

REINFORCING THE CAPACITIES OF MARGINALIZED ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE REGIONS OF DAKAR AND THIES



PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION - RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED - (OF A JOINT UNFPA-UNICEF-GOVERNMENT OF SENEGAL PROJECT)

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I.- THE PROJECT

The project "Reinforcing the Capacities of Marginalized Girls in the Regions of Dakar and Thiès" began at the end of 2001. The project was funded at US\$1,099,000 by the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP). It is directed by a Pilot Committee presided over by the Department of Youth and is implemented jointly by UNFPA, UNICEF, and the Department of Youth.

The goal of the project is to expand the opportunities and life choices of 10,000 adolescents in the regions of Dakar and Thiès. The main strategies are reinforcing access to quality services and adolescent empowerment. The first strategy is to provide adolescents with a "package" of services in the areas of reproductive health, non-formal education, vocational training, and socio-economic integration. The second strategy was that of empowerment, consisting of life skills education through peer education and counseling.

II.- THE EVALUATION

UNFIP project funds will come to term in the second semester of 2005 and evaluation activities are currently underway. At the beginning of the year, an evaluation protocol was elaborated by project partners with the technical support of WHO. The goal of the evaluation is to understand what was achieved and to form lessons learnt in terms of results and project implementation, with the purpose of helping involved actors reinforce their adolescent programs and policies.

Initially, the evaluation methodology was based on the administration of a questionnaire to be responded to by adolescent project beneficiaries as well as a control group. This approach was chosen to achieve the main objectives of the evaluation, which were to measure the impact of the integrated service package made available for adolescents. In addition to the questionnaire, the evaluation would consist of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with adolescents and people from their immediate environment in order to acquire a deeper understanding of questionnaire results.

During the preparation of the evaluation protocol, it was noted that even if the evaluation took account of adolescent perceptions, it would only be within the framework of the evaluation questions that were formulated by project staff and evaluation consultants. In this way, adolescent participation in the evaluation would be in the form of *consultation* rather than *active* participation.

Therefore, it was proposed that a *participatory evaluation* be carried out, by the adolescents themselves. This evaluation would be based on their preoccupations and the adolescents themselves would determine the questions to be asked.

III.- STAGES OF THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

The participatory evaluation was undertaken as follows:

1. A 3-day workshop (see Annex 1) was organized where 20 adolescent peer educators were gathered together from 3 partner NGOs (ACAPES, Keur Elleck, Solidarité AK BENN). The objective of the workshop was to facilitate discussions and activities that would lead the adolescents to reflect on their participation in the project and to formulate questions that would help them assess the strengths and weaknesses of the projects they had participated in. Questions formulated by the adolescents were put in questionnaire format (see Annex 2) with the purpose of being administered by these 20 peer educators with other project beneficiaries.
2. Peer educators returned to their respective neighbourhoods and carried out the questionnaires with other project beneficiaries that had participated in the life skills education sessions. Each peer educator interviewed 8-10 peers, leading to a total of 175 questionnaires being completed.
3. A second 2-day workshop was organized during which the results from the questionnaires were shared among the 20 peer educators (see Annex 1). Participants discussed the results, analyzed them, and finally proceeded to make recommendations for project improvement. At the end of this workshop, the 20 peer educators self-selected 6 adolescents among themselves that would work on a *participatory video*.
4. The 6 selected peer educators participated in an 8-day workshop, and through a hands-on 'learning by doing' approach, created a participatory video from writing the script, to assisting in the final editing (see Annex 1). The participants were encouraged to use the results and recommendations of the participatory evaluation in both learning exercises, and when deciding upon a topic for the final video. One of the recommendations made by the peer educators during the participatory evaluation had been to better sensitize parents on the project as to foster greater parental support in their daughters' participation in the project. Thus, the video set out to show parents the positive impact the project had on participants' lives. The video, *Xam Xamlé* (To Know and to Help Others Know) is based on a role-play that shows the change in attitudes and behaviour of an adolescent girl before and after her participation in the project. The video also included 3 parent testimonials.
5. The final editing of the video with the technical support of the Dakar Media Centre.
6. The presentation of the participatory evaluation and video to government and NGO partners.

The workshops were facilitated by a UNICEF staff member along with support from ACAPES staff, in collaboration with the Department of Youth, Keur Elleck and Solidarité AK BENN.

Specificity of participatory evaluation and participatory video

Participatory evaluation is theoretically linked to *participatory communication*. The two approaches put emphasis on 1) the *process* as being empowering; 2) *relevance* for primary actors; and 3) a sense of *ownership* for primary actors where the process and end product are expressed in *their voice*.

Traditionally, participatory evaluation is linked with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Action Research (PAR). In this context, participation is more than a consultation; rather the primary actors identify the evaluation questions, carry out the evaluation, and formulate recommendations. In this context, the 'expert' takes on the role of *facilitator*.

Participatory communication likewise is linked to PRA and PAR and uses media such as video, community radio, and community theatre. Communication in this context is more than just an end product: it is an approach where primary actors analyse a situation, identify messages, and direct the creative process. It is media *by* the people and *for* the people the end product is intended for. In this context, as with participatory evaluation, the 'expert' becomes a facilitator, giving maximum creative decision-making freedom to participants themselves.

IV.- RESULTS ACHIEVED

- 20 adolescent peer educators evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of their project according to the administration of a questionnaire formulated by themselves (results presented in the section that follows).
- 6 adolescents acquired basic video-making skills through which they presented the results of their evaluation.
- 1 participatory video based on the participatory evaluation.
- The participatory evaluation complimented the formal consultant evaluation and allowed a greater space for adolescents to be heard.
- The participatory evaluation and video process, was a strong learning opportunity for all actors involved.

V.- RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

The box below contains a synthesis prepared by the 20 peer educators that summarizes the results of the participatory evaluation questionnaire carried out by them in their neighbourhoods with their peers.

Synthesis written by peer educators:

We were 20 peer educators from three partner organizations (ACAPES, Keur Elleck, Solidarité AK BENN) that gathered together in a workshop for 3 days to discuss the project 'Reinforcing the Capacities of Adolescent Girls'. At the end of the 3 days we elaborated a questionnaire that we administered in our respective neighbourhoods among our peers that participated in the project as well as their parents (see Annex 2 for a list of the questions). The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out how the project had improved the lives of adolescents. The evaluation of the project was carried out in a participatory method and the results will be presented in terms of strengths, weakness, and also recommendations.

Project Strengths

Before the project, there were many girls who didn't do anything but drink tea, go to the beach, stay at home idle, or visit their friends. Now, with the project, they have an occupation. All the adolescents appreciated their education in Life Skills:

Communication techniques:

The project permitted us to communicate better with our parents, our elders, our peers, our community, and confident to speak before a large group of people.

We have also acquired knowledge in:

Reproductive health:

- Regarding the development of our bodies and puberty;
- Regarding how to face risks such as early and unwanted pregnancy, STDs and HIV/AIDS, abortion, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, etc.

Human rights:

- About our rights and responsibilities;
- About the right to an education, the right to a name and family, the right to be registered at birth, the right to a clean environment, the right to equality, etc.

Decision making:

- With regards to our parents concerning early marriage and the type of work we would like to do;
- With regards to boys and our friends;
- About the consequences of our decisions

Conflict resolution:

- Regarding the manner with which to manage our conflicts with our parents, our elders, and our friends.

Socio-economic integration:

We received vocational training in food preparation, restaurant training, and tailoring. The adolescents appreciated the training methodology used by the peer educators during the training sessions. They were happy with the peer educators' comportment during the sessions.

Weaknesses

Despite the strengths of the project, we came to identify some weaknesses that needed to be pointed out, including the following:

- The peers did not receive the financial support they were waiting for to facilitate their socioeconomic integration;
- Absence of vocational training in fabric dyeing and hairdressing;
- Lack of sensitization for parents regarding the objectives of the project;
- The Life Skills manual was written in French and too difficult for adolescents with a low level of education.

Parents' Perceptions

The large majority of parents thought the project was very positive. Parents cited the following behaviour change in their daughters:

- Increased maturity
- Increased realism
- Improvement in education
- Acquisition of knowledge
- Improvement of financial management

Parents remarked that after participation in the project, their daughters became more disciplined, respectful, and communicate better. Parents are proud of their daughters. However, according to many parents, there wasn't a substantial financial support.

Recommendations

Taking into consideration the strengths and weakness of the project, as well as our experiences as peer educators, we make the following recommendations to improve the project:

1. Expand the program to the national level;
2. Provide financial support for socio-economic integration;
3. Provide the micro-credit promised;
4. Provide a financial stipend for peer educators;
5. Improve the Life Skill manuals and other communication materials;
6. Sensitize parents about the project;
7. Provide adolescents with a certificate once they have completed their vocational training;
8. Reinforce French education;
9. Advocate local authorities to officially recognize the literacy training provided by the project;
10. Solicit partners to rehabilitate the local centres;
11. Provide transport funding to those with the greatest need.

IV - META-ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

This section offers a meta-analysis of the participatory evaluation, according to the participant observation carried out by the UNICEF facilitator.

1. *Project Relevance and Effectiveness*

One of the questions the participatory evaluation aimed to answer was: to what extent the adolescents could identify with the project and if the goals of the project -as articulated by program staff at UNICEF and partner organizations - were perceived as being the same goals by the project participants themselves. In addition, to what extent was there convergence between the felt needs/aspirations of the adolescents and those envisioned by the project managers?

The overall answer is positive. When the adolescents were asked what they thought the project goals were – what their project tried to accomplish – the answers were in line with the goals specified in the project documents. They were aware and able to identify the multiple components of the package (life skills training, vocational training, literacy and micro-credit). When answering the question “what problems did the project try to address?” they answered in line with the problems articulated by the project. The consensus was overwhelmingly positive on the relevance of the project components to the participants’ lives.

Main competence/goal envisioned by project: The adolescent is capable of resolving the problems she confronts in her context, permitting her to be a more active citizen who is well-integrated in the economic and social development process. ¹

Adolescents largely identified “being able to solve our own problems” as a main goal of the project and as a main result of their participation in the project. In this regard, they also identified increased participation in training to better their economic situation, as well as better relations with peers and community, as main goals and results.

The table below compares the goals set out by the project with regards to the life skills component (as they appear in the Life Skills Manual for peer educators), with the impact of the project, as identified by peer educators during the participatory evaluation.

Project goals ²	Project impact as identified by participants in the participatory evaluation
<p><u>Reproductive health:</u></p> <p>-Adolescent shares her problems with her peers and seeks to find solutions.</p> <p>-Adolescent resolves problems associated with reproductive health and risky situations to assure her general well-being, that of her peers, and of her community.</p>	<p>-often cited as project result.</p> <p>-knowledge and “knowing how” to avoid a risky situation cited as project result. However, it remains unclear to what extent actual behavior has changed (e.g. use of contraceptives).</p>

¹ As specified in the Life Skills Manual for peer educators

² As they appear in the Life Skills Manual for peer educators

Project goals ²	Project impact as identified by participants in the participatory evaluation
<p>-Adolescent is able to cope with puberty.</p> <p>-Adolescent fights against STDs/AIDS, early pregnancy.</p> <p>-Adolescent avoids risky situations and develops preventive actions for self-protection and for that of her peers and community.</p> <p><i>Evaluation indicators:</i></p> <p>-Adolescent can identify the different problems that pose a risk to her.</p> <p>-Problems identified can be regrouped in six categories. Relations between the different categories can be described.</p> <p>-Adolescent can identify the different physical and psychological problems of adolescence.</p> <p><u>Human Rights:</u></p> <p>-Adolescent promotes the respect of her rights, of her peers, and of her community.</p> <p>-Adolescent develops actions for the respect of her rights and actions to exercise her responsibilities.</p> <p><i>Evaluation indicators:</i></p> <p>-Adolescent puts in place awareness raising actions of her main rights and responsibilities and of the respect of equality.</p> <p>-Adolescent participates in citizenship activities.</p> <p>-Adolescent puts in place awareness raising activities against religious/socio-cultural/economic obstacles that impede the recognition of her rights.</p> <p><u>Socio-economic insertion:</u></p> <p>-Adolescent inserts herself more easily into the socio-economic fabric.</p> <p>-Adolescent is capable of finding training adapted to her needs and level.</p> <p>-Adolescent is capable of finding employment opportunities and presenting herself to them.</p>	<p>-often cited as project result.</p> <p>-knowledge on protection often cited as project result. Unclear on actual behavioral impact.</p> <p>-often cited knowing how to avoid risky situations as project result. Actual preventative strategies not mentioned.</p> <p>-it was clear from the evaluation that adolescents were conscious of the various problems they confront.</p> <p>-adolescents have learned to group their problems in terms of the project terminology and categories.³</p> <p>-adolescents placed emphasis on knowledge acquired regarding changes during puberty and how to cope with them.</p> <p>-while adolescents claimed to know their rights because of the project, evidence was not put forth that actual rights had been claimed.</p> <p>-not evident.</p> <p>-not evident.</p> <p>-not evident. Cases where rights had been claimed in situations where there was risk of rights violations were not forthcoming when asked of by participants.</p> <p>-while training had been received, it was unclear how many adolescents were being remunerated for income generation.</p> <p>-unclear</p> <p>-unclear</p>

³ However, this often comes across as being a mechanical procedure.

⁴ This will be qualified in the following sections.

Project goals ²	Project impact as identified by participants in the participatory evaluation
<p>-Adolescent is capable of effectively managing her financial resources.</p> <p><i>Evaluation indicators:</i> -Adolescent analyses her socio-economic situation and her social framework rigorously.</p> <p><u>Communication Techniques:</u></p> <p>-Adolescent communicates with her peers and other members of her community to exchange and share experiences with the aim of understanding her context and to make herself understood. -Adolescent can name the characteristics of good communication. -Adolescent can use group animation techniques. -Adolescent adopts the attitudes of a leader. -Adolescent can present issues regarding NCTs.</p> <p>-Types of communication techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Types of messages - Forms of communication - NCTs - Persuasion - Negotiation - Listening <p><i>Evaluation indicators:</i> -problems and experiences are shared. -Different forms of messages according to the situation are used. -Leadership attitudes are adopted.</p> <p><u>Decision-making:</u></p> <p>-Adolescent is capable of expressing her point of view before a situation concerning her, thus affirming her personality. -Adolescent is capable of evaluating the importance of a decision and the consequences associated with it – before</p>	<p>-often cited as a project result.</p> <p>-it was clear that adolescents knew what they needed, but unclear that they were actually seeking these opportunities.</p> <p>-one of the main results proclaimed by adolescents was increased and better communication between peers, family members, and community.</p> <p>-a main claim made by adolescents⁴</p> <p>-clear among the peer educators</p> <p>-clear among the peer educators -seemed largely inapplicable. Not often mentioned.</p> <p>-unclear if understood or used -unclear if understood or used -unclear if understood or used -clearly cited as a technique they had learned because of the project (though unclear that the strategy was learned from the project Guide) - clearly cited as a technique they had learned because of the project (though unclear that the strategy was learned from the project Guide) -clearly cited as a technique they had learned because of the project.</p> <p>-a clear result of the project through peer education -not specified in this way</p> <p>-clear among peer educators</p> <p>-clearly stated as a project result – being able to express oneself freely in front of others, including large groups. -clearly stated as a project result – that consequences to actions were taken more into account than before.</p>

Project goals ²	Project impact as identified by participants in the participatory evaluation
<p>taking it. -Adolescent is capable of making choices in terms of the short, medium and long term.</p> <p><i>Evaluation indicators:</i> -Adolescent determines the steps to take for her life project.</p> <p><u>Conflict resolution:</u></p> <p>-Adolescent participates in decision making concerning her that takes her needs into account.</p> <p><i>Evaluation indicators:</i> -Adolescent identifies with her peers, the rules for good group conduct. -Adolescent's behavior conforms to code of conduct for the good of the group. -Adolescent can identify the cause and consequences of a personal, interpersonal, or organizational conflict.</p>	<p>-identified as a project result.</p> <p>-often cited as a project result (stated in terms of "knowing where we are, where we are going, and what we want").</p> <p>-claims were made that there was better communication with parents on matters concerning early marriage and educational training. However it is not clear that any early marriages were stopped.</p> <p>-participants claimed knowledge in the area</p> <p>-participants claimed to be more peace-making because of the project.</p> <p>-knowledge gained cited by participants.</p>

2. Behaviour Change & Impact

While participants (along with project staff and parents themselves), clearly and repetitively identified behavior change as a result of their participation in the project, particularly with regards to the life skills education, the participatory evaluation allowed a probing which revealed more specifically what *kind* of behavior change took place and where project participants put the emphasis themselves. Also, what emerged was that the overall *impact* of the project is not at all clear. While it is safe to conclude that a positive impact was made in the lives of the participants – we should be careful not to exaggerate the extent of this impact. It appears that while impact was made on certain levels, it does not appear to be made on others, therefore distinguishing between the two is very important.

In terms of behavior change cited, many positive points were highlighted. To begin, participation in the project was seen as making more productive use of adolescents' time – many of whom were previously just staying at home or going out with friends. This aspect was particularly appreciated by the parents. In terms of life skills, better communication was emphasized by both adolescents and parents. Adolescents claimed that they not only were less shy to express themselves in front of others but that they discussed many different issues more openly with their parents and elders. They felt that among themselves, they were communicating more effectively and peacefully. They claimed that they now knew how to use persuasion and negotiation because of the life skills sessions, particularly with regards to boys. Adolescents and parents felt that the project had helped adolescents assume leadership roles in mediating conflicts among peers and also in the home amongst family members – including parents. Better decision-making and taking consequences into consideration before acting was another main life skill claimed by the adolescents – especially with regards to school, vocational training, and boys.

However, in terms of overall impact, it is unclear how far the life skills attained by the adolescents were able to make a dent in their reality. For example, with regards to early marriage, adolescents claimed to be talking to their parents about the matter and thus it can be assumed that some impact in terms of prevention may have been made. However, what was not identified were cases in which parents insisting on an early marriage were persuaded to reconsider. Sensitive topics like FGM were not spoken of during the evaluation, other than being listed as an area where knowledge was gained in reproductive health.

In terms of reproductive health, more emphasis was placed on knowledge gained with regards to puberty and sexual risks. While adolescents and parents recognized that the project helped them avoid risky, sexual situations, it is unclear whether adolescents that were sexually active were taking advantage of health centre services and using protection.

In terms of human rights, this again remains an area where knowledge gained was emphasized (right to an education, right to a family name, right to birth registration, right to equality, etc.), but little was said in terms of rights claimed or promoted, or instances where socio-cultural/religious norms were challenged, which was one of the aims of the project. It was very difficult for participants of the evaluation to identify instances where this happened and then led to a success story. While participants claimed that they now

also knew their responsibilities, they were not forthcoming with examples of how they were actually acting these out.

At one point during the evaluation, after a lengthy discussion on how the adolescent participants had been mediating conflicts among their peers and about having more effective communication skills – an argument ensued between the participants themselves – during which the skills they claimed to have acquired were not at all evident: speaking politely, speaking in turn, being calm, hearing out the other's arguments, trying to make peace. The argument was about some girls making noise after bed time, while others were trying to fall asleep. One peer educator brought up the scenario to tell the others that their behavior may not have changed as much as they claimed since they couldn't respect the right of the others to sleep at an early hour.

Of course, just because something was not said does not mean that it did not happen; perhaps it just didn't surface in the format of the evaluation.

An area that received positive feedback and was highlighted by peer educators, project participants and parents alike, was the literacy component. After life skills, knowing how to read and write were activities identified by most of the participants as a main gain made by the project.

3. Local appropriation

Adolescents' understanding of life skills concepts

The life skills component was the resounding major point of interest among project participants. Participants ranked the modules in order of interest as follows: reproductive health, communication, human rights, conflict resolution, decision making, and socio-economic integration.

While project participants used the language of the project (in terms of actual life skills – communication, decision making, problem solving, negotiation, persuasion, etc.) – what became apparent is that words like 'communication' denote different things to project participants than they do to program staff or in relation to general life skills concepts. *How* participants view these concepts and *where* they place the emphasis is very telling and revealing of participant preoccupations. It became clear that project tools and concepts have been locally appropriated and are being used in the way seen fit and deemed 'natural' for the context of project participants. The selectivity of project tools/concepts and rejection of others revealed much in terms of what adolescents best identify with for their context.

For example, in terms of communication, it took much probing to get the participants to specify what exactly had changed. The types of answers finally arrived at were as follows: before they would talk all the time and all at once with no capacity for listening to others, whereas now they are more polite and able to discuss by listening to everyone's opinion first. They considered themselves more group-oriented now, searching for consensus rather than just trying to put forth their own opinion. They consider themselves more disciplined now rather than unreasonable as before. They felt that before they were shy to speak before large groups but now feel comfortable doing so. Much emphasis was put on mediating conflicts at home between different family members – in terms of calming others down and fighting less. Negotiating permission to

go out and convincing parents was also mentioned numerous times; whereas before, girls claimed to go out without permission which led to quarrels. Speaking more politely and respectfully to elders was also emphasized, and properly greeting them (with handshake and curtsy) were seen as things taught to participants. With regards to conflicts among peers, adolescents mentioned that before, they would have taken a side but now search to create resolution between peers who are fighting. Being calm and not getting angry in conflict situations was also highlighted. An emphasis was put on being peaceful, polite, respectful, and willing to listen to others.

Additionally, discussions during the evaluation about general behaviour change laid much emphasis on being “well behaved” – i.e. speaking properly and politely, being dressed modestly, walking properly (modestly), and doing chores around the house. More was said about these aspects, than about challenging societal norms and being critical about social roles. To make the point clear, at one point during the evaluation, an NGO staff had a serious discussion with the participants because they didn’t wash the dishes after the evening meal, and the staff member saw the male guard washing the dishes the next morning. The staff member said to the girls: “Are the boys going to wash the dishes? We have been talking here about behaviour change, so show that your behaviour has changed.” During the video workshop, participants were told as an exercise to make a short video showing positive behaviour change in the life of an adolescent girl. In the video – an adolescent is shown at the start as being rude and rowdy – in the end scene, she is dressed in full hijab. In the final video made by the peer educators, emphasis on behaviour change was placed on dress, manner of speaking with elders, avoiding talking with boys, and helping around the house. It seems that a lot of weight is placed on being a “good girl” more than on emancipation. These sentiments are echoed by the parents interviewed in the video who place emphasis on the same.

This above aspect of behaviour change is not what the project had in mind, but what this reflects are the values of the communities the program works in. The project goal is for adolescent girls to be capable of resolving the problems she is confronted by *in her context*. In Senegal, *her context* is one where family and community relations take precedence over individual emancipation or empowerment. More will be said about this point in the conclusion section.

The link between claimed behaviour change and life skills pedagogical techniques

It became apparent that while the peer educators firmly claimed that the life skills sessions had helped them communicate better and make better decisions, it was difficult for them to make concrete links between what was actually learned/discussed in the sessions and actual examples of behaviour change in the noted domains. While claiming to “use communication techniques” to negotiate permission – participants weren’t able to specify what those specific techniques learned through the project were. For example, when pressed to give a specific case where techniques learned from life skills were applied in a conflict situation, a characteristic example given was: two friends were angry with each other because the one did not greet the other and so the peer educator asked the two to come to her home so she could get them to talk to one another again. Another participant said that before she wasn’t able to resolve a conflict because she “didn’t know there were personal, interpersonal, and organizational conflicts”. With regards to decision-making – no participants referred to the “steps to decision-making” spelled out

in the peer educators guide – very simply, participants said that before they did not take consequences of their decisions into account whereas now they did.

The participatory evaluation revealed why this is the case. For starters, while all peer educators spoke about the different life skills, not all had taught every module. Second, the peer educators informed us that they were not actually using the Guides provided by the program – at least not in the way the project had assumed they were being used. This was for two reasons: first, not all the peer educators had received a copy of the Guide, and second, the Guide was considered too difficult to understand. Therefore, both staff and peer educators had taught life skills in their own way. In one sense, this may be considered as the ultimate participation.

Staff from the 3 participating NGOs admitted during the sessions that they themselves had a hard time understanding the concepts in the Guide (they said that they were not consulted during formulation of the material). Peer educators told us that while conducting their sessions – they never actually used the terms “skills” or “competencies” – they just jumped into the sessions by way of directly reading the situational problem provided by the Guide for each session – and would discuss these with the participants. They found the situational problems very relevant and interesting. Therefore, instead of concentrating on techniques as provided by the Guide - they, by themselves, created an atmosphere based more on dialogue, exchange, and their own common sense. The situational problems found in the Guide were based on their direct reality and were issues they needed to talk about and encourage each other in, such as avoiding sex with an older man for material favors. They found what would be to project staff, simple concepts, too theoretical. For example: “session competencies”, “criteria and indicators”, “transfer of ideas”, “synthesis”. If even these seemingly simple concepts were too difficult to understand, it is no wonder that many of the other ideas in the Guide were discarded as being too theoretical and abstract.

Participants laid emphasis on communication techniques as understood in their common sense concrete context (like politeness and good manners), because techniques written in the Guide were often abstract and likely irrelevant: e.g. a schema on the ‘communication process’ that diagrams the sender/source with arrows pointing to the receiver (between which are the message and obstacles). In the Guide, principles of good communication were stated as: common language between sender and receiver, clear and audible expression of ideas, and active listening. Obstacles to good communication were stated as: “anything that goes contrary to good communication principles, for example difficulty in pronouncing different words.” It is not difficult to see why adolescents reading this would find it odd or too theoretical, and so project their own understanding of “good communication” onto the peer education sessions, rather than teaching the above.

In fact, much of the content in the Guides seemed to have been translated verbatim from Scout Guides (which were referenced in the bibliography), without being *culturally* translated as well. In this way, the Guide went against the “first step to behavior change” as defined in the Guide itself: “providing information that is clear, comprehensible and adapted to targeted groups.” Another example in the communication section: there are a list of pointers given on how to carry on a meeting – including the appointment of a chairperson, secretary, and facilitator. The secretary is advised to take minutes and send copies to all participants. Clearly, this is irrelevant to peer education sessions in this context and was just directly translated from a Guide originating in a Western country

where meetings would be formal enough (and with well-schooled youth), for minute-taking and copies to make sense.

For persuasion, the suggestions provided in the Guide were simply: “Refuse clearly and firmly; stall; negotiate to find a compromise; speak and express your point of view; refuse to be interrupted; convince the other that your position is best for you.” It is not surprising then that the peer educators had a hard time making links between pointers given in the Guide and their real application. While they spoke of persuasion and negotiation it may have had more to do with discussing together in an open forum that which was deemed best for them (using the concrete situational problems as a starting point) and encouraging one another – more so than learning the theoretical abstract “steps”.

The section on decision making offers a list of “steps” to taking a decision – a very abstract set of considerations to make. While adolescents spoke much about making better decisions, none made the link with the suggested steps spelled out in the Guide.

The section on leadership gives a definition of a range of leadership styles – starting from *autocrat* to *laissez-faire* – these are typical of theory found in Management 101 textbooks – not relevant for impoverished girls in Senegal with little education and the same ideas could have been communicated in a conceptual language more attune with the common sense of the girls themselves. Otherwise, as we see, they do not refer to these concepts.

Further evidence that content in the Guide was not given enough attention for cultural and contextual translation is found in regards to the section on new communication technologies, in which *isolation* is given as a negative possible consequence. While this is true for a Western setting where children have computers in their homes – it is clearly not applicable to poor girls in the suburbs of Dakar who will have very limited access (if any), to the internet in cyber cafés. While the information certainly didn’t hurt anyone, it is just another example of the Guide not having been adapted properly from the outset and why peer educators did not use it to a large extent.

In reference to gender, only one line in the Guide is devoted to explain the concept: “the term gender regroups the notions associated with the male and female sex and the relations that keep men and women in the roles and responsibilities that society has assigned them.” Clearly, this single sentence is not adequate for preparing adolescent girls to challenge gender norms. If anything, it causes confusion or is cast aside as incomprehensible.

Sections in the Guide that advise adolescents to “affirm their identity” are also not obvious assumptions. While in Western countries, individual identity and individual values are encouraged and schools rear adolescents to determine these for themselves, there is a huge cultural leap made when assuming that adolescents in all places come from contexts where such individualism is also found. In places like Senegal where group and family identity is more the cultural emphasis, advising adolescents to be direct might not make sense.

All this being said, it becomes apparent why staff and peer educators relied on their own common sense, rooted in their cultural context, to give their own meaning to *communication*, *decision making*, *negotiation*, etc. The definition of competencies as

interpreted by the participants were more practical and direct for their context – not technical, abstract, or even emancipatory, as we would define it. Their preoccupations are very different: ones that are closely intertwined with families and communities and perhaps less individualistic than those assumed by the Guide.

While the evaluation showed that many positive changes were made in the lives of participants, and further supported by the enthusiasm of parents, it begs the question: *what factors made the real difference in life skill acquisition?* It is unclear if the differences were made *because* of the specific strategies of the project, (i.e. exercises in the Guide), or because of the provision of an organized forum that provided a place for dialogue, based on common sense, positive peer pressure, guidance, and fun (use of role plays, songs, etc.) – coupled with learning opportunities in literacy and vocational training.

4. *Materials*

Limitations of the Guide were long recognized by project staff even before the evaluation. The Director of the Department of Youth (Ministry of Youth) took the lead, along with UNICEF and NGO partners, to revisit the Guide and adapt it. This process took place alongside the participatory evaluation and thus all participating peer educators were able to contribute to an in-depth critique of the materials. The main constraint was that the Guides were initially printed in French. Wolof versions now exist. The critique of the Guide was consensual among peer educators and project staff: it was too theoretical, needed to be simplified, there were too many sessions and some repetition, there needed to be illustrations, the Guide was too thick and long (they preferred a smaller booklet per module), the need for supplemental material (visual aids like flipcharts, videos, and pictures), and that situational problems should be left in because these are what really help.

Staff as well had concerns that the Guide was too long and difficult for girls who were not educated at a high level. One staff member put it this way: “the concepts and steps in the Guide are very European. We are a culture based on the oral tradition. With our traditional story-telling – a grandfather tells a story and the children get fixated on it – the grandfather poses questions to the children to test their comprehension and then to pull lessons from the story. The steps in the Guide are too complicated so we simplified the approach by using the situational problem, stating the learning objectives, and then posing questions.” Another staff member said: “the Guide must be based on facts – on ‘learning by doing’ – not on theory.”

5. *Project Implementation*

The main critique of the program made by participants and parents concerned socio-economic insertion which represented two of the five project components (vocational training and micro-credit). The reality is that these adolescents come from poor families and while the life skills component was much appreciated, it was not considered enough *on its own*. Financial gain was a priority consideration for participants and was a chief expectation of parents. This practical type of concern should not come as a surprise, and of course, this is why the “packet approach” to the program was designed in the first place. While participants were satisfied with the quality of the training – they felt that

there had been “unkept promises” with regards to financial support in the form of micro-credit. Parents who expressed negative comments during the evaluation were, according to the peer educators, let down that their daughters had not benefited financially.

While some NGO partners had been promised micro-credit by the project, others had not. Yet even those who had not been promised micro-credit laid the blame on UNICEF. Two of the NGOs in the evaluation had contracts with UNFPA, yet it was UNICEF that “didn’t keep its promises” according to not only peer educators, but also to project staff themselves. This should be taken into consideration for future projects with joint UN agencies. Each agency may be responsible for different things, but in the minds of project participants, this differentiation blurs into one UN partner; since UNICEF has the most visibility, it can also undeservedly be the target of blame.

All peer educators firmly stated that they should receive some kind of financial stipend for being peer educators.

Peer educators emphasized that many parents were unaware of the project and needed to be sensitized to its positive aspects. Still, the large majority of parents interviewed felt that the project was good for their daughters.

Other problems noted in the Guide were that staff from NGOs said they did not receive enough money to make photocopies of the Guide for all peer educators. Some had to use their own money to make copies.

6. *Participatory evaluation / video process*

The participatory evaluation/video as a *process itself*, was one that the participating adolescents found empowering. In the beginning, the idea of an evaluation was something foreign to the adolescents. Thinking in terms of ‘project goals’, ‘anticipated impact’, and ‘indicators of success’ was too complicated or abstract for the participants. Exercises and questions asked during the workshop had to be kept very simple, concrete and at the every-day level (like, “how did the project help you?”). The idea of a questionnaire and administering a questionnaire was something they never thought that they themselves would do. It was necessary to go through some simulation exercises of administering the questionnaire because it was difficult for the adolescents to understand how the process worked.

Thus, by the end of the workshop, adolescents expressed feelings of pride and accomplishment. Once they returned after 2 weeks of carrying out the questionnaire, they shared their experiences. Feedback ranged from:

- Morale being built after hearing so much positive feedback from peers;
- Pride at being seen by people in their community for carrying out this work;
- Family members being impressed by the questionnaire and showing respect for the work done by their daughters/sisters (“you are like a business woman,” “you could be a teacher,” “you could be a journalist”);
- Boys and other girl peers becoming curious about the project and wanting to join;

- Parents being interviewed gained a better appreciation of the project.

Some challenges encountered by the adolescents during the questionnaire process:

- Many parents were uninformed about the content of the project and so it was difficult for them to answer the questions;
- Many peers being interviewed had a hard time understanding the questions;
- Meeting times not being respected;
- Many parents expressing dissatisfaction with project because of the lack of financial gain for their daughters.

The participatory video workshop itself was also an empowering experience for the adolescents. Training was hands-on and based on learning by doing – participants were encouraged to “jump right in” and handle the cameras from the very start. Participants expressed feelings of pride and increased confidence at being able to use a camera. They said that they were scared at first that it would be too difficult, but then saw that it was easy. Again here as with the questionnaires – people in the community and family members that saw the girls video-taping, expressed that they were impressed by the work being done by the girls. Staff working for the NGO where the workshop took place were impressed and encouraging and asked the girls to teach them in turn.

Unlike the evaluation, the video process came much more intuitively to the participants probably because they all watch TV and films and thus it was not a large conceptual leap to imitate what they had already seen many times before.

One video exercise assigned to participants during the workshop was to form two groups and to make a short video about any topic whatsoever – so long as it had an introduction, middle (with interviews), and an end. Given this free reign, it was very striking to see the two groups on their own choose politicized topics. One group chose market prices during the month of Ramadan and the effect it had on local shop owners and on shoppers. The second group went to the gas station and bus station and interviewed bus drivers and passengers on increasing costs of fuel. People were again very impressed by the video-taping done by the girls and were happy to be interviewed.

Video proved to be an important tool in that the products produced by the girls acted as a *mirror* of their interpretation of the project. In this way they were able to *show* us rather than *tell* us how they viewed the project and their participation within it.

7. Conclusions & Recommendations

While the project was evaluated by the participants in the evaluation as being responsible for many positive changes in the lives of adolescents, the extent of the impact did not seem to go as far as project staff had envisioned in some areas. Participants found the project and project approach relevant to their situation, but had interpreted much of the life skills content according to their own preoccupations and also expressed project limitations in terms of implementation (i.e. micro-credit). The adolescents did not speak about the project in terms of ‘empowerment’ or ‘competencies’ or ‘critical thinking’ – this is not their conceptual language – they spoke in terms of practical every-day preoccupations: getting along better with family and friends; being more confident, knowledgeable, and mature; making wise decisions thinking of the

future; and the acute importance of income-generation. Their preoccupations are very intertwined with families and their community. More was said on helping people resolve every day (often seemingly petty), conflicts peacefully rather than challenging wider societal norms. While project staff might operate looking at the wider perspective, the participants themselves are looking at the immediate perspective.

In some ways, the interpretation given to life skills by the NGO staff and peer educators was somewhat “conservative”: encouraging “good girl” behavior, modest dress, helping with chores, speaking and walking respectfully. More emphasis was put on abstinence and being appropriate, over ways of protecting oneself in a sexual relationship. This reflects the values of the society around them. When more emphasis is put on dressing modestly to avoid sexual abuse, rather than on questioning gender stereotypes this seems to fall short of any deep impact/empowerment and is perhaps even counter-productive as victim-blame. On the other hand, in a conservative country like Senegal, perhaps staying home and doing chores rather than going to the beach every day where one is more likely to get into unequal relationships that can lead to undesired pregnancy, *is* empowering for these girls. There is also empowerment in resistance. When the adolescent at the end of the video is shown wearing traditional Senegalese dress instead of the short skirt and tank top she was wearing at the beginning, the adolescents were expressing their dissatisfaction with a new culture that lays emphasis on provocative dress for attracting a man’s attention, rather than concentrating on developing one’s own learning opportunities. Either way, what is clear is that we must work *with* the values of the participants rather than against them, because rather than accepting our ideas and definitions, the interpretation of the participants will be given regardless.

If materials/Guides are not based on participant concerns and a conceptual worldview, they will simply project their own ideas onto them, so these should be based on their own concepts to begin with and they should decide the change they want to see in their own lives, not based on those of project staff removed from the everyday realities of the participants. More cultural/anthropological approaches to the development of project approaches and materials will likelier ensure project relevance and success.

What became very apparent was the importance of providing adolescents with the opportunity to come together, to learn about concrete issues (like puberty and sexual health), and to dialogue together in a safe environment about situations they all face, especially with regards to boys. It seems that participants relied more on common sense rather than abstract concepts to counsel one another and offer guidance. When formulating the questionnaire, the peer educators did not think in terms of specific competencies or indicators that would show the acquisition of these. Instead, questions were broad in order to gauge overall impressions.

While life skills education was valued by participants and parents – these types of interventions did not prove to bring about major changes in girls’ lives. Partly because of the implementation problems (misappropriated Guides, rupture in séances) but mostly because we cannot expect girls to change their behaviour while their context stays the same. There is a wider discussion to be had surrounding adolescent programming that recognizes the limits of these individual behaviour change interventions and considers the challenge of wider social contextual change.

Much more emphasis should be given to the question of livelihoods in future. This was, unsurprisingly, one of the main preoccupations of participants and parents. Without this, participants end up feeling frustrated and even drop out of the life skills education. While this is not an area of comparative advantage for UNICEF, partnerships with local research institutions, UNDP, ILO, and NGOs could focus on this area. Macro factors need to be taken into consideration in terms of market analysis. It is clear from the participatory evaluation that while life skills were extremely important it should be coupled with income generating opportunities. Though the project understood this from the start, and thus it was part of the packet, problems in implementation and partners' capacities need to be seriously analyzed for the next project phase.

The participatory evaluation revealed many strengths and weaknesses of the project. The limitations must be addressed in the next country program 2007-2011 to base adolescent programming on lessons learnt. The purpose of the participatory evaluation was not to provide a certain image of the project, it was to understand the project from the perspective of the participants themselves, and in this way, it can be considered to have been a success.

Last but not least, the participatory evaluation itself was not only telling in of itself, but it also served to enrich the formal, external evaluation. Because this was done prior to the formal evaluation and because it was more in-depth in terms of qualitative research, many questions emerged that hadn't been considered by the formal evaluators and were later integrated into the formal questionnaire. Many of the preoccupations that emerged were highlighted and this gave some new directions and insights to the design of the formal evaluation, particularly with regards to the life skills component.

ANNEXE 1 – Participatory Evaluation Workshop Exercises

Workshop #1 (over 3 days with 20 peer educators):

- 1) Introductions and game
- 2) Presentation of workshop objectives and expected results
- 3) Overall question introduced to participants: “Did the project improve the conditions in the lives of participants? If yes, how? If no, why not?” To determine answer – we will consider strengths and weaknesses of project and also make recommendations to improve it.
- 4) Discussion regarding idea of participatory evaluation.
- 5) In 4 groups, answer the following questions:
 - i. What activities was your project comprised of?
 - ii. What strategies were used in life skills education?
 - iii. What problems did you face before the project?
 - iv. What problems were resolved by the project?
 - v. What problems were not resolved by the project?
- 6) Discussion on life skills modules taught by participants and relevance of each
- 7) Discussion on use of the Guide and problems encountered
- 8) Discussion on communication/decision-making problems encountered before the project and differences now.
- 9) Role plays assigned based on a real-life success story.
- 10) Discussion of questionnaire and brainstorming session on questions to be included.
- 11) Discussion on logistical issues with administering questionnaire (target number, choosing interviewee, simulation exercise).
- 12) Evaluation of 1st workshop

* games and songs were interspersed throughout the exercises of all workshops.

Workshop #2 – (over 2 day period with 20 peer educators):

- 1) Welcome back
- 2) Exchange of general impressions of questionnaire administration (reactions of family and community).
- 3) In small groups, results from each question were summarized.
- 4) Results from each group were synthesized.
- 5) Results discussed in the plenary and validated.
- 6) Recommendations formulated.
- 7) Evaluation of workshop.
- 8) Criteria determined for democratic selection of 6 girls to attend video workshop.
- 9) Selection of 6 girls made by participants themselves.

Workshop #3 – (over 8 day period with 6 peer educators):

- 1) Immediate hands-on introduction to video camera
- 2) Group building exercise
- 3) Short video-poster assignment: “Why I like being a peer educator” (followed by review of individual videos and discussion).

- 4) Short video treatment: discussion on theme, purpose, elements, interviews, conclusion (theme selected: child begging)
 - 5) Short video assignment on any topic (two groups)
 - 6) Role play video assignment on success story
 - 7) Brainstorming on final video topic
 - 8) Selection of final video topic (criteria: should be 20-30 minutes and not complicated to portray on video, relevant to target group, should take into account findings/recommendations of participatory evaluation).
 - 9) Discussion of elements to be included in final video
 - 10) Brainstorming on final video
 - 11) Script writing and story boarding
 - 12) Practice video
 - 13) Site selection (actor selection and preparation)
 - 14) Filming and footage review
 - 15) Editing at studio
- various 'camera trick' games were interspersed throughout the workshop, along with ample "free play time" to let participants feel comfortable handling the camera.

Basic video techniques learned over the course of the workshop:

Beginners basics: On/off, record/stop, zoom, tape load/unload/labeling, handling lens and lens cap, using the tripod, steady shots, TV/VCR connection, battery recharge, playback

Intermediate basic: shot sizes, focus, importance of time lag, lighting, role play for video

Advanced basic: smooth sequencing, storyboarding, scripting, in-camera editing, logging footage for editing.

* techniques were learnt throughout the workshop in a learning-as-you-go manner – as footage was reviewed – techniques were discussed in response to issues raised (e.g. lighting, shot sizes).

ANNEXE 2 – Questionnaire (élaboré par les éducatrices pairs)

A) Questions posées aux pairs :

2. Quelle était ta situation avant le projet ?
3. Est-ce que le projet a résolu quelques uns de tes problèmes ? Si oui, comment ?
Si non, pourquoi ?
4. Qu'est-ce que le projet t'a apporté et qu'est-ce qu'il ne t'a pas apporté ?
5. Quels sont pour toi les modules les plus intéressants ? Pourquoi ?
6. Est-ce que tu as maîtrisé les séances ? Lesquelles ?
7. Quels sont les problèmes rencontrés avec le projet ?
8. La démarche utilisée par les éducatrices pairs t'a-t-elle plu ?
9. Comment trouves-tu le comportement de l'éducatrice - pair ?
10. Est-ce que ton éducatrice - pair était toujours à ta disposition ?
11. Est-ce que tu es prête à raconter une histoire intéressante que tu as vécue dans le projet avec la vidéo ?

B) Questions posées aux parents/entourage :

1. Quelle est votre perception du projet ?
2. Quels sont les attitudes et les comportements que vous avez observés de votre fille avant et après le projet ?
3. Quels sont les changements que vous aimeriez voir dans le projet ?