

United Nations Population Council UNICEF
Foundation

**Regional Workshop on the "Implementation of
the Participation and Development Rights of
Adolescent Girls"**

31st October - 3rd November, 2000

Dakar, SENEGAL

WORKSHOP REPORT

**UNICEF
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1. Why a Workshop on Participation and Development Rights of Adolescent Girls

Within the framework of the Global Movement for Children, the United Nations Foundation, the Population Council and UNICEF organized a regional workshop on the "Implementation of the Participation and Development Rights of Adolescent Girls" from 31st October to 3rd November, 2000 in Dakar, Senegal.

107 representatives from UN Agencies, the Population Council, NGOs and governments participated in this workshop. 23 countries were represented, majority of them from West and Central Africa. Kenya and Egypt were also represented.

It was observed that:

- Many countries had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women,
- The rights to education, health, freedom of expression, as well as the rights to participation and development in a safe environment are yet to be achieved for the African adolescent in general and the African adolescent girl in particular,
- A country without a programme for its adolescents is a country without a future.

Some of the problems that hinder the full development of adolescents (considered particularly vulnerable) were highlighted during the opening ceremony:

- absence of dialogue in families,
- adolescents are not involved in the making of decisions that affect their lives
- adolescents do not have easy access to education
- many adolescents drop out of school
- early and/or forced marriages
- early and/or unwanted pregnancies
- health risks arising from pregnancies, child delivery or abortions
- HIV/AIDS
- economic and sexual exploitation
- female genital mutilation
- rape
- forced enrolment into armed groups
- discrimination

Ensuring the rights of adolescents in general and adolescent girls in particular therefore requires significant efforts through multisectoral programmes based on a strong and coordinated partnership. From this perspective, this regional workshop aimed at:

- identifying ways and means of generating information on adolescents. This is an essential element for national and regional capacity building;
- developing collaboration strategies with adolescents on a regional level;
- identifying the technical, human and financial resources required to promote a multisectoral policy that will take gender considerations of adolescents in West and Central Africa into consideration;

- developing a common agenda with defined objectives, priorities, areas of intervention and modalities for the implementation of the rights of adolescents. Particular emphasis should be laid on the rights of adolescent girls.

This is the first time a coordinated regional inter-agency workshop has been organised since the institution of the regional programme for adolescents in December 1999. This regional programme was the outcome of a joint Population Council/UNFPA mission to the UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office. The preparatory meeting held in April 2000 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, paved the way for this process by identifying the vital issues to be considered, evaluating the status of projects and country experiences and setting up an inter-agency committee for the preparation of the regional workshop.

The exchange of technical information, followed by discussions and group work enabled the participants to thoroughly analyse the situation of adolescents and explore avenues for programme development. Four themes were selected in relation to the major constraints adolescents faced: education, means of livelihood, early marriage and AIDS. The workshop ended with a special meeting for partners. The objective of this meeting was to better coordinate programmes for adolescents.

2. Programmes for Adolescent Girls

Some of the existing programmes for adolescents were presented as a prelude to the workshop.

2.1. Overview of Programmes to ensure the implementation of the rights of adolescent girls

2.1.1 Research

The Population Council, an international research institution, helps broaden knowledge on reproductive health. This institution carries out research in biomedicine, social sciences and public health. It has undertaken to create the awareness that the problem of adolescents goes beyond that of reproductive health. They are also faced with limited socio-economic opportunities. The Population Council seeks to understand the role played by the community, parents, peers and sexual partners in the full development of adolescents. Some of the research work carried out by the Population Council can be found in this report.

2.1.2 Towards a global movement for children

UNICEF contributes to the promotion of the rights of the child and the participation and development rights of adolescents in West and Central Africa through the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (0-18 years). UNICEF Country programmes are aimed, amongst others, at:

- creating a conducive environment for adolescents by encouraging policies, legislation and appropriate plans of action that will promote their rights

- facilitating access to services and opportunities that will enable adolescents to develop their skills,
- ensuring optimal physical and psycho-social well-being of adolescents,
- promoting the participation of adolescents in decisions affecting their lives

To achieve these objectives, UNICEF assists countries in the region to:

- ◆ carry out studies, operational research and use new indicators to understand the problems of adolescents,
- ◆ support reforms in civil and penal law for adolescents,
- ◆ promote basic education as a means of preventing economic exploitation and child trafficking,
- ◆ promote AIDS prevention amongst young people,
- ◆ develop social integration, physical and psychological rehabilitation of adolescents affected by HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse and all forms of violence,
- ◆ provide vocational training to illiterate adolescents or to those who have dropped out of school,
- ◆ promote freedom of expression and the participation of adolescents in Child Parliaments, technical meetings and in the planning and implementation of programmes designed for them,
- ◆ develop national inter-agency projects that will encourage the implementation of the rights of adolescents.

All existing projects will be reviewed in September 2001 during the preparation of the Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Child. At this session, progress made since the Global Summit for Children in 1990 will be evaluated. New commitments will be made and actions for the next ten years will be defined within the framework of the Global Movement for Children, launched in 1999 to strengthen the commitment of all development partners to a new programme for children. The West and Central African region contributed to this new programme at the Regional Consultation on the vision of the child in the 21st century held in Abidjan in November-December 1999. This Consultation, which is the outcome of a vast participatory process, ended with the Abidjan Appeal.

2.1.3. Ensuring the implementation of the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents

In order to attain lasting and equitable development, each individual, especially adolescents, must have a mastery of his/her sexual life and ability to procreate. UNFPA, whose mandate is to promote reproductive health, pays special attention to adolescents.

UNFPA encourages the development of national policies and programmes on reproductive health for adolescents and the youth in West and Central Africa by:

- building national capacities in situation analysis and by identifying the needs of adolescents and young adults,
- developing national policies on sexual/reproductive health for adolescents and young adults,
- creating special services for adolescents within existing socio-medical structures or building integrated or multi-purpose centres for adolescents and young adults,
- introducing the teaching of life skills in schools. This subject should take equity, sex and reproductive health issues into consideration
- integrating IEC into school and extra-school curriculum and adult literacy programmes,

- improving the skills of health providers on IEC and reproductive health,
- training peer educators to work with adolescents and young adults who are going through difficult moments as a result of HIV/AIDS, STDs and unwanted pregnancies, etc.

The desire to meet the specific needs of adolescents requires a continuous update of programmes. This is the only way one can be abreast of the ever evolving needs of adolescents.

2.1.4 Generating a synergy of actions in favour of adolescent girls

Created in 1998 through a donation from Ted Turner, the United Nations Foundation's mandate is to work with other United Nations agencies so as to:

- ◆ encourage a synergy between them
- ◆ support them by fund-raising and other programmes
- ◆ make United Nations more visible through information and advocacy

The Foundation donates about 30 million dollars per year to different United Nations agencies which carry out 3-year projects in the area of population and women. Emphasis is laid on projects that will effectively improve the lives of adolescents/young adults (11-20 years) and the quality of sexual and reproductive health care provided for them. Due to limited funds, the Foundation's priority is poverty alleviation and field services.

For the United Nations Foundation to finance a project, it must meet the following criteria:

- ◆ The project must be preventive and innovative. It must be able to implement lessons learned and good practices. The programme must be able to generate funds and as such sustain itself,
- ◆ The project must offer an opportunity for the strengthening of collaboration between the different United Nations agencies. It must also encourage partnership between United Nations agencies and civil society, the private sector and donors. It should help in the capacity building of the UN in its role as an agent of development.

Collaboration between the different agencies and their partners was discussed at a special meeting during this workshop. Minutes of this meeting can be found in this report.

2.2 Achievements and Challenges

Ten years after the Global Summit for Children, what has been achieved in West and Central Africa as regards the rights of the child in general and that of adolescent in particular. Are there more opportunities created for them? These are the some of the questions that came up after the presentation of programmes.

For UNICEF, the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by almost all countries of the world indicates an increasing commitment to these rights. Programmes developed for the implementation of the rights of children/adolescents led to the preparation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which was adopted 1990 and became effective in November 1999. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by many countries. Human rights, the rights of the child and women's rights are now recognised as being fundamental to

the development of nations. National Associations are now involved in the promotion of the rights of the child.

For the past 10 years, we have moved from the notion of welfare to a holistic perception of the child in which his/her stages of development are also taken into consideration. It is said that "the child of today is the adolescent/adult of tomorrow". Emphasis was laid on the differences between girls and boys, the needs arising from these differences and the participation of young adults in their own development as major actors. UNFPA observed that reproductive health care is not just limited to family planning. It now embraces all other aspects of reproduction.

Emphasis was also laid on advocacy and participatory programmes on the reproductive health of adolescents.

Finally, this century will offer us the opportunity to assess the promises made to children a decade ago. It will also strengthen partnerships so as to accelerate the implementation of the rights of the child.

On the lessons learned this past decade, participants called for caution.

Discussions led to the following observations:

- the recommendations of the different workshops on the implementation of the rights of the child have not been executed,
- Despite the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is not fully implemented in many countries, it still serves as a deterrent to those States who have ratified it because they have committed themselves to its implementation. The ratification of the Convention makes it difficult for a country to violate the rights of the child. However, the implementation of the Convention is hindered by differences in the laws and social values of different countries. Also, there is no follow-up of its implementation.

Suggestions

To redress the situation, it was suggested that (i) the commitments made and effectively achieved by the States should be evaluated; (ii) all sectors of the society should be involved in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This can be done by :

- **Evaluating the rights that have been respected as well as the recommendations of different workshops that have been implemented. This can be done by analysing the social policies of these countries.**
- **Evaluating the joint implementation of the CRC by NGOs and institutions at national level. This could be a source of information for Heads of State**
- **Using the conclusions from the assessment of the Decade for the Rights of the Child to sensitise Heads of State**
- **Increasing the authority of national CRC and CEDAW committees**
- **Popularising the CRC. This will make the population more involved in its strict implementation**

The full participation and development of adolescents can only be obtained if the following actions are taken:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Create awareness on the implementation of the rights of children and adolescents⇒ Provide quality education and appropriate training to children and adolescents⇒ Create more opportunities such as income generating activities⇒ Facilitate access to information on health matters, especially on reproductive health⇒ Encourage adolescents to actively participate in their own development⇒ Improve on bilateral and multilateral projects meant to tackle all the problems that might hinder the implementation of the rights of adolescents. | Issues to be Considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ <i>Should countries which do not respect the commitments made at the ratification of the CRC be sanctioned ?</i>◆ <i>Reach a consensus on the definition of youth, adolescents and participation</i>◆ <i>How can we duplicate positive experiences ?</i> |
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3. Education for All: A Challenge

3.1. Commitments made during the Global Education Forum

Initiated in 1990, the "Education for All" programme was evaluated at the Global Education Forum held in April 2000 in Dakar. Participants committed themselves to providing education for all by 2015.

The implementation of the rights of the adolescents to quality education was one of the renewed commitments made during this Forum. The main objectives of the Dakar Forum were to:

- Ensure that all children (girls in particular, less privileged children, child workers and those with specific needs) have access to quality primary education by 2015.
- Meet the educational needs of all youth by ensuring equal access to programmes aimed at imparting the necessary knowledge and life skills.
- Improve on the quality of education provided for adolescents with emphasis laid on reading, writing, arithmetic and life skills.
- Eliminate disparities between sexes in primary and secondary education by 2005. This will go a long way to ensure equality in educational programmes and institutions by 2015.

The next stage is the preparation of national plans of action which will take all the objectives and recommendations of the forum into consideration. The implementation of these recommendations will lead to the establishment of schools where each child, irrespective of his/her gender, will have access to quality education.

3.2 Problems in Educating Girls

Enrolment rates in the West and Central African region show a significant disparity between girls and boys. According to statistics obtained from DHS (1992-1998),

- in Benin, while 59% of boys between 10-14 years are in school, only 32% of girls within this age group are attending school. In Chad, still within the same age group, 50% of boys are in school, compared to only 29% of girls. In Mali, it is 34.5% of boys to 27% of girls.
- Within the 15-19 years age group, this disparity is even more pronounced. While 36% of boys attend school in Benin, only 16% of girls do so. In Chad, 43% of boys attend school as against 12% of girls. In Togo, 66% of boys and only 37% of girls attend school.
- The area in which a child lives is also a determining factor in his/her education. Girls between the ages of 15-19 living in rural areas are more at a disadvantage. In Burkina Faso, 60% of girls in the urban areas between 10-14 years attend school compared to 14% in the rural areas. For those within the ages of 15-19, 34% of those living in urban areas attend school compared to only 3% in rural areas. In Niger, it is unlikely that a girl living in the rural area will attend school after the age of 10 and even less likely after the age of 14. 56% of girls between the ages of 10 and 14 living in the urban area attend school, while 12% of girls living in rural areas do so. For girls between 15 and 19 years, 25% of those living in the urban areas attend school as against 0.7% in the rural areas.
- Many families cannot afford to send their daughters to school. This is a major hindrance especially for girls between the ages of 15 and 19. Very few girls from poor homes complete their primary education. In Mali for example, only 1% of poor girls between the ages of 15 and 19 complete the primary education compared to 29% from rich homes. In comparison, 3% of boys in the same age group and from poor homes complete their primary education as against 48% from rich homes.

In conclusion, girls are more at a disadvantage than boys when it comes to education. This becomes more apparent with less privileged girls in the rural areas. They are more affected by poverty. Their school attendance is lower and they are more likely to drop out of school much earlier than boys. The rights of girls to education is still far from reality, especially for those between the ages of 15-19.

Different programmes meant to provide girls with quality basic education are being initiated at regional and national levels. One of these programmes is the *Initiative pour l'Education des Filles en Afrique (IEFA)*. It is financed by UNICEF and other donors. Participants from Burkina Faso, a member of this initiative, shared their experiences during the workshop.

3.3 Community Schools in Burkina Faso

3.3.1 Overview of Girls' Situation

In 1996, 54.94% of the 10 million inhabitants of Burkina Faso were less than 18 years old. Statistics have shown that in 1998, 45.3% of the population lived below the poverty line (72,290 CFAF - about \$94 dollars - per adult per year).

There is also a disparity to the disadvantage of girls:

- School attendance rate in 1997/98: girls 33.6%; boys 44%
- Rate of repetition of academic year in 1997/98: girls 17.2%; boys 16.9%
- Rate of girls' withdrawal from school: Primary 1, 3.1%; Primary 5, 9%
- Success rate in Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination vary between 40% and 50%.

Some of the reasons for the low attendance of girls in school in Burkina Faso are poverty, negative perceptions of female education and the social status of women.

3.3.2 Community Schools

The Community Schools Project started in 1995. These schools bring education, physically and culturally, closer to children in disadvantaged areas where school attendance rates are very low. There are 185 Community Schools in Burkina Faso. They admit children between 7 and 9 years, half of whom are girls.

The distinctive features of these schools are:

1. Communities and families participate fully both in the running of the school and in the monitoring of the progress of the pupils. This is done through Parent-Teacher Associations and Teacher-Mother Associations. Teachers in the Community Schools are natives of the communities in which the schools are located. They are paid by the community and the State. They are trained and given refresher courses regularly. Community Schools are built, equipped and run by the villagers. They have different committees who see to the smooth running of the schools. Most of these schools have drinking water and separate latrines for boys and girls. Plans are underway to build canteens in the schools.
2. The Community Schools do not only make up for the absence of regular schools, they also offer a healthy and safe environment for children, especially girls who are often deprived of education as a result of some difficulties (financial problems, distance etc.) and beliefs (some families do not believe that going to school is good for girls).
3. Children start learning in their mother tongue before they are taught in French. Some of the issues taken into consideration while preparing the school curricula are the children's environment, nutrition, health, hygiene, family education and civil rights. Non-Governmental Organisations assist in preparing the schools' curricula. They also create awareness in the communities.

Two comparative studies carried out on the Community School system and regular schools showed that the pupils in Community Schools performed better than their counterparts in regular schools. These studies also showed that bilingualism in schools is an advantage. The Community School system has been integrated into the 10-year Basic Education Development Plan.

Constraints such as lack of motivation on the part of some teachers and communities must be solved. Teachers' status should be defined. The quality of education, monitoring and assessment must also be improved on. For people to be more interested in Community Schools, social communication/mobilisation must be widely used. This will go a long way to change parents' attitudes and increase the number of girls sent to school.

After the presentation of the national programme on the education of girls in Burkina Faso, Population Council presented a paper on Kenyan school girls.

3.4 School Children in Kenya

In 1996, the Kenyan Ministry of Education and Population Council carried out a study which involved 36 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, 774 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 years, teachers and parents. The study was to determine the link between what girls go through at school, their academic performance and early sexual activities. Conclusions from the study showed that negative attitude of teachers towards girls, bad experiences in class and a hostile school environment put girls at a disadvantage in Kenyan schools.

Attitude of Teachers

63% to 92% of male teachers interviewed claimed they make no distinction between girls and boys compared to 50% to 67% of the female teachers interviewed. 31% to 40% of female teachers prefer boys to girls while 8-30% of male teachers do the same.

This preferential treatment towards boys can be seen in the way teachers make contemptuous remarks to girls. They are considered less intelligent than boys. They are sometimes punished and even threatened.

Teachers prefer to ask boys questions in class. They have a more positive attitude towards boys. It is a general belief amongst teachers that girls excel in English while boys do better in mathematics.

Pupils' Aspirations

When questioned about their aspirations, all the pupils interviewed expressed the desire to obtain a university education. However, while all the boys believed they had the right to good education up to university level, 71% of the girls considered it a privilege.

Hostile School Environment

It was discovered that boys sometimes fondle girls at school and teachers are indifferent to this act. Schoolgirls are not only sexually harassed in schools, this behaviour also takes place on the streets and in discotheques and these girls are helpless. Teachers also take advantage of their positions to have sexual relations with schoolgirls. Most of the studies carried out showed that the girls had their first sexual intercourse under duress. It has also been observed that schools' toilets are not only dirty and in bad condition, they are also indiscreetly located.

Lessons Learnd

This study led to the preliminary drafting of a policy on gender by Kenyan Ministry of Education. This was done based on the observations that:

1. Girls and boys do not go through the same experiences in school.
2. The school environment is often hostile towards girls.

This preliminary drafting of a policy on gender recommends a training programme on gender issues for teachers and district school inspectors. It also suggests the need for laws on gender issues as well as compensation for school girls. This will go a long way not only to motivate the girls, but also encourage their parents to keep them in school.

Issues to Consider

- *Creating a conducive school environment for girls. An environment free from harassment from boys and teachers*
- *Harmonising local and national initiatives so as to avoid a situation where there will be several systems of education in a country*
- *Motivating community school teachers*
- *Ensuring that schools build separate toilets for girls and boys*
- *Encouraging teachers to change their attitudes by treating school children equally.*

4. Is Work a Means of Livelihood and/or a Tool for the Development of Adolescents?

4.1 Towards a Positive Approach to the Implementation of the Rights of Adolescents

The need to protect children and adolescents is a priority in West and Central Africa, where 41% (about 80 million) of children between the ages of 5 and 14 work. Child trafficking is very rampant and children are enrolled into armed groups as soon as conflicts break out.

While it is very important to promote the education, harmonious development and protection of children, it is also necessary, in conformity with the CRC and ILO Conventions, to create job opportunities and income generating activities for adolescents aged 15 and above, many of whom are jobless.

In the situation analysis carried out on adolescents, it was suggested that efforts should be made to help these adolescents overcome the problems that make it difficult for them to fully enjoy their rights. Adolescents are faced with many difficulties. Access to a reliable and decent means of livelihood can contribute to their development. An adolescent with a good job will be able to contribute economically and socially to his/her family and the society at large. He/she will be financially independent and confident. An adolescent with a decent means of livelihood will not be tempted to go into drugs or prostitution.

UNICEF and its partners believe that there is a need to make a distinction between child labour (for children less than 15 years) which should be eliminated, and work for children

who are over 15 years which should respect certain universal standards in order to avoid economic exploitation. While fighting poverty and making parents assume their responsibilities, efforts must be made to maximise the potentials of adolescents and also ensure the implementation of their rights. In trying to meet the needs of adolescents, factors such as age, sex, level of education and marital status must be taken into consideration because adolescents have their peculiarities. Adolescents are often considered to be a homogenous group which is not the case.

The development of adolescents can only be achieved by:

- building their intellectual capacity through education, vocational training and other activities that will provide them with a bright future
- creating opportunities that will encourage income generating activities. This could be done, for example by providing easy access to credit facilities, savings schemes and agricultural projects
- making information available
- providing a safe and decent working and learning environment as well as improving their living conditions
- encouraging them to participate in making decisions that affect their lives.

The significant contribution of adolescents to the workforce was shown in a case study carried out in Senegal.

Population Council, in conjunction with UNICEF had asked the Senegalese Department of Statistics to provide a secondary data analysis on its workforce. Statistics showed that half of the adolescents between 15 and 19 years (64% of the boys and 34% of the girls) are employed mostly in the agricultural sector and as domestic workers (most of the girls were employed as domestic workers). Their working conditions are often precarious. Efforts must be made for their work to be recognised and appreciated so that they can work in a safe and healthy environment while being well remunerated.

For a project designed for child workers in Senegal to succeed, its planners must:

- ensure that the contributions of these children are recognised,
- encourage girls to go into income generating activities,
- provide vocational training that are in demand,
- consider giving more attention to the rural areas.

When developing programmes for adolescents and young adults, these two age groups with different needs must be taken into consideration: the 10-14 year-olds and the 15-24 year-olds. Working can be a good experience and an opportunity to earn a living for an adolescent of 15 and above, but it is dangerous for a child below 15 years. Children in this age group must be protected from economic exploitation and their education should be a priority.

4.2 Meeting the Training and Financial Needs of Adolescents

Two special projects designed to meet the training and financial needs of adolescent girls were presented. "Projet Mille Jeunes Filles", a training programme for young girls in Burkina Faso and Tap and Reposition Youth (TRY) in Kenya.

4.2.1 Preparing Girls for Active Life

Girls between the ages of 14 and 18 are trained in the two centres for girls in Sourou, Burkina Faso. They go through a two-year programme in vocational training and general education.. They are taken care of by the centres. Each Student receives a monthly stipend of 10 000 F CFA (about US\$12). The main partners of the centres are the Republic of China, UNFPA, FAO and WHO.

Some of the subjects taught in the centres are reading and writing, environmental education, first aid, hygiene and sanitation, reproductive health and Introduction to Management. Vocation courses such as cloth dyeing, dressmaking, weaving, market gardening and animal husbandry are also taught. At the end of the training, each student receives necessary tools and 120 000 F CFA (about \$154).

UNFPA and Population Council evaluated the project three years after the first set of students passed out from the centre. Out of 651 girls, only 4% had never started up income generating activities. 69% said they were making profit from their vocation. It was difficult to have access to credit facilities; only 9% were able to obtain credit.

88% of the married girls chose their own marriage partners and 34% use modern contraceptive methods.

The girls face a lot of difficulties in the area of organisation, supply and marketing. Some do not have a mastery of the trade they have learnt. They therefore decide to go for refresher courses, learn a new trade or change their selling points.

With the assistance of UNFPA, the training centres plan to set up a credit system, improve on marketing and management courses given to the students and also help women farmers obtain financial assistance from FAO.

4.2.2 Credit Facilities Provided for Adolescents

In 1998, Population Council, in collaboration with Kenya Rural Enterprise Program (K-Rep) set up a project called " Tap and Reposition Youth" for girls who are unmarried, jobless and dropped-out of school between the ages of 16 and 24 in the disadvantaged areas of Nairobi. A test project was carried out to determine how credit facilities and savings had an impact on job opportunities available to adolescents and on their living conditions. It was also meant to find out if credit facilities and saving could create more economic opportunities for young girls and if running a business changed their views about themselves and those around them.

Innovative Fatima

Fatima Sedego shared her experiences with the participants at the workshop. After graduating from the Training Centre for Girls in Sourou, she went into market gardening.. According to her, she had acquired many skills at the Centre. She admitted that she regretted leaving school after just three years of primary education. Fatima said, "I chose to study agriculture because there is a dam not far from my village. We also have an agricultural co-operative. We were advised in the training centre to contact our local authorities on completing our studies. I therefore went to the "Prefet" of my town for a parcel of land. I also asked my supervisor to help me convince the women in my village to start a co-operative. They were sceptical because they felt market gardening was very difficult. The supervisor helped obtain all the documents needed to set up a cooperative".

Fatima went on to describe her daily programme. "In the morning, I work on the parcel of land belonging to the women's co-operative and in the afternoon, I work on mine. The harvesting periods are not the same in my community, so our products are on the market before that of the village. I have sold seeds to my former school. My main problem at the moment is the difficulty in getting water".

They receive training in management, reproductive health, life skills, decision-making, leadership, self respect and gender issues.

When Perseverance Pays

During the workshop, Fatou Ouattara, another beneficiary of the "Mille Jeunes Filles" Project in Bobo Dioulasso, recounted the difficult moments she went through: "I dropped out of High School in the 3rd year. I was a lazy student who liked night clubs. Today when I see girls going astray, I feel sorry for them. It is such a waste. At the centre, I learnt weaving, but it was not lucrative. I then went into cloth dyeing with my three sisters. I would go to sell my products in Côte d'Ivoire and buy plastic crockery which I resold in Bobo Dioulasso. I was involved in a car accident, so I had to stop my business activities. I started to braid hair to revive my activities. I was able to obtain a loan of 300,000 FCFA from the "Mille Jeunes Filles" Project. I went back to cloth dyeing. I sell my products in a shop but I also go out to look for customers. I would like to bring girls together so that they can learn a trade. This will help them become independent. I would like to appeal to the authorities to continue training adolescents. I would like to achieve something within the next two years. I will open my own shop and hairdressing salon and I will buy a motorbike! "

A maximum of \$200 is given as loan to one or two girls after saving on a weekly basis for some time. The other girls will have to wait for their colleagues to reimburse the loan before they can take their turn. They are free to choose a trade, hairdressing, dressmaking or less common trade for girls such as battery charging. Out of the 105 girls who have taken part in the project, 90 have obtained loans of not more than \$200. 9 girls have abandoned the project. Some left on their own accord, others because of their husbands or problems with other participants. Some girls also left the project because they felt it was not in line with their religious beliefs. Those who are carrying on save about \$7. The percentage of reimbursement of loans after the first year of operation is 70%.

Population Council documents all aspects of the project and is concerned about its sustainability. Such projects are very few in Kenya and many of them have failed to attain their objectives. Some of the questions Population Council will try to answer are:

- How do young women occupy themselves?
- How do they earn their living and how do they spend their money?
- How much do they put aside as savings and do they reimburse loans granted to them?
- What is their attitude towards gender issues?
- What type of relationship do they have with people who are important in their lives?

Lessons Learnt

Created in 1984, K-Rep, an experienced and professional structure, has proved to be an excellent partner. The idea of a unisex, group-based credit system has helped the project. Apart from the credit opportunities and savings scheme, the girls have also formed a social assistance network. Each group of girls has its criteria for membership as well as its rules and regulations. For example, when a young woman gives birth, other members of the group help her in one way or another. Other forms of social assistance are given to members whenever the need arises. This is another factor that has maintained the project. The girls consider the Project Officers as an additional support in their quest for social integration. They see them as being knowledgeable and reliable.

Finally, the content of the training aspect of the project is very useful to the participants. By learning how to save money, participants in TRY project are learning how to plan for the future.

4.3 Protecting Adolescents From the Worst Forms of Labour

As mentioned earlier on, one of the best ways of ensuring the development rights of child and adolescent workers is by improving their working conditions and paying them their salaries regularly. Child workers must be protected from dangerous work. It is in this light that the International Labour Office has taken it upon itself to fight all worst forms of child labour through the International Programme for the Abolition of Child Labour. Countries taking part in the programme have committed themselves by signing a Protocol Agreement. They have set up a working committee that will coordinate the fight against the worst forms of child labour, which is defined by the individual countries. However, vulnerable children less than 12 years old and girls are top priority in all countries that have signed the Protocol Agreement on the Abolition of Child Labour. The main areas of intervention of the Programme are prevention of child labour, withdrawal of children from dangerous activities and the improvement of the working conditions of children. 9 West African countries are participating in the programme. The success of this programme depends largely on inter-country strategies and collaboration.

In West and Central Africa, Benin and Gabon are working in collaboration to eradicate child trafficking. Mali and Côte d'Ivoire are doing the same. Some of the actions undertaken to combat child trafficking in the agricultural sector and domestic labour are awareness campaigns, creation of bilateral commissions, studies, repatriation of children and repressive measures against child traffickers.

These actions have started yielding good results because different authorities are not only aware of the phenomenon, but have decided to wage a war against it. There is a follow-up on national and regional level. However, the success of this follow-up is hindered by persistent poverty, the light repressive measures imposed on child traffickers and the difficulty in coordinating the activities of different organisations fighting against child trafficking.

Suggestions

♦ On adolescents' means of livelihood

During the different presentations, a lot of emphasis was laid on the importance of research and documentation as starting points for the development of programmes, strategies and actions. It was also observed that the involvement of micro-finance institutions, training institutes, governments, international organisations, as well as the adolescents and their communities is very important in the development of strategies and programmes that will have an impact in the region. Some of the strategies and programmes suggested are:

- **Diversifying vocational training programmes offered to adolescents girls.**
- **Granting credit (not only micro-credits) facilities to adolescent girls,**
- **Giving more assistance in the rural areas**
- **Developing project support services for the youth. These could be in the area of training, starting up a business, marketing, distribution, land acquisition, savings, etc.**
- **Create a health insurance scheme for adolescents. This will help them take care**

of their medical expenses

- ♦ On child trafficking:
 - Families should be more involved
 - Transit Centres should be set up for intercepted or repatriated children

5. What is the Situation of Married Adolescent Girls in West Africa

Unless the national legislation of a country states otherwise, the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a person between 0 and 18 years. Early marriage violates the rights of children and adolescents, especially their education rights. It also poses a lot of risks to their sexual and reproductive health. For example, early pregnancy can lead to medical complications arising from incomplete physical development of the child or adolescent. Children and adolescents in early marriages are not only exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, but also to a psychological and physical violence. Early marriage also deters self-determination, independence, freedom of choice, free movement and social development. Their chances of being educated or engaging in income generating activities are very slim. Many of them face a bleak future.

The average age of first marriages in the West Africa ranges from 15 and 18 years. In Niger and Chad, however, girls get married at a more tender age. EDS statistics show that:

- half of the Malian women between 20 and 24 years were married at the age of 16 (1996)
- half of the Burkinabe women between the same age group were married at 17.6 years (1993)
- 35% of the women in Niger between the ages of 20 and 24 were married at 15 and 77% at 18 years (1998)

According to UNICEF, 25% of Mauritanian girls are married at 12 and 75% at 17 years. These girls are particularly vulnerable because they are very young and without any social support when they move to their in-laws' households. Forced marriages are also very common and national laws on the legal age at which a girl can get married (when they exist) are not respected. Besides, there is a disparity between the marriageable ages of girls and boys. In Benin, a girl can legally get married at 15 years, while a boy can get married at 18 years. In Guinea, a girl can legally get married at 16 years, while a boy can do so at 18. Since the husbands are generally much older, the girls placed under their authority have no power to make decisions. As shown in a study carried out in Senegal, some of these girls are no longer aware of what is going on around them since they are cut off from their friends. They no longer go to places such as school, youth centres, health centres, etc. where they meet other adolescents of their age group.

Since married adolescent girls are not "seen", they are generally not taken into account in the compilation of data. Consequently, they are not considered by those who develop programmes for the youth. How can married adolescent girls be reached? What specific programmes can be developed so that they can also enjoy their rights? These are the crucial

questions that must be answered when developing programmes for adolescents. The first stage of this programme planning can be done by trying to discover who married adolescents are and how they live their lives as married girls. A qualitative study carried out in Senegal (Saint Louis and Louga) by Population Council on married adolescents (61 boys and 215 girls) shows the reality of early marriage. It also depicts how they live on a daily basis.

5.1. Adolescent Girls in Early Marriage

Results of a study carried out by the Dakar office of Population Council on 313 married Senegalese adolescent girls were presented to the participants. This was done so as to inform them better on the lives of married adolescent girls and stimulate ideas on how to assist these married adolescent girls.

Most of the girls interviewed were not aware of their marriage until their wedding day. They did not choose their spouses. It was their parents' choice and these marriages are endogamous. They endure sudden and brutal changes such as withdrawal from school, lack of freedom, inability to visit friends, excess domestic obligations, health problems arising from intensive sexual activity, early maternity (46% of the girls have at least one child) and low outdoor activities. Their husbands and mothers-in-law are their primary source of information on reproductive health matters. Apart from the difficult access to the health centres and to lack of money, embarrassment, shame and ignorance prevent the girls from seeking medical assistance.

A Study on married adolescent girls in urban areas in Senegal – Suggestions of Programmes for them:

- Involve husbands and mothers-in-law
- Older women should organise visits to their homes
- Organise meetings between midwives and married adolescent girls
- Arrange for meeting places where discussions can be held
- Develop an integrated services approach

The study also shows that the young married girls appreciate being taken care of by their husbands and the discovery of sexual intercourse. They also enjoy the accelerated transition to maturity. Some of the reasons given for leaving school are lack of interest in education, difficulty in combining school and family life. Some were asked to leave by their parents or spouses. Those who pursued their education obtained permission from their spouses. When asked about their aspirations, married adolescent girls interviewed seemed not to have future plans.

5.2 What Can be Done to Promote the Rights of Married Adolescent Girls and Foster Changes

5.2.1 Encourage families to delay marriage

The success story of the Maqqatam Project in Cairo was presented by Marie Assad, the originator of the project. According to her, within the framework of an integrated project for girls between 12 to 20 years, which included training in skills development, income generating activities (carpet making, textile and paper manufacturing), literacy classes, life skills, awareness on health issues (SMI, hygiene and the elimination of harmful traditional practices) recreational activities, leadership training, the Project Officers gradually discovered that it was necessary to take the specific needs of married girls into consideration.

Recounting her experience, she said, "We discovered that marriage often creates problems for the girls and their families. They need a lot of money to organise a 'decent' wedding and buy basic household items. For the girls, there is the additional fear of the unknown or of the old "new husband". Girls are also faced with other problems such as the loss of their freedom and identity and leaving their work, training or studies due to intense pressure from families. We started to work with unmarried girls and found that we had to strengthen their bargaining power with their families on issues such as their participation in household duties, their rights to obtain a good education, earn a living, manage their resources, the possibility of delaying their marriage and the free will to choose whoever they wanted to marry".

"Girls who do not get married until they are 18 years old and are not forced to get married are compensated with a sum of \$150. This is done so as to encourage families not to give their daughters away in marriage at a tender age. In cases where girls have been forcefully given away in marriage, we negotiate with their parents so that they can be allowed to continue their training or activities with us. A day care centre has been set up for working adolescent mothers. Only married adolescent girls are encouraged to work at home, though they need to take part in some outdoor activities so as to avoid being constantly at home.

These types of activities are very necessary for the improvement of the lives of married adolescent girls. The girls who take part in our project are taught to be responsible for themselves. They have created a network that enables them share excess work load, exchange information and look after each other's children. They organise these activities among themselves and with other mothers and girls who are not part of the programme. Married adolescent girls also involve their husbands by creating couples' clubs. We were able to confirm their interest in our programme when they allowed their wives to come back to work 40 days after giving birth instead of the planned three months.

Participants at the workshop were interested, but at the same time sceptical about the financial incentive offered to the girls who delay their marriage. They were also sceptical about the sustainability of such a measure. However, it is important to note that this project has led to the existence of self-financed programmes.

5.2.2. Reducing the rate of early marriages by educating adolescents, sensitizing parents and fighting against poverty

The different discussions held by participants on early marriage and its impact on the life of adolescents revealed that the issue remains very sensitive even within development agencies. Indeed, some participants found it regrettable that the idea of early marriage as an institution that disregards the rights of adolescents originated from those who do not have any respect for the marriage institution. They do not see the social and cultural aspect of early marriage which is considered by those who practice it as a factor of socialisation. Some participants wanted to know who benefited from the social aspect of early marriage: the families, the husband or the married adolescent? Those who are fighting against forced marriages maintain that they are doing it from the viewpoint of the defence of human rights.

According to some participants, families forcefully give their daughters away in marriage at a tender age due to ignorance (they may not be aware of the harmful consequences of early marriage), poverty, the desire to strengthen family ties and their wish to protect their daughters' virginity. Early marriage is very common in rural areas. Further studies would help better determine the extent of the phenomenon and make it possible to appreciate the marital lives of adolescent girls in the rural areas, which would be very different from that of their counterparts in the urban areas. Indeed, studies carried out in Senegal show that between the late 1980s and the 1990s, the average marriage age of adolescents went up from 17 to 19 years as a result of school attendance. This was limited to the urban areas where adolescents are also exposed to early sexual relations outside marriage and as such, to STDs/AIDS.

Issues to Consider:

- *The life of adolescent girls in the rural areas*
- *The role of adolescent boys is not much considered. How do they live?*
- *What impact does education have on the age at which adolescents get married*
- *How can the incentives given to those who delay their marriages be sustained.*

In conclusion,, the following strategies could discourage early marriage:

1. negotiate with the families of the girls so as to delay their daughters' marriage to a reasonable age
2. make education accessible at all levels so that adolescent girls, even when married, would be able to at least complete their primary education,
3. create job opportunities and income generating activities for girls and women,
4. the rights of girls must be respected,
5. psychological and social assistance should be given to married adolescent girls whenever the need arises.

Suggestions

- people should be made more aware of the effects of early marriage on the social mobility of girls and their access to health services. The political implications of making health services (especially safe maternity services) available to married adolescent girls should be well explained,
- traditional leaders should be involved in awareness campaigns on educating young girls as it is being done in Niger,
- create a legal framework which will support the fight against early marriage. This can be done mainly by harmonising all national laws using the CRC and by increasing the legal marriageable age,
- encourage adolescents to express themselves through discussions within their families and with other adults,
- married girls, especially those in rural areas, should be taken into consideration during programme planning,
- psychological assistance should be given to adolescents whenever necessary,
- adolescent girls should be encouraged to express their feelings,
- joint programmes for adolescents should be encouraged,
- the attention of donors should be drawn to the need for a holistic integrated programme for adolescents. These programmes should include education, reproductive health information, income generating activities and easy access to health services.

6. Protection against AIDS

Reproductive Health and AIDS Prevention Programmes for Adolescents

According to UNAIDS, while the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS is 1.07% at global level, it is 8.57% in West Africa. Despite the significant differences in West Africa, the AIDS pandemic is fast spreading, with the prevalence rate being more than 10% in most countries: Central African Republic (about 15%), Côte d'Ivoire (nearly 11%), and Burkina Faso (8%). Mali, Cameroon, Togo and Nigeria have prevalence rates of between 4 and 8%. These rates may appear relatively low, but what should be noted is that a prevalence rate of 3% means that there is a 20% probability that one person is infected with AIDS, while a prevalence rate of 20% means that there is 50% probability that one person is infected with AIDS. According to UNAIDS, as at the end of 1999, 760 000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in Côte d'Ivoire. The number of children who have lost their parents to AIDS is increasing at an alarming rate. In Côte d'Ivoire, as at the end of 1999, there were about 300 000 children who were less than 15 years old and had lost their mother or both parents to AIDS (UNAIDS).

Our region must look into some of the factors that encourage the spread of HIV/AIDS: poverty, unprotected sexual relations, migration (populations at risk), adolescent girls given away in marriage to older men (girls are 3 to 6 times more infected than boys of the same age), etc. Discussions must be encouraged between adolescents, their parents and teachers (who often "take sexual advantage" of their students) and the community. The overwhelming AIDS scourge must be combated by all possible means. It must be included in programmes of every sector: health, education, social services etc.

For some years now, the international community has recognised the needs and rights of the adolescents as regards sexual and reproductive health. Over and above the ethical point of view, ensuring the health of adolescents is a guarantee for the future for three reasons:

- a change in behaviour will be a lasting asset if it takes place early enough in the lives of the individual,
- adolescents of today are the adults and parents of tomorrow. Their children will enjoy better health care,
- efforts made to improve the lot of adolescents will have a long-term effect on society at large.

Early involvement of adolescents in sexual activities and the devastation of the AIDS pandemic have put reproductive health and AIDS prevention at the forefront of development programmes designed for adolescents. Reproductive health programmes tend towards the setting up of integrated programmes that will take the living conditions of adolescents, their level of education and the mastery of their sexual lives into consideration. There is already a framework for the fight against AIDS - the International Initiative for the Fight Against AIDS. Some of the objectives the Initiative plans to attain between now and 2010 are:

- the provision of easy access to information on AIDS
- to help young adults between the ages of 15 and 24 fight against the AIDS pandemic by equipping them with the necessary preventive tools
- to reduce the prevalence rate of HIV among young people between the ages of 15 and 24 to 25%.

Some of the preventive measures that have proved successful with adolescents are peer education, life skills training and joint programmes.

Using UNICEF experiences and that of other organisations, the UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office has developed a communication strategy that will facilitate the preparation of a communication programme on AIDS prevention. The strategy proposes that any communication programme on AIDS prevention should have these three dimensions as its top priority:

- identification of priority areas,
- the targeting of the socio-professional groups
- Identification of partners and available resources.

The strategy adopted by UNICEF is aimed at developing the behavioural approach in the planning of communications programmes.

Participants later debated on how the strategy will be implemented. They also discussed concrete actions that will be carried out on the field so as to have a complete change of sexual behaviour. Listed below are some of the suggestions made by participants:

Suggestions made by participants on how to effect a change in the sexual behaviour of adolescents:

- the communication strategy developed should stimulate reflection on preventive measures and messages. It should incite people to watch the evolution of AIDS and look out for data that will lead to implementation of result-yielding actions.
- Attainable goals should be fixed.
- AIDS data should be distributed according to sex and age. This will make it easier to reach the targeted group
- Adolescents should not only be seen as a targeted group, they should also be used as resource persons.
- Discussions should be held with adolescents so as to regain their confidence.
- Young people should be trained on how to develop their sense of analysis vis-à-vis the media. If not, they would not gain anything from them.
- AIDS prevention will provide an opportunity to improve on programme complementarity.
- AIDS prevention should start early enough if lasting behavioural change has to take place. This should start in schools and wherever adolescents can be found.
- AIDS prevention should be continuous. It should not be occasional or ceremonial.
- Messages on AIDS prevention should be straight forward and precise. They should be addressed to young boys and girls as well as adults whose behaviour also contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- AIDS prevention programme should be developed in rural areas by working with development associations in the villages.
- The problem of sexual harassment should be considered.
- Consider the issue of AIDS propagation in conflict situations. Adolescents are the most affected in such situations.
- Advocacy should be done for the obtention of AIDS medication in Africa.
- Governments should be sensitised on the need to release funds for development projects for adolescents.

CHALLENGE: WE HAVE TO DO MORE THAN WE NORMALLY DO IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME BY CO-ORDINATING OUR ACTIVITIES USING A JOINT AND COHERENT AGENDA

CONCLUSION

With a common objective which is "the implementation of the participation and development rights of adolescent girls", participants of the regional workshop in Dakar have had the opportunity of appreciating the different projects executed not only in West and Central Africa, but also in Kenya and Egypt.

Different presentations and suggestions made have shown that a lot has been done to ensure the respect of the rights of adolescents to quality education, health, protection and development. We have also seen that we still have a lot to do as soon as possible. We must make concerted efforts so that the adolescents of this region would enjoy their full rights in the near future. This will make it easier for them to contribute socially and economically to the development of their different countries.

From the presentations and declarations made, it was obvious that there was a consensus on the need to implement the rights of adolescents as stipulated in the CRC. It was also agreed that the adolescents should be seen as assets and not as liabilities. The implementation of the universal interdependent and indivisible rights of adolescents demands a holistic perception of their needs when developing programmes and strategies. No development partner can meet all these needs alone. Participants at the workshop laid a lot of emphasis on the need for concerted efforts if any progress has to be made on the implementation of adolescents' rights.

In order to establish a well co-ordinated and more effective collaboration, the representatives of the United Nations Foundation, UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS, Plan International, Population Council and UNICEF held a meeting in Dakar just after the workshop. The meeting led to the identification of a 5-step process that would encourage either the joint implementation of programmes for adolescents or concerted efforts in programme planning (each institution would run its own programme).

- 1- Designate a focal point in each regional office and keep the different agencies informed. Disseminate information on the visions and the priorities of these agencies as regards the development and participation right of adolescents.
- 2- take an inventory of country programmes (planning, implementation, etc.) and exchange information obtained. The International focal points are encouraged to share obtained information on the state of country programmes with their regional counterparts.
- 3- Identify technical assistance needed and the availability of resources/programmes/tools/organisations.
- 4- Develop links between country programmes and with key partners and regional initiatives.
- 5- Finalise Terms of Reference for the positions financed by the United Nations Foundation (UNICEF/UNFPA/CST). The main activities to be considered would include the following:

- *Identify, develop, manage and co-ordinate technical assistance and support tools for programmes. This includes research, training, etc ;*
- *Assistance in follow-up, evaluation and preparation of project reports ;*
- *Preparation of project reports and identification of successes (and failures). They should be shared with other countries, regions and partners such as United Nations Foundation ;*
- *A cordial relations and the exchange of information should be established with other regional initiatives ;*
- *Identify extra financial resources for supporting country programmes ;*
- *Technical support groups should be set up with special attention paid to some specific issues concerning some or all the countries (early marriage, breakdown of data, participation of adolescent, HIV/AIDS, etc).*

A meeting held the following month in New York, United States made it possible to finalise the provisional work plan.