

# THE GRANDMOTHER PROJECT

# Bulletin

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## BRIDGING THE GAP: Strengthening Communication Between Generations

In many places in Africa positive cultural values are being lost as alternative western values are promoted, especially by the mass media. The loss of traditional values has contributed to a communication gap between younger & elder people in urban and rural settings. There is an urgent need to increase communication between generations in order to promote understanding & solidarity in families and within society-at-large.

One of the objectives of Grandmother Project (GMP) is to promote *intergenerational (IG) communication & learning*. The IG approach builds on existing relationships between different generations and enables the strengths of two or more generations to complement each other.

### Adapting school programs to community realities

In collaboration with World Vision (WV) Senegal, GMP is implementing a school-based strategy that aims to *reinforce IG relationships* and to *increase children's appreciation of positive local cultural values and traditions*. The project includes: development of reading texts based on local history, traditions and knowledge; involvement of elders in schools to share their knowledge; and organization of cultural events with communities. If resources permit a resource guide for teachers & community leaders will be produced to help them implement IG activities that link schools and communities.

This strategy responds to concerns expressed by communities, teachers and young people about the loss of cultural values and the weakening of IG relationships. It also supports a Ministry of Education priority: to strengthen ties between schools & communities.

### Positive outcomes in families & communities

In Oct. 2009 a mid-term project review was carried out and it revealed various encouraging outcomes related to: the improved status of grandmothers & elders in families & communities; and their increased involvement in teaching children positive traditions & life skills. It also showed that there is now greater dialogue between generations on sensitive subjects related to adolescent life such as teenage pregnancy.

Other results of the review showed that:

- ◆ Students now have a stronger sense of cultural identity and greater capacity to use cultural knowledge and values in their lives

**Booklet: *The Role of Grandmothers in African Societies***  
produced in collaboration with local teachers  
and school children in Velingara, Senegal



*"Before I thought that grandmothers were there only to sleep, eat and scold. Then one day my teacher showed us this booklet and told us about the importance of grandmothers. Now I spend all of my evenings with my grandmother and I have learned so much from her. I realize now that grandmothers know many things and they are very useful to children and families."*

Wolde, student, 10 years old

- ◆ Students have a stronger sense of appreciation of their elders and cultural traditions.
- ◆ Grandmothers and elders have strengthened their roles as leaders, protectors and teachers of children and adolescents in the community.
- ◆ Elders, youth and children spend more time together and intergenerational learning has increased.
- ◆ Elders are more sensitive to issues youth are facing and they discuss these topics more frequently with them.
- ◆ Teachers have more respect for cultural traditions & more contact with community elders & leaders.
- ◆ An IG learning strategy is being integrated into school programs in the local school district.

GMP and World Vision are implementing these activities in 20 schools in Velingara District in Senegal. Boubacar Diaw, Director of Sare Faremba primary school says, "This project has helped strengthen ties between children & elders and between teachers & communities. It is very positive." Many other school directors & communities have expressed interest in having these activities developed in their schools.

**If you would like further information about this project please contact GMP (details below).**

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