by adults over the outings of girls, in order to prevent too close proximity between girls and boys. Through grandmothers, girls are encouraged to avoid going out at night:

"They keep us busy by telling us riddles and tales, it's so that we don't go out at night" (Adolescent girl, Bagayako).

Decline in teenage pregnancies

Participants describe with relief that one of the effects of the project is the observed decrease in early pregnancies, attributed to the closeness of grandmothers, mothers and adolescent daughters:

"There have been a lot of changes. Here, every year, we took children out of school because of pregnancies. But since the program was here, I don't know, but I don't hear it anymore. I know that there is awareness. It is thanks to the discussion between the mother and her daughters. Well, there was more cohesion, they discuss together, they are oriented, they give them advice" (Father, Nemataba).

This drop in early pregnancies noted is mainly attributed to the night storytelling sessions, when the grandmothers "occupy" the young girls and prevent them from going out:

"We revitalize storytelling and teach tradition. Thanks to that, many of our teenage girls do not get pregnant" (Grandmother, Bagayako).

"Regarding tradition, we also noticed that it helps our girls and it reduces the incidence of their early pregnancies. Thanks to stories and riddles, and the arrival of the Grandmothers Project, now, after dinner, each grandmother gathers a group of five young girls. After dinner, the young girls go to the grandmother's house and stay with her, and she tells them stories and riddles. When they leave the grandmother, they will all be sleepy" (Community leader, Nemataba).

INCREASED IMPORTANCE GIVEN TO EDUCATION

Communities invest in children's education

Many participants spoke of a radical change in the positioning of communities with regard to the education of children. Previously, children took part in agricultural work and could miss school for an entire season. Parents, mostly illiterate and not having attended school themselves, did not see the point of educating their child:

"You know, before, adults did not know the usefulness of studies. They only thought about their own interests. During the winter everyone was concerned with the fields…. But they [children] were born when they saw the school. You can no longer say to a child 'drop your studies and go to the fields'" (Grandmother, Nemataba).

"Formerly Sirayel (a young girl representing the girls of the community) did not study and did not like the school, valued much more the field work and was going to take care of the breeding, she showed to everyone that she is enthusiastic about field work and breeding. Today she sees those who have studied cleanly shower and go to offices to work, while those who have not studied go to work in fields. Studies have become important for her, and all children know that studies are important and for parents too, their intention is that their children study" (Grandmother, Bagayako).

Parents, most of whom had not been to school, did not support their children, especially when it was necessary to finance their school supplies or ensure their attendance in class:

"It has changed a lot, why am I telling you that it has changed, before the parents did not take care about their children's school supplies, but now they buy all the supplies, in addition they follow

their children well at school, see if they learn or not. Before, there was no control" (Father, Nemataba).

"It's like they said: what brought about the change is something that wasn't there before but is here today. The change is due not only to the project but also to people like me. Previously, everyone 20 years and over could not read a letter circulated in the village. It was scary and is due to misunderstanding, but now it is the children of 15 or 13 years of age who compose the letters, all this is thanks to the project" (Father, Saré Yira).

The dialogue initiated within the framework of the project enabled communities to identify the factors blocking children's progression within the school system, in particular, regarding the failure to register births. However, registration in the civil status registers provides access to identity documents which are then necessary for access to secondary school. This problem was solved in some of the communities consulted within the framework of this project. Solving the problem revealed a significant change in standards reflected in an evolution of attitudes and behavior on the issue of schooling.

Education recognized as an advantage for girls

The education of girls, in particular, takes a prominent place in the interviews. Among all the groups consulted, there is talk of this normative turnaround which makes it possible to give girls their place in school back to them:

"Before the project, the parents did as they saw fit with their daughters, but once the project came ... even if we are in a hurry to give girls in school away in marriage, we must let them study because studies are useful. This issue is very common in the south of the country, this is why we do not see a girl from the south of the country working in the public sector or in large companies, because even if the girl is smart and bright, we take her out of school" (Father, Saré Yira).

Increased schooling for girls (especially secondary school) calls into question the traditional roles and expectations associated with gender: while boys help in the fields, the role of girls is associated with sharing household chores with the mother so that the mother isn't so burnt out with work. Some mothers are not inclined to see their daughter become more involved in school and schoolwork because they perceive this as an additional burden. By creating positive incentive mechanisms (such as rewards), the project has contributed to the change in attitude in favor of keeping girls in school, as shown by the story of this mother, who initially disapproved of the commitment of her daughter to school precisely for the reasons mentioned above:

"I have an only daughter, I do not help her in studies, her father wants her to go to school. I said no, she is not going to go there, she works at home, she is going to wash the dishes, she is going to sweep, she is the only girl I have so she is the one who has to do all the housework.... These studies will be of no use to me. He said to me, 'I don't know if it will be useful or not, but she will continue [the school] to discover if it will be useful or not.' But now my daughter has studied, this year she is in the upper class. She received gifts. She received a bicycle. She received many things, even money. We gave her, 30,000 f CFA (50 USD), for her party attire. This year, she entered into the upper class. She is in Bakayoko. This year, I saw the usefulness of studies, and I know that she will continue to study if she is not dead, she will study until the end, if it is the will of God!" (Mother, Bakayoko).

As daughters stay close to their mothers, some mothers may see this change as a potential long-term benefit:

"If you study and you succeed: if he (your husband) gives you 25 francs you can increase (your income) to 50 francs, you can help your mother" (Adolescent girl, Nemataba).

It is also necessary to allow a girl to free up time so that she can devote herself to her duties and to check that they are done:

"Moms can also say now, 'When you make your compositions, you have to bring them to us so that we know what you did at school.... It is homework that can tell us whether you are learning or not. If we see the homework or your composition notebooks, we will know if you are studying or not'" (Grandmother, Nemataba).

The girls themselves have taken ownership of this development and all the girls consulted (active in the project) share this desire to stay in school to learn, partly thanks to the active involvement of relatives. During the group interviews, the interviewer asked the participants to imagine a young girl living in their community (called Binta below):

"Concerning the Binta of yesterday, her parents did not take care of her studies, whereas nowadays, Binta's parents are involved and help her in her studies so that she succeeds. Previously, her parents do not help" (Teenage girl, Koumera).

Girls' education depends in part on their academic success. Parents were more willing to continue educating girls, and girls said they would consider dropping out of school if they did not perform well.

"If the father says to his daughter, 'I want to give you in marriage,' the daughter will say, 'No papa, I do not agree, I want you to let me study. I promise to succeed ...'. With this promise, her father will let her study. If she succeeds everyone will be happy. If she does not succeed, she will herself tell her mother, that 'Dad, now I want to get married because I cannot succeed in school and I'm old enough to marry" (Father, Bagayako).

"The teacher will say to Binta (fictitious example), 'You are brilliant at school. If you neglect your studies to the point that your grades drop, I would go to see your parents and I would tell them that you are being given away in marriage since you are being as foolish as the other girls" (Teenage girl, Koumera).

"We are going to tell her [the girl] not to agree to marry until her body is mature, 19 years old, or 18 years old, and only if she is intelligent" (Grandmother, Koumera).

Reduction of domestic tasks in favor of school attendance

One of the changes associated with the increasing value of education for girls has been to challenge harmful child labor practices, especially for girls. This constitutes a significant social advance:

"Since the project started, we no longer make students work on school days, we only make them work on days when they don't have classes" (Father, Nemataba).

"In the past, parents made the girl work until she did not have the time or the courage to learn her coursework. Also, in the morning before going to school, she is made to work and she arrives late at school all the time, which is why she is always last in her class" (Adolescent, Bagayako).

DECREASING FGM/C

Community members disapprove of FGM/C

Half a dozen participants also highlighted a significant drop in the practice of FGM/C. Among the arguments noted in favor of stopping this practice: the consequences on the health of babies, complications during childbirth, reduced libido, and the associated lack of fidelity of the husband:

"When two girls are pregnant, during childbirth, it is the one who is not mutilated who gets out quickly" (Grandmother, Koumera).

"They also talked about FGM/C. We trust them because what they said is true. What we did before was not good. They described to us the problems that there are, and we found that these demonstrations were noted in our children ... we realized that it is confirmed. Before, we didn't know it was a problem, but now that they have told us, we have stopped" (Mother, Bakayoko).

"If they get pregnant, at the time of delivery, most of them risk having an operation. Others may even die. All these problems are related to the FGM/C of young girls. Before we did not know the cause. Several children were mutilated before the Grandmothers Project came. But since its arrival, they explained it to us. I stopped. I don't do it anymore. I have two daughters, but I'm not going to cut them" (Mother, Bakayoko).

The change in attitudes and behaviors announced suggests a significant change in social standards. These are to be tested over time and through indirect participants (in order to measure the dissemination of this revised standard). It is possible, for example, that the age of FGM/C is delayed in certain cases (during adolescence). In any case, the grandmothers, as bearers of the tradition, are among the best placed to lead this change in standards head on. Indeed, it has been observed that the mutilators are often elderly women. Their involvement is, therefore, crucial in this process (more research on the cultural motivations linked to excision in *Peulh* society would be useful).

Some misconceptions could be reviewed during future training, including the idea that excision would cause cancer:

Participant: *"Now we have given up on that because we may have said that certain diseases arise from the practice."*

Interviewer: *"Okay."*

Participant: *"This is what gives rise to certain diseases such as cancer" (Mother, Bagayako).*

TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT IN GENDER INEQUALITIES

Increased redistribution of roles within couples

The dialogue between generations and between the sexes has enabled a reconfiguration of certain roles, which were once very anchored in traditional stereotypes: in this sense, the participants highlighted the commitment of fathers in the field of schooling for their children, along with a better understanding from the couple, as well as shared decision-making within the couple:

"Before the arrival of the GHD project, it was the mothers who bought the children's supplies and food, but after its arrival, fathers are also involved in discussions." (Mother, Saré Yira)

"Communication has developed more, especially between women and their husbands. Before, it was the heads of families who made all the decisions. Not anymore." (Mother, Saré Yira)

"We women dared not talk about things concerning our children ... but now we sit down, and we discuss our children with the men, and them with us." (Grandmother, Koumera)

A contrasting perception of equality

Some participants noticed a favorable change in attitude to more gender equality:

"We understood that we are the same because fathers and mothers are the same thing." (Father, Saré Yira)

For others, the evolution of attitudes towards more respect and cohesion in the couple does not

fundamentally call into question the hierarchical relationship which makes the woman a subordinate compared to her husband. She owes him respect and obedience and cannot afford to "contradict" him, given he is the head of the household:

> *"The husband brought you to himself. You are not too afraid of him, but you give him respect. Do not deduce his words, it's your husband, that's what I think. It is necessary to establish agreement and understanding between the two of you." (Grandmother, Koumera)*

> *"We tell them [to already married girls] to obey their husbands." (Grandmother, Saré Yira)*

Girls' schooling is seen as a path to autonomy

Even if it is still difficult to envisage women reaching positions of power, lending value to the education of girls gives hope that they will have the possibility of increasing their potential so that they can access the best economic opportunities. While the education of girls remains largely regarded as useless, we see a process of modification of this standard in the direction of a better appraisal of education as a privileged access door towards better autonomy for women, and among others in order not to "depend on her husband":

> *"Girls must be allowed to continue their studies. This is very important because today a girl can become a minister; she will help you and it will also benefit her." (Grandmother, Nemataba)*

> *"Today, studies are useful for both men and women. Today, if you study until you get a good job, you will serve your parents, you will serve yourself, and you will even serve your husband. Because you can study and after getting married, if your husband does not have a lot of means, your studies can take care of you." (Father, Nemataba)*

It is also interesting to note that through the many development projects taking place in various territories, especially rural ones, local populations often find themselves living alongside women managers/officials/staff of NGOs, often from more well-off socio-professional categories, and whose life experience constitutes a fine example of success through education. So, according to this father:

> *"It is not only boys who succeed in studies, girls also succeed in finding a good job in offices! The state prefers those who have studied." (Grandmother, Koumera)*

> Participant: "*Now they see [the girls in the village] all the projects going on here, the women are numerous, you understand? So, they understood that those pushed themselves in their studies, didn't they? Then they have examples of training….*"

> Interviewer*: "Ah ok, so they see in the projects that are here that women are more represented?"*

> Participant: *"They are more represented than men, and they also see that in micro-credits. There are only girls working on computers, and they will tell themselves that their success did not come out of the blue, but it is thanks to studies. Do you understand?" (Father, Nemataba)*

Questioning domestic violence

Some grandmothers question the practice of domestic violence (physical violence) in couples and say this is a bad influence on their sons:

> *"We tell our sons not to beat their wives. When you take a woman from her home and bring her home with you, you must watch over her and protect her." (Grandmother, Koumera)*

> *"I talked to my sons so that they would stop arguing with their wives, no longer beating them. Since I started to chat with my sons and my daughters-in-law, there are no more*

misunderstandings between them. They get along well now." (Grandmother, Koumera)

Although anecdotal in the data (few grandmothers have mentioned it), this trend is important to highlight because it constitutes a questioning of the crucial problem of domestic violence, and thereby reveals an unexpected positive effect of the project.[5]

Marital violence is not necessarily a norm in itself (which would induce pressure from the group/men to comply with it). However, its justification is generally based on social norms and stereotypes propagating the idea of superiority of men over women, and the possibility (tolerated by society) that men have of exercising their power over them by the use of force.

In this sense, the project presents an undeniable opportunity to question these harmful norms, the effects of which have devastating consequences on the lives of women.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT PRACTICES

Questioning violent punitive practices

Grandmothers played an important role in educating parents about harmful educational practices such as corporal punishment. As this father noted:

> *"If we want to hit the child or hurt them or give them bad things. They [the grandmothers] call us to tell us that this is not how we educate a child." (Father, Bagayako)*

The adults involved in the project explain that they can question this practice, commonly used as a form of punishment or parental discipline, as explained by this mother:

> *"Before the arrival of the Grandmothers Project, when my co-wife beat her child, I did not dare to intervene. I did not dare, and if the child ran towards me, she would double the blows. I did not dare to interfere with her. But since the arrival of the Grandmothers Project, when she starts to scream at the child, now I ask her to stop. You see the child approaching me, I give him advice and I go and see the mother to tell her that it is not good, we must stop beating, otherwise it will make him 'bad.' You have to wait until he is calm to call him into the room and talk to him until he understands that, because what he is doing is not good and he will stop, but hit, shout, run; but now he dares not. And I know that it has changed and that is what brought it about." (Grandmother, Koumera)*

This change in attitudes and practices among those engaged in the project gives hope for positive results within the larger community (dissemination effect):

> *"Before when I beat my child, no one intervened; but now when you do it, someone will come to the rescue and beg you to forgive him" (Grandmother, Koumera).*

While violence was socially accepted as a means of discipline, these words show that grandmothers are now able to offer nonviolent models of discipline that encourage obedience through dialogue, rather than coercion:

> *"We shouldn't force them, or look for a stick either, rather, we should call the child into the room*

[5] In Senegal, more than one woman in four (27%) has been the victim of physical or sexual violence by her husband / partner.

and chat with them." (Grandmother, Koumera)

INDIVIDUAL CHANGES: SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITIES

Improved parenting skills

The various participants have made many comments on the strengthening of intra-family ties and, in particular, the parent-child bond. This effect has been largely attributed to the acquisition of new parenting skills from the project, better interpersonal skills, and the establishment of educational attitudes favoring listening and being open to the child's voice:

> *"... this project taught us how to live with our children." (Mother, Saré Yira)*

> *"I support the project and want them to increase the activities, especially the discussions between the children and their elders, we want to become friends with our children so that we can chat peacefully with them and give them good ideas." (Father, Koumera)*

For their part, the girls also noticed this change, as well as the application of non-violent discipline methods and an openness to dialogue:

> *"The role of parents now has changed. Now they talk calmly to teenagers without hitting or yelling at them." (Teenage girl, Koumera)*

> *"Now our parents are approachable and open to everyone." (Teenage girl, Nemataba)*

Mentoring and coaching from grandmothers

All the interviewees and focus groups highlighted this increased role of grandmothers with children: grandmothers were able to take on new places (school), new roles (passing on stories and other traditions), and new communication skills. They were able to put into practice their ability to "connect" with the children and to provide advice, and became the girls' confidants:

> *"Since the project has been there, she has told us if we have problems, we talk about it with our grandmothers." (Teenage girl, Saré Yira)*

> *"Now the grandmothers care for and watch over the children." (Teenage girl, Bagayako)*

Thus, each grandmother was entrusted with the mission of "mentoring" several adolescent girls with a view to following their progress, coaching them and ensuring, among other things, their school attendance:

> Interviewer: *"Before I start, I want to know how many adolescent girls are you mentoring?"*

> Participant: *"I was entrusted with 5 teenage girls." (Grandmother, Koumera)*

> *"Previously, your child stayed in the fields, without going to school. Unless the teacher comes to tell you, you will not know if your child is attending. However, since the arrival of the project, there are women who go to school to see if the children are there or not. If your child does not go to school, the grandmother will tell you and you will know that your child did not go to school." (Grandmother, Bakayoko)*

Negotiation skills

The results show that the grandmothers have acquired the confidence to negotiate with their sons and the rest of the family, thus creating the conditions for improving the well-being of the children. Grandmothers have become a central element in the decision-making process for the marriage of girls and a precious ally for the girls:

> *"If our parents want us to marry early, our grandmothers don't accept, they refuse. Therefore, when our parents want us to marry, we talk to our grandmothers because our dads are afraid of them, because the grandmothers are their mums. So, if we talk to our grandmothers and they speak to our fathers they drop the decision to marry us" (Teenage girl, Nemataba).*

> *"As for the grandmothers, they have become influential and intervene in conflicts as a mediator. Similarly, they encourage parents not to marry off their daughters and to allow them to study" (Teenage girl, Bakayoko).*

Their senior status gives them credibility with their sons in particular:

> *"They are the elders, and they are the ones who guide us on the path to follow and show us the one that we should not follow. We obey them too" (Father, Bakayoko).*

Grandmothers are also influential with their daughters-in-law and can negotiate less domestic workload for girls in order to free up time for schoolwork:

> *"We chat with our daughters-in-law so that they leave their young daughters in school. If adolescent girls return from school, they should not be asked to do housework; let them wash and rest and then they will learn their lessons. Because if they come back from school you tell them to go wash the dishes and get water from the wells; they will be exhausted; they will even forget what they learned in school. The mothers understood and acted on our advice. And now if the teenagers come back from school, they learn their lessons before going back to school" (Grandmother, Koumera).*

Whereas obedience was previously the order of the day, girls have also gained confidence, and can identify people in the community who are good sources of advice (grandmothers) to support them:

> "*If my father wanted to marry me off at this age or with someone I don't love, I would go and talk to my mum, if it doesn't work; I go and see my father's older brother. I tell him that my dad wants me to marry and I don't like it because I'm not yet old enough and I want him to let me study. I go and talk to my grandmother too. Since they are his elders I believe if they argue with him he will give up" (Young girl, Nemataba).*

Enhanced reproductive health skills

Grandmothers are also important allies in the field of reproductive health and are privileged interlocutors for girls. In a context where the age difference between girls and mothers is sometimes relatively small, mothers are not always able to advise their daughters on subjects which are relatively new to them, and which their daughters do not dare to talk about (especially the start of menstruation). The transition from adolescence is also a transition where young people need to confide in other trusted adults:

> *"... since I was embarrassed to talk to my mum about it; I decided to see my grandmother" (Teenage girl, Nemataba).*

> *"So, grandmothers with a lot of tact can discuss this with teenage girls until they understand.... They can also speak with young mothers to ensure that they do not neglect to discuss it with adolescent girls because it is ignorance that leads to certain errors" (Father, Nemataba).*

"Some mothers cannot talk about menstruation with their daughters. They cannot explain to adolescents what to do when their periods arrive and how to behave..." (Father, Nemataba).

The project allowed grandmothers to be able to counsel girls on several subjects related to reproductive health, including managing periods, the importance of giving birth in hospital and preventing pregnancy:

"When I experienced my first period, I went to see the grandmother. I told her I experienced something unusual today, she asked what it was, I told her it was blood, and she said, 'Come into the bedroom,' she explained everything to me saying that all girls see that" (Teenage girl, Saré Yira).

"The project and the grandmothers taught us a lot, because before we didn't have much knowledge but now, we are aware and we know a lot, because today the way the girl sees her menstruation" (Mother, Koumera).

"Before we did nothing but find traditional medicines, if she was in pain, we asked to take her to the healer, and she was tired. Now when we go to the hospital, when the doctor sees her, he can know if the time for delivery has come or not. If it is not yet time, he can give you medicine to relieve the pain while waiting for the birth" (Grandmother, Saré Yira).

Grandmothers have given mothers a better understanding of their daughters and the specific changes they go through in adolescence, in particular, the physiological and psychological changes linked to adolescence, and the transformations of the girl's body at puberty:

"Before we did not know much about the changes at the age of adolescence, it is the project and the grandmothers who taught it to us, how the adolescent girl changes. Before, we did not understand adolescent girls, we told them off all the time because we didn't understand them and we thought it was rudeness, we now know it's not rudeness, that these changes due to puberty are the causes of misunderstandings with their parents, we know now that these changes can make adolescent girls and their parents not understand each other" (Mother, Koumera).

Acquisition and transmission of knowledge

The pedagogy of the project, inspired by ancestral customs, restored grandmothers' confidence in their ability to pass on knowledge and made visible the relevance of their knowledge in today's society. Those who were not educated participate in the production of a culture stemming from ancient and revitalized traditions which are valued by the communities and by themselves:

"Riddles allow us to understand things we did not know. Tales and riddles strengthen children's knowledge" (Teenage girl, Bakayoko).

"The project and the grandmothers taught us a lot, because before we didn't have much knowledge" (Mother, Koumera).

The groups consulted demonstrate the value placed on the knowledge transmitted by the project:

"You see a project can give you money. You will spend it and it will be gone quickly. The project can also enable you to dig a well for you, although that may eventually collapse. What this project brought us will last forever, therefore, we want our abilities to be strengthened. Knowledge takes precedence over wealth, we also want it to help us continue forward, so that there is also development in the village" (Father, Bakayoko).

Confidence and self-esteem

Thanks to the project, the grandmothers were heard by the populations and this helped to increase their self-esteem. They are invested with the role of educators, even though they did not go to school:

> *"We teach, but we did not study" (Grandmother, Nemataba).*

Likewise, grandmothers testify that children have increased self-confidence, in particular because their views are better considered by their elders:

> *"The children no longer accept staying behind, they all want to be in front" (Grandmother, Nemataba).*

> *"Adolescent girls have the courage to speak, to express their feelings" (Grandmother, Koumera).*

COLLECTIVE CHANGES

Problem/conflict resolution

The action of the grandmothers goes beyond the family framework alone, and the influence they exert on the improvement of social ties (see above) is visible. They are described as forming the foundation of conflict resolution:

> *"Grandmothers have become mediators both in their respective homes but also in the surrounding homes. When they are informed of a conflict in a home, they are the ones who go to reconcile, inviting people to get along and remain united" (Father, Bakayoko).*

> *"[To see] if the grandmothers are useful you must have a problem, they will fight, body and soul, to solve it" (Father, Bakayoko).*

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS: EXAMPLES OF CHANGES DRIVEN BY THE PROJECT

The project allowed communities to take on the problems that were previously ignored. The significant stories of change described below were reported during interviews with the various project actors:

TABLE 2. EXAMPLES OF CHANGES CATALYZED BY THE PROJECT

Example 1. **Collective action to clean up the school before the start of new term**	A father says that the school in his village was so under-attended that it was almost abandoned. Following the community's efforts to rehabilitate it and allow children to continue their education, the communities were able to see positive results. The inspector wanted to close the school because the students did not go to school. Even the teacher was discouraged. For 2 years in this village, the 1st to the 5th of the best pupils of the town left to take the entrance test of the 6th, and so we are happy and grateful to the project.

Example 2. **Obtaining birth certificates allowed students access to secondary school**	The dialogue initiated within the framework of the project enabled the communities to identify the factors blocking the progression of children in the school system, in particular with regards to the failure to register births. However, registration in civil status registries allows access to identity documents, which then are necessary for access to secondary school. This problem has been resolved in some of the communities consulted in the context of this project, and indicates a significant change in standards translated by an evolution of attitudes and behaviors on the question of the importance of schooling. *"Before the arrival of the project, the students who passed their exams and left to learn at Nemataba could not continue their studies because we neglected to ensure they had the necessary papers. All the children said they had succeeded, but they could not advance because without the papers, they could not pass. These are the two most important things I remember. There are other things, but these are the two that left the greatest impression on me" (Community leader, Bakayoko).*
Example 3. **Grandmothers join forces to make school uniforms and pay for school supplies**	*"I had seen last year, all the mothers with the collaboration of the grandmothers of the Grandmothers Project each contributed 1000F or 1500F.... They bought fabrics to make blouses for primary school knowing that even buying notebooks, pens and inscriptions was problematic.... The inspector congratulated them and the minister too, because it is an example to show in Senegal. Things have changed and it is thanks to God and the Grandmothers Project program" (Mother, Bagayako).* *"Since the arrival of the Grandmothers Project, we have started making financial contributions to education. If the child tells you that he does not have a slate or a notebook, you can incur a debt with a communal fund so that your child has a regular opportunity to learn. When you work, you could pay at the cash register and your child's studies could go ahead" (Mother, Bagayako).* Investigator: "*And what is this fund?"* Participant: "*Strengthening of the ties!"* Investigator: "*Where does the money come from?"* Participant: "*We are the ones who contribute!*" Investigator: "*How much?*" Participant: "*500f sometimes, 1000f, it depends on everyone's means. There are no constraints, each does as they can."* Participant: "*But if your child is missing something you don't have at home, you go to the cashier and ask for credit, you buy the supplies for your child who is going to study as normal. During the month, if you have money you contribute to the fund."* Investigator: "*And where did this idea come from?"* Participant: "*The Grandmothers Project!" (Mother, Bagayako)*
Example 4: **Community clean-up actions**	*"For example, if there are derelict wells, we meet to fill them with sand, so that nobody falls into them. We also gathered to clean the village. It has also allowed us to mix, when women meet, men can join them to discuss as well as the young can join them, together they are going to interact with one another" (Grandmother, Koumera).*

Example 5: **Eliminating bees in schools**	The grandmothers proudly talk about how they were able to get rid of a beehive in the school which posed a danger to the children: *"I illustrate with an anecdote concerning bees which occupied the children's school for years. Four to five directors were concerned because the bees had chased the children several times when they came to learn. They tried to hunt the bees in vain!* *We grandmothers got together saying that since nobody has found a way to drive these bees out of here, we won't be able to successfully do so, we won't be able to go there at night since we are women. One of us asked the rest to find her a container filled with a flammable chemical. We dunked a piece of cloth into it until it was well soaked with the chemical... And that's how we managed to kill them one by one.* *Everyone laughed, saying, you grandmothers, you don't even know how to run, and you expect to rid us of the bees! We replied, of course we can.* *So, the students were amazed and wondered how we managed to get rid of these bees that have lived here for a long time, more than ten years and nobody was able to do anything.* *They asked us how we did it because for 12 years, the bees were there, nobody could move them, and now some eight women got rid of them in one day.... We explained to them how we managed to hunt these bees, they all appreciated it" (Grandmother, Nemataba).*
Example 6: **Grandmothers cook for school kids**	Participant 4: "*In our school, our children, we really want them to study, in the first place, we miss a lot of things in school..."* Interviewer: "*In the school?"* Participant 4: "*Yes. In school, because when you go to school, we cook and bring meals, since the doors are not good, donkeys can come after us and can eat the meals. We have to leave the dish for fear of being bitten by the donkey."* Interviewer: "*Taking it to school?*" Participant 1: "*We cook for students..."* Interviewer: "*At school? Is it cooked there? Do you offer it to them, or do you sell it?"* Participant 4: "*We cook it there."* Interviewer: "*Who cooks there?"* Participant 4: "*It's us!"* Investigator: "*Do you sell it to the children?"* Participant 4: "*No, we don't sell it to them! We cook it here, and we give it to them" (Grandmothers, Nemtaba).*
Example 7: **Grouping of women for income-generating activities**	Participant 5: "*Since the Grandmothers Project came along, we have made associations."* Investigator: "*Ok, groupings."* Participant 5: "*Yes, we contribute, we make soap, and we give it away every week."* Investigator: "*Do you buy soap and distribute it among yourselves?"* Participant 5: "*No, we make it ourselves."* Participant 5: "*It's us who make it, when the Grandmothers Project came, we started it together."* Investigator: "*You make soap and distribute it? If you make it, do you sell it?*" Participant 5: "*Yes, we sell it"(Grandmothers, Nemtaba).*

Diffusion effects

The diffusion effects of the project are observable through the cohesion effect and the collective action initiatives shown above. In addition, most of the adult respondents talked about the project and its content to friends, family, or neighbors.

> *"After each activity on our return home, friends ask us to tell them what has been said. We tell them and they tell us that they too would like to participate now, because they saw that the activities are useful" (Adolescent girl, Bagayako).*

There has also been a noticeable change in the level of duty bearers and local authority figures who disseminate positive messages on the education of children:

> *"Now even the Imam speaks of the education of children and the teacher" (Adolescent girl, Bagayako).*

Some neighboring villages expressed their wish to take part in the project:

> *"We have a very positive view of the Grandmothers Project, that is why even the neighboring villages want to be part of the project and they ask us how they could? They want to know how to get the project to their locality and they even go to the offices of M. to find out how to accomplish this" (Grandmother, Nemataba).*

During future research, it would be interesting to include the participants not directly involved with the project in the interviews, in order to better understand the elements of change in norms whose dissemination was more or less rapid.

COMMENTS ON THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

It seems important to welcome this report's results with caution, given the biases that can arise when collecting self-reported information (social desirability bias). In addition, these results must be compared with quantitative data and measured over time at a distance from the project. That said, there is every reason to believe that changes in social norms in favor of the well-being of children/adolescent girls have really taken place in the recipient social group of the project. Additional data is required to make this development visible in the indirect groups associated with the project.

In some interviews, a certain number of hesitations and repetitions suggest that the emphasis was not placed sufficiently on relational reconciliation (in order to put the respondent at ease). In some interview extracts, young girls find it difficult to speak and answer questions, which leads to some interviewers repeating the questions a few times and persisting to get an answer. During the training of investigators, it is important to emphasize that participants have the right not to answer any or all questions with which they do not feel comfortable. In addition, interviewers must be able to further explain any questions that are not understood. In future research, the methodology applied could use additional participatory approaches with adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS

BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE SELECTED APPROACH

The challenge of GMP to promote the holistic development of girls was all the greater because it took place in complex societies that were apparently homogeneous (sharing the Fulani language), but particularly divided and separated by demarcation lines such as age (older generations versus younger generations), gender (men versus women), social status (nobles versus commoners), and perspectives of social order (advocates of preserving tradition and cultural values versus advocates of change), etc.

These are the gaps that needed to be bridged. It was necessary to make the communities reflect on these divisions in order to find the consensus needed to overcome them.

To do this, it was essential to resocialize the grandmothers by changing the image associated with them and seeing them as resourceful people, capable of transmitting knowledge and values which the adolescents and all other segments of society could build in order to drive change by and for the community.

The GMP have reestablished social links and updated social resources. These efforts have particularly contributed to the strengthening of autonomy, understood here as the capacity of groups of people such as adolescent girls to be agents of their own destiny.

Furthermore, it is not individual autonomy that the GMP has created, but collective autonomy formed by sequences of autonomy (carried by adolescent girls, mothers, and grandmothers), which are self-reinforcing within coalitions of women. Thanks to this collective autonomy, women acquire important, but above all, effective decision-making powers in the sense that they can change norms. This approach to collective autonomy is in line with the works of Mumtaz and Salway (2009): "The women's autonomy framework, with its focus on independence, fails to consider these bonds and the crucial support women provide each other in a context dominated by patriarchal norms that are traditionally hostile to women's interests."

In any case, the effectiveness of these coalitions of women and their strategic alliances has appeared in the domain of girls' holistic development in the commune of Nemataba.

Also, it is important to note that the major changes that are taking place do not cause imbalances, which would otherwise endanger social orders and their functioning. Thus, if we can see the effectiveness of women's coalition (grandmothers, mothers, and adolescents) in making it possible to obtain the postponement of the marriage of a schooled adolescent girl through negotiation, we always leave the care to the man to publicly give the hand of his daughter and to the imam, the care of celebrating and blessing this marriage. This gives credit to Daniele Kintz (1999), a great Fulani specialist who said the following: "The one who expresses a position, or a decision is an adult man, preferably elderly. This does not mean that this position or decision is up to him alone. On the contrary, it was the discussions upstream, between peers, relatives or associates, which led to this position or decision."

You will find below a summary of the main conclusions of this study, focusing specifically on the approach, attitude, social norms, and behavior change of the GHD.

Strengthening the social fabric

- Communities are very enthusiastic and follow the approach that strengthens social and inter-generational connections. The intervention considers the group context in which social change occurs, which values group consensus over individual views.
- Strengthening inter-generational connections has, thus, facilitated and made collective action to achieve change possible.
- This project's main benefit is to value culture, traditions, and people first, helping them reach a point where they want to address other issues (especially harmful traditions).
- Community members engaged in dialogue that helped them reexamine social norms that discriminate against girls.
- The actions of grandmothers extend beyond their families and have a clear impact on the community. Grandmothers can take collective action and have become key agents of change.

Restoring traditions and figures that inspire respect

- The intervention made it possible to highlight internal community resources (bottom-up approach): by restoring respect for culture and grandmothers, the project helped the community recover a heritage it thought was lost (traditions). That development led to a reintegration process that deepened the sense of belonging and group identity in community members. That, in turn, led them to imagine new values.
- People who command respect can change social norms: as cultural guardians, grandmothers have a natural legitimacy regarding sensitive subjects rooted in tradition. Their age allows them to exercise symbolic authority in a society that emphasizes the value of respect for older women: parents cannot refuse a grandmother anything because she was born before us. Grandmothers are, thus, a precious resource, a preferred means of influencing community stakeholders (specifically parents).

> *"Multiple projects have been carried out here, but the Grandmothers Project truly enhanced our understanding. Some projects have generated money for us, but we spend those funds and don't last! This project, in contrast, taught us how to live with our children, our village, our community, and with others. The project, thus, taught us valuable lessons. We always carry those lessons with us, and never forget them. As you go through life, you'll always know how to get along with others. This project, thus, taught us that you benefit from engaging with others and exchanging ideas with them. You won't forget that. You 've learned how to treat your children, other people, anyone you will meet, you'll be able to get along with them" (Mother, Saré Yira).*

- Grandmothers have shown such openness to change that they have become figures of positive deviance.
- Grandmothers were an undervalued resource who took on roles in the lives of adolescent girls: they became the new mentors and models of resilience for young girls.

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES RELATED TO SOCIAL NORMS HARMFUL TO GIRLS

- The evaluation results show the creation of an initial group ready to publicly disavow some old and harmful practices. Specifically, the group rejected girls' marriages, FGM/C, corporal punishment, and discrimination linked to girls' access to school.
- Gaining new knowledge (especially on reproductive health) boosted confidence among the women and girls in the project.
- The intervention modified the family system: fathers no longer unilaterally make decisions affecting girls, but involve other members of their families and the community.
- The intervention helped parents reexamine traditional but harmful ways they tried to instruct their children and develop parenting skills requiring listening and non-violence.
- The project helped girls take more initiative and

> *"Men changed their views after participating in the Grandmothers Project discussions and exchanges. The project helped men support children in their studies, keep them in school, and show them respect. Men stopped seeing children as completely ignorant and treated them like smart people with whom they could talk calmly. The Grandmothers Project also helped the community come together to talk and to support the well-being of all its members" (Mother, Saré Yira).*

speak clearly so that adults hear them. These adults had not previously sought their opinions, especially at home and in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on lessons learned from this qualitative study. Some recommendations reflect suggestions that GMP should strengthen its strategies and project monitoring. Others reflect more general observations on the rights and welfare of girls, grandmothers, and communities. In addition to the following recommendations, change processes develop positively, as the GMP assumes and the theory of change states. A qualitative and quantitative follow-up study after several years of implementation would provide more information on the results of behavioral changes (preventing FGM/C, early marriage and pregnancy, and keeping girls in school). It would also be important to conduct a study of the results of GMP's work with schools to involve grandmothers in education. Such a study could examine how GMP helps create stronger bonds between teachers, families, and the community, develop trust and solidarity, and use storytelling to bring culture to schools. The theory of change assumes that this part of the program promotes community values and traditions. It thus creates trust and solidarity, increases respect for grandmothers, and, therefore, promotes all the processes of change. This qualitative study could not cover these questions, although GMP has conducted other independent studies of them.

Strengthening collective responsibility for greater gender equality

- The evaluation results highlight many successes emancipating girls and greater collective accountability for the welfare and development of adolescent girls. The evaluation showed that change is more likely to occur when key community stakeholders play major roles, including elders (grandmothers) and decision makers (community leaders, school officials, etc.). Expanding the roles of community stakeholders is worth considering if this project continues. Specifically, the project could welcome contributions from all community leaders (clergy, existing organizations, or groups), as well as men, boys, and others.

Updating the existing theoretical framework of change

- The intervention led to multiple changes that the original theoretical framework did not anticipate, specifically in the use of corporal punishment on children. The framework, thus, requires updates to reflect this development.

Highlighting the effects of more girls attending school

- If we can confirm the effects are linked to more girls attending school, we can expect that higher enrollment will strain educational services (e.g., class size, number of students per teacher, instructional quality, etc.). We will, therefore, need to consider these effects in the next program cycle.
- Grandmothers have made requests regarding support for school supplies, transportation for girls to high schools, and building a cafeteria as well as a wall to protect the school.
- The greater diligence that girls apply to their studies as they advance to secondary school could place financial and logistical strains on their families. Parents would lose the labor of their daughters (housework girls do to help their parents), reshaping roles and requiring support for these families.
- Girls entering secondary school will face new challenges and require support (tangible resources: transportation and supplies); diversity in school and growing importance of emotional relationships,

etc. It would be valuable to support girls in this new transition.

- Work with teachers to raise the quality of school instruction. Teachers need to learn methods for interacting, engaging, and communicating with children (girls and boys) to foster an environment conducive to learning.
- Continue to involve teachers in protecting girls, specifically support their in-service training in non-violent education (positive discipline), child protection procedures, and preventing sexual abuse in schools.
- Promote the safety of girls and boys in school: several grandmothers commented on the issue of school safety. They specifically cited the need to build fences around the school building to protect children from hazards and potential trespassers.

Tracking the impact of these changes on families and the community

- Strengthening the role of grandmothers can produce changes in family and community relationship dynamics. Specifically, it would be valuable for future research to examine the greater role that grandmothers play in families (i.e., the two pairs of grandparents) and the community.

Continuing to support the emancipation of girls

- Supporting girls in the process of emancipation and empowerment: in a context defined by rural poverty, a girl's future prospects often lie in the promise of a 'good marriage.' This means that the ultimate goal of girls remains securing a husband (marriage prospects). However, the start of change observed in girls' education (valuing education) could lead to discussions of their life plans. It would, thus, be valuable to revisit the social construction of gender relationships, especially the tradition of reducing the role women play to reproduction (mainly associated with motherhood and marriage).
- Strengthen cohesion within groups of young girls, for example, by facilitating learning: the girls serve as advisers and confidants to each other, they influence each other and can enrich their respective experiences. The project could, thus, highlight outstanding young women (role models; non-traditional but positive models) who can support girls in this important phase of their development.
- Continue to strengthen the human and social capital of girls: the evaluation results show an improvement in girls' knowledge, self-confidence, decision-making, and interpersonal skills. Young adolescent girls are now more confident in their ability to express themselves in public (to their families and at school) on subjects that affect them. They can identify key resource people who can help them in difficult situations. The project has made it possible for girls to express themselves; make their families hear them; and say no to early, forced marriage. It also marks a promising milestone towards girls mobilizing collectively to assert their rights.
- Establishing a process for monitoring these changes as the project progresses would be valuable. The team could consider developing a simple, participatory monitoring and evaluation system, so girls could assess themselves. They could measure changes in their personal development (decision-making, self-confidence, etc.), but also in their progressive involvement and mobilization in the community (collective action, girls' commitment to their rights).

Marriage and academic failure

- All groups have frequently reported that advancing girls' education depends on academic success. This means that girls who do not perform well are likely to leave school on their own, or when a teacher or parent tells them to. As a result, leaving school limits their equality of opportunity. These

reports also show communities still see marriage as the only way women can establish autonomy.

Monitoring the effects of changing social standards

- When one standard changes, it can lead to changes of some kind affecting related standards. This raises the question of how traditional, rural Senegalese society prioritizes and values different social standards. The project fostered a social dynamic that the team could use to monitor changes in other related or less important standards. This would help the team better understand and adapt project activities. For example, a change in standards related to de-emphasizing physical punishments (it is no longer considered acceptable to punish children by hitting them) can sometimes lead to adaptive behaviors. That conduct aims to induce obedience using verbal or psychological violence.
- *"We haven't seen battered children since the project started. Now you can confront children alone in a room and shout at them until they understand but don't get angry" (Grandmother, Koumera).*
- It will, therefore, be necessary to support this change in non-violence and positive education by providing parents with new tools. Specifically, parents need non-violent ways to communicate and help developing clear rules for family members to live together.
- Changing a standard practice by delaying a girl's marriage until after puberty may lead to new behaviors that encourage girls to remain chaste. Parents may assert stronger control over a daughter's social activity (going out at night).
- Grandmothers, parents, and daughters will also require support in this process so they can cope with the changes resulting from coeducation and exposure to boys in school. A curriculum to educate students about emotions and puberty is one possible form of support.
- Finally, delaying marriage does not ensure that parents will not 'commit' a daughter to marriage during puberty, or even have her married without consummating the marriage. Some families may commit a girl to marriage with the tacit agreement of the husband to let her keep studying until she turns 18. This practice requires further research in order to better understand its parameters (engagement, traditional versus official marriage, etc.).

  "She will have a wedding but will not go to live with her husband" (Father, Koumera).

Indeed, the main factor in delaying marriage is a young girl's physical maturity (e.g., she is not physically ready for pregnancy) and not her psychological maturity. It is, thus, important to address these issues considering a young girl's emotional maturity (can a 12-year-old girl make an informed and adult choice about a potential spouse?). This raises the question of marriage without the girl's (mature) informed consent.

Girls' emotional and reproductive health education

- An important part of the action of grandmothers consists in preventing early pregnancies, mainly by limiting the risks of exposure to gender diversity and socialization opportunities (night outings) as mentioned above, and by educating girls about abstinence before marriage. We can consider a complementary component to limit early pregnancies by supporting girls and boys on the component of reproductive health (including use of voluntary family planning methods) and emotional education (how to make choices).

On the other hand, some misconceptions about puberty and sex emerged in interviews with women (you can get pregnant by touching a boy or before your first period), which would need to be clarified. The information appears to come from rumors, myths, or information provided by other services in the community. GMP is working to resolve this through community meetings where mothers and grandmothers are invited to discuss these misconceptions.

Extension to the most vulnerable groups

Consider the possibility of widening the spectrum of intervention to young girls from the most marginalized groups:

- Girls who are already married;
- Girls who are out of school and working inside/outside the house;
- 'Invisible' girls like domestic workers;
- In general, the most vulnerable groups of girls (living in families in conflict, orphans of a parent, living with one or two sick parents, living with a disability, victim of abuse or violence, etc.).

Involving boys

- One of the recommendations of grandmothers and fathers is to involve the boys in the dialogue process, so that they feel concerned and benefit from the transfer of knowledge on changes related to puberty and emotional relationships.

  "If we can get close to young boys like we did with young girls, that would be nice. But if we are only close to girls and not boys, you know something is going to be missing" (Grandmother, Nemataba).

Their involvement in the area of reproductive health and education in the emotional life of adolescents (prevention of adolescent pregnancy) would also be an important aspect for future projects.

APPENDICES

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE COMMUNE OF NEMATABA

This study mainly focused on the Fulani community. Fulani societies constitute both a homogeneous and heterogeneous whole. The homogeneity is reflected in the sharing of the same language from Senegal to Adamaoua in Cameroon, passing through all the countries of the Sahel strip (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso): "Despite their spread geographically and their different political, social and economic structures, the Fulani speak the same language (whose dialects are not all inter-comprehensible), but it is above all their social institutions, many of which are common to all the Fulani groups, which are the basis of their specificity and which distinguish them from the other ethnic groups which surround them" (Kintz, 1975).

The commune of Nemataba is made up of villages inhabited by three ethnic groups:

- The Fulani;
- Soninke;
- The Koniagui.

The Fulani Fulani (originally from Guinea Conakry) and the Foulacounda Fulani, native to the area, constitute the largest ethnic group, followed by Soninke and Koniagui, whose numbers are relatively low. The Fulani societies of Senegal in general, and of the commune of Nemataba in particular, have shared and continue to share a certain number of socio-demographic characteristics. Among these are early marriage. Girls used to be given in marriage at a very young age to avoid extra-marital pregnancies, which was considered a supreme dishonor for the girl, her mother, and her family in general. Having a child

“reeducated” out of marriage was an event that the girls, families, and communities sought to protect themselves by giving young girls into marriage very early on.

Another fundamental fact of the Fulani communities within Nemataba commune is that there is a statutory demarcation line between the Foulbé, who are nobles, and the Jiyabé, who can go unnoticed by outside observers. Jiyabes, whatever their age or sex, have less authority compared to Foulbé. To give only the example of marriage, a Foulbé girl cannot accept being married with a commoner. In addition, there are also certain discriminating representations within these apparently homogeneous societies: a Foulbé elder who has become poor can find the chance to become rich again by marrying a commoner. In contrast, a wealthy commoner risks becoming poor if he marries a nobleman.

Before the arrival of GMP, grandmothers were marginalized. This marginalization was first a purely biological reality. It is considered that as part of the life cycle, they had made their lives.

From the viewpoint of the younger generations, grandmothers are old-fashioned and quirky. This marginalization was manifested by a disagreement between the grandmothers and their teenage girls, as underlined by this grandmother who stresses that the arrival of the GMP reconciled them with their granddaughters:

> *“Thank God, the activities helped us a lot because now, we get along with our little girls. We tell them stories and tales. If they are asked to go to school and they do end up going, the project will turn out to be very useful” (Grandmother, Nemataba).*

In addition, marginalization was often linked to the fact that they were considered as witches who could, therefore, harm the physical and mental health of the people they approached. This image of the grandmother is not only the prerogative of Fulani societies (Foulbé Fouta or Foulacounda) but is found widely in Africa. Roger-Petitjean (1999) explained the restriction of the grandmother’s attendance in certain places where she was undesirable in connection with the image that was stuck to her: “On the other hand, it is sometimes forbidden for her to go to places frequented by women of reproductive age (there is sometimes a suspicion of witchcraft with regard to elderly women), therefore to the health center (she only goes there if she is suffering and is accompanied).”

This marginalization, therefore, occurs first at the family level, insofar as the grandmother-sorcerer’s attacks are primarily directed against their parents: “In general, wizards are supposed to have a special hold on their parents. This is why we look for the culprits in witchcraft cases first inside the house” (Geschiere, 1998).

Added to this is that witchcraft is particularly feared, as Madina Querre (2003) shows, citing the words of the Fulani woman in Burkina Faso: “A sorcerer is an assassin. It is a great evil to be a sorcerer!” (Woman from DebereTalata).

The combination of the dangerousness of witchcraft drawn from its evil power and the fact that its preferential targets are primarily members of its family explain why, in the villages of the commune of Nemataba, grandmothers were kept away from their grandchildren within their own families. It is, therefore, an intra-family isolation.

The communities of the study, although living together, are separated into zones which will determine the relations between the one and the other, as well as the level of communication between the different groups. These different zones constitute barriers to the establishment of intra and intergenerational solidarities. They also are prohibitions to communicate and to act. Therefore, although living together and offering the image of homogeneous and united communities, we are faced with heterogeneous communities that cannot forge common destinies. The paths of change for holistic development must necessarily recreate social ties.

This change is possible. For this, we must consider the standards that guide social and cultural practices, such as marriage, fertility, education of girls, their access to speech. We can understand by norm, the meaning that Dressen (2003) gave it, from the work of Durkheim (1893). The norm is “the set of rules which are not negotiated, but not necessarily mechanically reproducible, to designate informal moral constraints

which are often the subject of inculcation and incorporation" (Dressen, 2003).

Changing standards requires identifying the mechanisms through which they interact and reproduce. It also requires identifying and targeting the transmission belts of cultural norms and values, of the agents who are their custodians and transmitters.

One of the essential mechanisms for the reproduction of standards was the assignment of roles, positions, and spaces, assignments based on gender and generation inequalities: men and seniors are theoretically power holders compared to women and young people. The frequentation of places which are also spaces for deliberation of issues affecting the community is also determined by these criteria of gender and generation: women are not going to go and discuss community affairs with the men under the tree. This would be considered a hassle. Children are not allowed to speak in order to give an opinion on matters concerning them.

EXAMPLES OF HOW GHD'S PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH ARE ANCHORED IN LOCAL CULTURE

Storytelling

The reassessment of the perception of the grandmother also had to be more easily acceptable by the community and the adolescent girls, starting from the traditional roles. In order to do so, the reconsideration of the perception of grandmothers had to start from their own traditional role in these societies, essentially based on oral tradition. Sudano Sahelian societies are societies orientated around storytelling conducted by elders, mainly mothers and grandmothers. These tales, which often present a Manichean vision of the world, force adolescents to be responsible adults who have influence on the fate of their communities. Tales are of capital importance in traditional society where it is a privileged means of education: "In traditional African societies, the gratuitousness of art cannot be imagined: all occasions are good for education, all the more so during a storytelling session. From then on, the moral of storytelling takes on its full meaning: it is a question of making the individual responsible towards his group, of ensuring harmony, of preserving the balance of society through the rectitude of behaviors" (Lebrun, 1994).

The tale allows values considered cardinal to be instilled: "The African tale, we understand, cultivates values, whereas dishonesty, jealousy, disrespect, indiscretion, lies and selfishness are castigated" (Lebrun, 1994).

Both at school and especially at home, in the evening after reading the lessons, the grandmothers' tales are very appreciated because it is instructive, but above all, it is a good use of their time, and frees them from the temptation to go out at night to date boys. Because of this, we can explore the functionality of storytelling in the evening.

One way in which the tale is conveyed is in an educational style intended to educate adolescent girls and to transmit to them the cardinal virtues which are the backbone of the Fulani ethos (the *pulagu*): the *jom* (meaning of honor), *kersa*, *ndimagu* (nobility), *mojeere* (kindness and sense of sharing). This primary vocation of the story coincides with that of the grandmother at school.

Another way the tale is conveyed is as a purely instrumental rendition, which seems to appear in the evening. This activity has the desirable purpose of occupying the adolescent, or to entertain her, so that she does not consider going out at night, which can be potentially dangerous because it can lead to unwanted pregnancies. But ultimately, whatever the explicit or implicit purpose, the tale told by the grandmother at school or in the evening at home, appears as a fundamental communication tool in the revival of the social bond between the grandmother and adolescent, rooting adolescent girls in their cultural context and transmitting positive cultural values.

Revitalizing intra-generational and intergenerational links

It is important to understand that the end of self-marginalization and the end of marginalization of grandmothers will put an end to the stances of avoidance between them. These acts will also break down the barriers and close the gap that they had established between themselves. The meetings between the grandmothers themselves, those between them and the masters, favored by the GMP will restore a feeling of a common destiny, which is a key element of Fulani societies. In fact, each individual belongs to and identifies with a group (*yirdee* / *feddee* in the singular and *jiree* / *pellee* in the plural). It is "these social resources" that the GMP has regenerated and made available. Not only the grandmothers, but also all the other *jirees* (grandmothers, parents, and adolescent girls) will draw on these resources to regain their cohesion, remobilize, and develop autonomy.

Dealing with the tinkering of identities, the mobilization of social resources with a view to achieving autonomy, Bessone et al. (2015) explain:

> "In this context, individuals would benefit from a certain autonomy in terms of 'choice' and identity building or 'identity tinkering,' when they use the social resources at their disposal as there are so many materials they themselves can use to contribute to the production of their own identity, as argued, for example, by James C. Scott. Thus, autonomy finds its source in the multiplicity of internalized social roles which fosters, from primary sociality, the possibility of a reflexive distance with regard to these roles and allows the individual to be supported, below this socialization, on a reflexive identity or 'identity for oneself.' This distance would allow the individual to never coincide with their social roles, to disengage from them, to refuse classifying categorizations, and finally to make themselves available for identity acquisition projects, made possible by an affiliation chosen with help from others or social groups considered to be 'significant.' With these, an identification process begins."

In the same way that the grandmothers found themselves in the *jiree* of the *mamirabé*, the adolescent girls, too, will find themselves in their corporations (*jiree jiwbee*), and will also rely on these "social resources" made available by the project for also achieving autonomy. Mumtaz and Salway (2009) evoke these coalitions between women, woven by bonds which constitute crucial social resources: "women-to-women bonds in Jatti constitute a woman's key social resource." It is important to understand autonomy here from a global and not an individual perspective. In other words, the autonomy created is collective, in the sense that it is made up of the contributions of autonomy emanating from adolescent girls, mothers, and grandmothers.

The GMP, therefore, favored intra and intergenerational synergies, which are the basis of the commitment of the different categories for the promotion of the well-being of adolescent girls and the village. This commitment is particularly evident in the mobilization of grandmothers in several villages to support the education of adolescent girls.

Intelligent and efficient use of "social resources" by women's coalitions to forge the autonomy of adolescent girls and grandmothers and go after their goals.

In fact, grandparents, and especially grandmothers in Fulani societies, have been considered very attached to their grandchildren. The excesses or misconduct of small children are often seen as the direct consequence of too much affection from grandmothers towards them. However, this non-functional, affective link could not be exteriorized due to a number of barriers, like the negative representations associated with the grandmother like the witch figure. This would be revitalized, and this revitalization will be one of the links in the women's coalition, which integrates at the family and community levels, the grandmother, the mother, and the adolescent. This coalition is a strategic alliance because it is both a space of power, but also a space of decision-making concerning the essential questions related to reproductive health and the well-being of

adolescent girls. According to one article, whether it be FGM/C, engagement, marriage, pregnancy management, breastfeeding, or schooling for adolescent girls, mothers, but especially grandmothers, are the real holders of decision-making powers. In general, everything related to reproductive life is controlled by older women, as evidenced by White et al. (2013) in this study on Mali, certain socio-cultural traits of which are shared by Senegal: "Although Mali has a strongly patriarchal society, it seems that women — older women in particular — exert influence over maternal health decisions."

This assimilation of elderly women to a reservoir of experience and wisdom is even shared by other non-African communities.[6] Mumtaz and Salway (2009), in the context of research carried out in Pakistan, evoke the wisdom attached to older women and which gives them decision-making power.

These powers are legitimized by a specific cultural fund. Indeed, relative to everything related directly to sexuality or indirectly to it (FGM/C, marriage), the body isn't private property, but rather community property. This is the reason why a pregnancy of an unmarried young girl is considered a shame for the whole family.

Generally, the shame of getting pregnant outside of marriage is associated with the shame of the girl, but also of her parents and even her peers. This communitarian concept of the body has been well highlighted in the work of Izugbara and Undie (2008) on the ownership of the body in various African cultural contexts, including Senegal, taking the example of rape: in this instance, the notion of the "communal body" is privileged over the body and personhood of the victim. The body and personhood of the victim are important; however, the serious incident is regarded as having affected a larger body than that of the victim alone. The "communal body," therefore, appears to take precedence in this matter (Izugbara & Undie, 2008).

It is this communitarian appropriation of the body and here in this case of the adolescent girls' bodies more assumed by mothers and grandmothers, that gives them a certain social legitimacy to speak about the affairs of the adolescent girl and to advocate. In other words, their coalition will make it possible to transform "group causes" into "coalition causes."

[6] Older women are considered *siyarni* (wise and experienced) and vested with the authority to make these decisions (Mumtaz & Salway, 2009).

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