How Do You Prevent Child Marriage And Early Pregnancy And Keep Girls In School? Empower Their Grandmothers

A Collaboration between Passages and Grandmother Project – Change through Culture
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Girls’ Holistic Development (GHD)
Adolescent Girls in Kolda, Senegal

- Strong family ties
- Identification with tradition and cultural values
- Parental responsibility to protect and ensure girls’ well-being
- Average age of marriage: 17 years
- 64% of women circumcised
Considering Culture

**ISSUE BASED PROGRAMS**

- Knowledge
- Attitudes
- Norms
- Practices

**CULTURAL FOCUS IN PROGRAMS**

- Values and vision
- Dynamics of families and community systems
- Hierarchies of authority
- Interaction, decision making
Cultural Influence On Girls’ Rights & Development

- Girls can rarely make decisions on their own
- Various family members are involved in decisions regarding girls’ welfare and options in life
- Senior women/grandmothers have considerable influence in those decisions.
- Grandmothers play a central role in socialization of adolescent girls and throughout the lifecycle
Intergenerational dialogue and critical thinking

Grandmother leadership training, confidence and skill building

Participatory learning sessions with groups of grandmothers

Changing social norms

Girls empowerment and strengthened social connections

Keeping girls in school

Preventing child marriage, circumcision/FGM, early pregnancy
Intergenerational Communication

- Traditional and existing attitudes, beliefs and practices
- New and improved information and practices
- Strengthen existing communication links within communities
- Create new communication links within communities
How Does The GHD Approach, With Its Emphasis On Grandmother Action, Foster Normative Change?
1-What are the change mechanisms and are they leading to normative and behavior change?

2-How will they be scaled (and documented)?
Girls’ Holistic Development

**Program Theory of Change – Girls’ Holistic Development Approach**

### Girls’ Holistic Development

**Package of Activities**

#### Strengthening Social Infrastructure

- **Activities**
  - IG forums (communitywide)
  - GM leader training
  - Women’s forums (3 generations)
  - Days of praise of GM’s
  - Days of Solidarity (Inter-village meetings)

#### Linking Schools to Culture via GMs

- **Activities**
  - Teacher workshops
  - Teacher + GM workshops
  - Teacher-GM-led classroom sessions

### Mediating/Enabling Effects

- GMs more confident to act in girls’ interest
- Increased Communication on girl child issues
- Solidarity within/between villages
- Solidarity between peers – GMs, women, and girls
- Improved & expanded IG relationships
- Young people & GM/adults aware of female health
- Communities more involved in educating youth
- Communities more involved in school management
- Pupils know how to integrate into practice culture via GM and Teachers

### Behavioral & Normative Shifts

- **Diffusion of new ideas and role models to larger community**
- **GM and other adult allies and champions** advocating for girls rights to education, health, expanded life roles
- **Education system better aligned with Community and Cultural values**
  - Children, especially girls, stay in school
  - Better teaching quality
  - Better pupil performance

### Ultimate Aim

- **More coherent and collective social mobilization** in favor of strengthening positive practices/discouraging negative practices on girls’ futures/choices in health, education, marriage and related practices & wellbeing
- **GM and other adult allies and champions** advocating for girls rights to education, health, expanded life roles
- **Better girl-child outcomes**
- **Strengthened community infrastructure**
  - Inclusive of all voices regardless of gender, age, socioeconomic status
  - Better able to engage with changing culture and society
- **Education system better aligned with Community and Cultural values**
  - Children, especially girls, stay in school
  - Better teaching quality
  - Better pupil performance

- **Better grit-child outcomes**
  - Extra-marital teen pregnancy
  - Practice of early marriage and FGC.
Research Questions

• How does Girls Holistic Development (DHF) influence **self efficacy, intentions, social norms and behaviors** of grandmothers and girls?

• How does DHF influence **communication**? And the **value and role of grandmothers**?

• How does DHF influence **community collective agency in favor of girls, social cohesion and collective action**?
## Qualitative Methods

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Adolescent Girls & Grandmothers

Grandmothers have a very important role in the home and educating the community.

- Adolescent girl
CHILD MARRIAGE

- Protect girls from unplanned pregnancy/early pregnancy

- Family honor

- Father as the traditional decision maker

- Economic security

The girls mother will see that her child is growing up. She will want her to marry. If the girl refuses, the parents will force her to marry.

- Adolescent Girl, speaking about her parents before GHD program
Before (GHD), fathers and mothers discussed and made decisions about their daughters marriage without consulting anyone. But now, everyone is involved. Grandmothers have close relationships with adolescent girls and their mothers. In the community, everyone is talking to each other.

-Adolescent girl
Girls Education

- Birth registration
- Parents engaged in school
- Grandmother story telling
- Value of education uplifted
- Chores and homework
Early Pregnancy

We wanted to marry adolescents before 18 years to avoid some problems (e.g., early, unmarried pregnancy) that they face. Now (after GHD), we refuse that our children are married (before 18 years). But we see, when we follow this new system, girls start spending more time with boys. The result is that they come back with the very thing that most concerns their parents (i.e., early, unmarried pregnancy).

- Father of adolescent girl
New Strategies Emerge

Girls are encouraged to spend more time with family and discouraged to have relationships with boys.

Changing norms and practice of child marriage and girls education

Retained norms of purity, honor, and girls' virginity
Grandmothers teach the community about its culture. When young people know their culture, they will not go in the wrong direction. Culture should not disappear. It should be passed on one generation to the next.

- Father of adolescent girl
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT HOW NORMS SHIFT IN GHD?
Project Actions To Prevent Violence

- A **holistic approach** to supporting girls resonates more with communities than single issue programs.

- **Accurate information and support** among and between groups support change.

- **Grandmothers constitute an abundant and underutilized resource** given their status and their proximity, experience and commitment to girls’ well-being.

- Project staff and community agents use **respect and dialogue** to shift norms.
Community Actions To Prevent Violence

• Communities are supportive of strategies which recognize and value their culture

• **Girls and grandmothers can lead change**, influence peers and elders

• Girls well-being is a critical concern to the community and **locally identified solutions** can protect protection and ensure girls well-being

• Working within existing hierarchy, **shifts in interaction, dialogue and content of communication** can influence decision making
If someone wants to bring down a large tree, they will get tired before they even starts the battle. But if they work in a group, then in no time, the tree will fall. This demonstrates the benefits of communication, solidarity and cohesion.

- Mother of adolescent girl
THANK YOU!