

May 1, 2017

Overview of Grandmother Project's Education Programme

GOAL: to improve the quality of primary education in Senegalese schools by making it more culturally relevant

Grandmother Project – Change through Culture is an American and Senegalese NGO that has been working in education in southern Senegal since 2008. In the Velingara Dept (Kolda Region), there are some of the lowest school enrolment and attendance rates in Senegal, particularly among girls. Limited family support for formal schooling is related to parents' perceptions that *schools are culturally inappropriate* insofar as they ignore cultural values and knowledge that are important to communities.

Justification for the community-school programme

Across Africa there is concern with the loss of positive cultural values among the younger generations. In Senegal, the need for schools to teach positive African and Senegalese values is frequently heard. The 2014 National Conference on Education concluded that "the Senegalese school system should produce citizens who are rooted in their cultural, spiritual and moral values" and "schools should ensure that children learn about local socio-cultural values and local/indigenous knowledge" (p. 13)¹. Families and communities throughout Senegal are also profoundly concerned about the loss of cultural identity and values in their children.

Since 2005, in collaboration with the Velingara District Education Office (DOE), Grandmother Project (GMP) has been addressing this issue through its programme entitled "Integrating positive cultural values into schools" (IPCVS). The DOE-GMP work in Velingara has been recognized by the Ministry of Education as innovative, culturally-relevant and effective in teaching children their cultural values within the formal school setting.

Objectives of the programme:

The IPCVS programme has three objectives:

- to integrate positive cultural values and knowledge into schools
- to strengthen communication and collaboration between teachers and communities
- to increase involvement of parents and grandparents in children's upbringing and education

Components of the programme

The diagram below provides further information on the three objectives, the three components of the school-community programme and the results of each.

Beneficiaries of the programme

The IPCVS programme has been implemented in 2 communes (Nemataba and Kandia) in the Velingara Dept involving :

- 52 primary schools
- 4 secondary schools
- 239 teachers
- 8,027 students
- 156 Grandmothers as classroom *cultural teaching assistants*.

In addition, the community level activities have also involved:

- 1550 grandmothers in the community-at-large
- 411 other parents and elders, including traditional community leaders and religious leaders.

Results of the programme

The IPCVS has made school programmes more culturally-appropriate and has thereby improved the quality of education offered to children. In addition, the IPCVS programme has had various positive effects, some anticipated and others not:

- improved attitudes of communities toward schools;
- increased school enrollment, especially of girls;
- decreased drop-out of girls;
- improved oral expression by young children;
- improved behavior of children with family and community members, and with peers;
- increased collaboration between communities and schools; and
- decreased child marriage and teen pregnancy.

Strong support for the programme from local and national officials

The strategy to integrate positive cultural values into schools (IPCVS) has been very successful based on results of an external evaluation conducted in 2015 by Newman & Soukouna and on feedback from local communities, teachers, DEO officials and national level Ministry of Education directors. The 2015 evaluation concluded that:

“The work of GMP with the DEO in Velingara is the first experience of its kind in Senegal. It has contributed to both improving the quality of education offered to children and their families and brought schools and communities closer together. The GMP-DEO programme is a model that will be useful throughout Senegal, as well as in other countries in the region”.

The DEO Director, Mr. Wade has repeatedly said “We would like to see this programme expanded to all 9 of the communes in our catchment area.” The Director of Elementary Education, Mme. Mbodj, has stated that “We would like to see this programme

implemented in schools throughout Senegal. It responds directly to our policy priorities related to making schools more culturally relevant to children and their families.”

Plans for expansion of the strategy:

Based on both the positive results of the IPCVS programme in schools and communities, and on the very positive feedback from communities, local government officials and the education sector in Senegal, GMP hopes to be able to expand the strategy within the Velingara Dept and eventually throughout Senegal. GMP is actively looking for resources to enable us to coordinate the expansion of this very successful program.

Expansion of the programme will require resources for the following expenses:

- Coordination/management of the programme
- Planning workshops with District Education Office staff
- Coordination workshops with school directors
- Teacher training: workshops and follow-up school visits to reinforce learning
- Printing and dissemination of the Teachers’ Guide (*Guide Pédagogique*) for all teachers involved. This guide will be published in May/June 2017.
- Printing and dissemination of the 5 booklets on cultural values to schools
- Organization of inter-generational community forums
- Grandmother-Teacher workshops

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Grandmother Project & District Education Office (IDEN) Vélingara, Senegal



