

Report on results of
Final project evaluation

Building intergenerational
alliances of women
to support
Girls' Holistic Development

Project funded by Grand
Challenges/Canada

2022-2023

Revised: 1 July 2024

Results of baseline and endline assessments in Girls' Holistic Development Program
Supported by Grand Challenges Canada 2022-2023
Velingara, Senegal

Introduction:

To address several intersecting forms of gender-based discrimination and violence against adolescent girls *Grandmother Project – Change through Culture* (GMP) developed a program entitled Girls' Holistic Development (GHD) to promote girls' education and abandonment of child marriage, teen pregnancy and female genital mutilation (FGM). GHD was initiated on a very small scale in 2008 and was progressively expanded to involve more than 65 schools, 125 teachers and more than 70 rural communities and urban neighbourhoods in the Velingara Dep. in Kolda Region in southern Senegal.

Overview of Girls' Holistic Development (GHD) strategy

As GHD has been expanded geographically, the strategy has been refined. Now, there is a set of core activities in the GHD program that are carried out as GMP accesses resources to do so. In 2022-23 GMP received a grant from Grand Challenges Canada to support expansion of GHD into new rural and urban sites.

In August 2022, prior to initiating activities in 12 new sites, a baseline study was conducted in all of those sites. After carrying out 9 months of activities in the 12 communities, an endline survey was conducted. This report provides information on the results of the baseline and endline studies in order to determine if any changes came about.

Based on purposeful sampling, individual baseline and endline interviews were conducted with adolescent girls (150 at baseline & 171 at endline); mothers of adolescent girls (161 & 170); grandmothers (101 & 133); adolescent boys (62 & 67); and men (63 & 31). It was quite difficult to identify boys and men to interview due to their activities away from home, especially during the endline survey in the spring when they were involved in intense agricultural work.

Topics addressed in the baseline and endline surveys include:

- family attitudes and practices regarding: girls' education; child marriage; teen pregnancy; female genital mutilation (FGM);
- grandmothers' influence on family decision-making regarding girls' education and development
- relationships between young girls and grandmothers;
- influence of different categories of family members in family decision-making related to adolescent girls' accomplishments and challenges
- factors that contribute to collective decision-making related to social norms affecting girls, women and families.

Tabulation of the survey responses

The responses of all interviewees in both the baseline and endline survey were tabulated and converted to percentages. The comparative results are presented below. Results of baseline and endline surveys

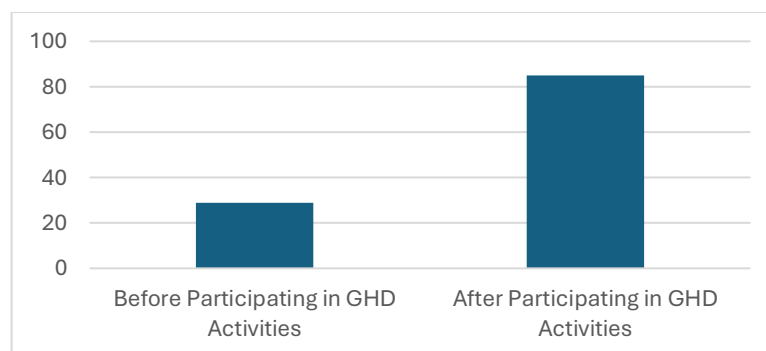
The implementation period of the project activities was very short, only 9 months, and the intensity of the activities carried out with the 12 targeted communities was quite low, particularly with men and boys. In spite of the fact that the project activities were not very intense, the endline study results show significant changes on most parameters related to the attitudes of adolescent girls, mothers and grandmothers. Changes among men and boys are less significant, reflecting the fact that activities with them were much less intense.

Girls' education:

INCREASED DETERMINATION OF GIRLS TO CONTINUE AND TO SUCCEED IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

In the project area the percentage of girls who go onto secondary school is low and those who complete secondary school are few in number. The intervention, based on cultural values and traditions, created spaces for dialogue to encourage both family members and girls themselves to increase their appreciation of the importance of formal schooling for girls. In Table 1 below, between the baseline and endline the percentage of girls who think that they can continue into secondary school and that they can successfully perform at that level increased significantly from 29% to 85%. This result suggests that through their participation in the GHD program girls are now more motivated to go onto secondary school than they were in the past and that they have more confidence that they can succeed at that higher level.

Table 1 Percentage of Adolescent Girls who believe they can continue to secondary school and succeed

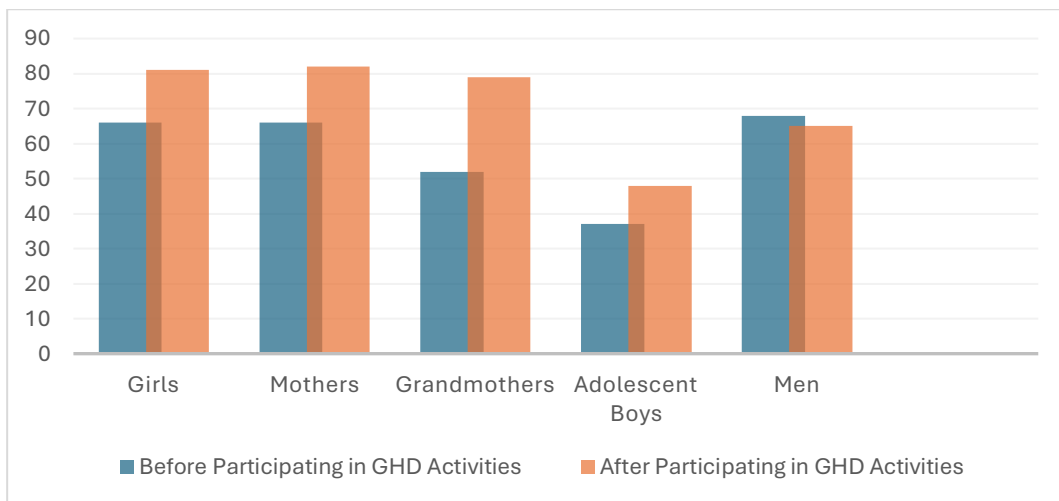


Marriage of girls before 18 years of age:

SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE IDEAL AGE OF MARRIAGE FOR GIRLS

Reflecting the international priority to prevent marriage of girls before they are 18, this is a top priority in the DHF activities with girls and other community members. In Table 2 below, the endline study results show that the percentage of community members who think that the ideal marriage age for girls is 18 or older has greatly increased: among adolescent girls from 66% to 81%; mothers 66% to 82%; and GMs from 52% to 79%. Among adolescent boys their belief that girls should not be married before age 18 increased somewhat, from 37% to 48% while among men their attitudes did not improve, and in fact regressed a little from 68% to 65%.

Table 2 Percentage of community members who state that the ideal age for girls to marry is 18 or older

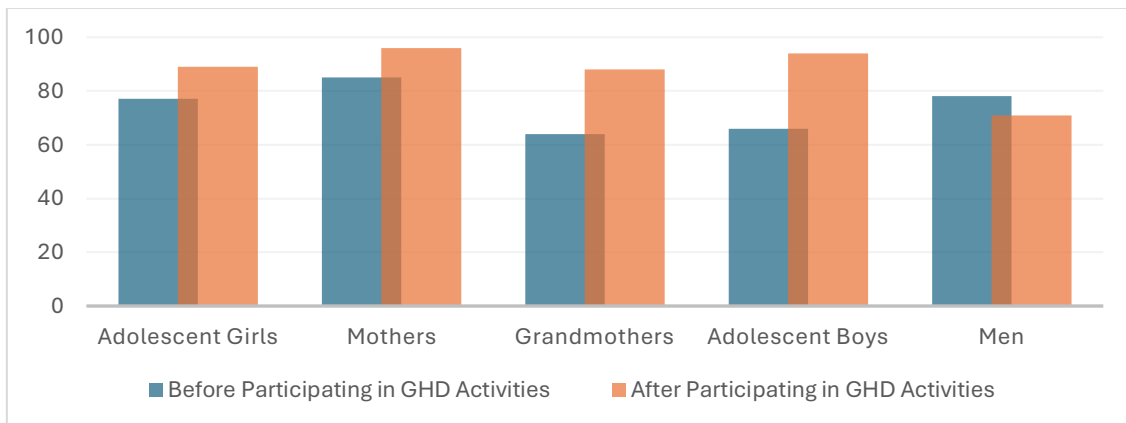


Attitudes toward teenage pregnancy

INCREASED UNDERSTANDING OF THE DANGERS OF PREGNANCY FOR GIRLS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

In Table 3 below, the endline results show a significant increase in understanding the dangers of pregnancy for girls under the age of 18, by all categories of interviewees, with the exception of men. It is encouraging to see that the largest increases are among GMs from 64% to 88% and adolescent boys 66% to 94%. For adolescent girls, there is an increase from 77% to 89% and for mothers from 85% to 96%. In the case of both girls and mothers, already at baseline, a large percentage of them recognized the danger of teen pregnancies. In the baseline, 78% of men were aware of the dangers of teen pregnancy but this proportion did not increase at endline with only 71% stating that they are harmful.

Table 3 Percentage of community members demonstrating an understanding of the dangers of pregnancy for adolescent girls

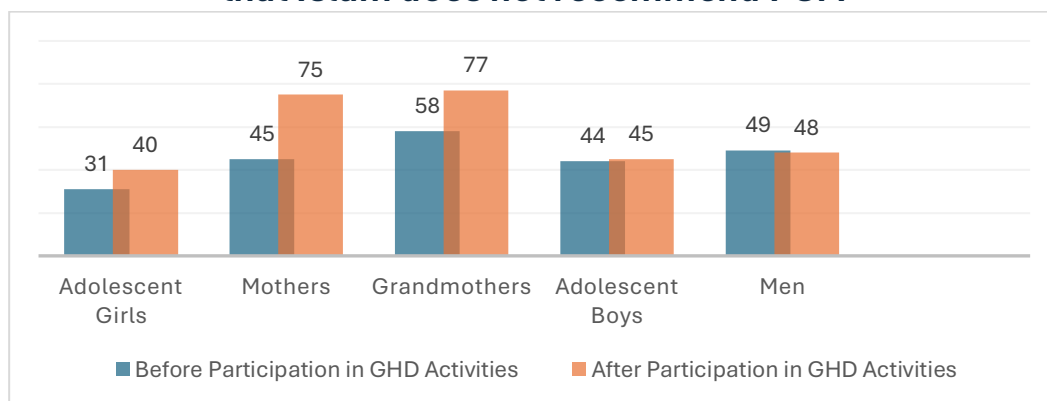


INCREASED KNOWLEDGE ON THE POSITION OF ISLAM REGARDING FGM

In all of the areas where GMP has worked, at the outset there was a widespread misconception if that “FGM is a requirement of Islam”. In Table 4 below, between baseline and endline, among mothers and grandmothers there was a significant increase in those who believe that FGM is not a recommendation of Islam. Among mothers the increase was from 45% at baseline to 75% at endline and with GMs it evolved from 58% to 77%. These shifts are significant given the role of mothers and GMs with baby girls and decision-making regarding FGM.

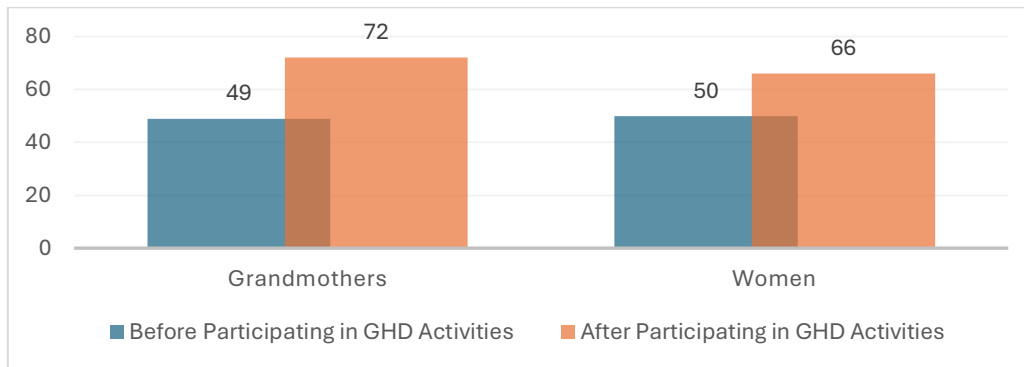
For adolescent girls there was a small improvement in their knowledge of the fact that Islam does not recommend FGM, from 31% to 40%. Among men and boys, those who believe that Islam recommends FGM did not shift (for men from 49% to 48%; and for yboys, from 44% to 45%). At endline, many interviewees stated that they did not know Islam's position on this practice: almost half of all girls (44%); 26% of men; and 27% of boys.

Table 4 Percentage of community members who know that Islam does not recommend FGM



Another survey question asked interviewees whether they agreed that “a woman must be cut to be considered a good Muslim”. In Table 5 below, the proportion of GMs who disagreed with this statement increased considerably from 49% to 72%, while among women those who disagreed also shifted from 50% to 66%.

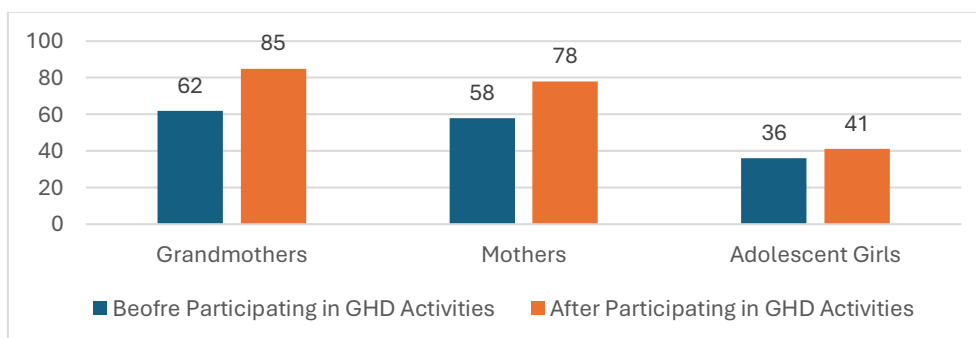
Table 5 Percentage of women who disagreed with statement "A woman must be cut to be considered a good Muslim"



DECREASED SUPPORT FOR FGM

It is extremely difficult to accurately assess changes in community attitudes toward FGM. This is largely due to the fact that in the context of programs that promote abandonment, interviewees’ responses are very often influenced by the *social desirability bias*, i.e. providing answers that will please the interviewer who is associated with the program. In the survey, the three generations of women were asked whether girls born into their families in the future would be cut or not. In Table 6 below, in all three groups, those who said that girls will not be cut in the future increased from baseline: especially among mothers from 58% to 78%; among GMs from 62% to 85% and among ADOs from 36% to 41%. Recognizing the possible bias (discussed above) these results do suggest a positive trend toward abandonment of the practice, especially among mothers and GMs, who are more involved than adolescent girls in carrying for very young children. While it is often assumed that GMs can neither learn nor adopt new attitudes, these shifts in GMs’ knowledge and attitudes suggests that that assumption is not valid.

Table 6 Percentage of women who claim they will not cut their baby girls in the future



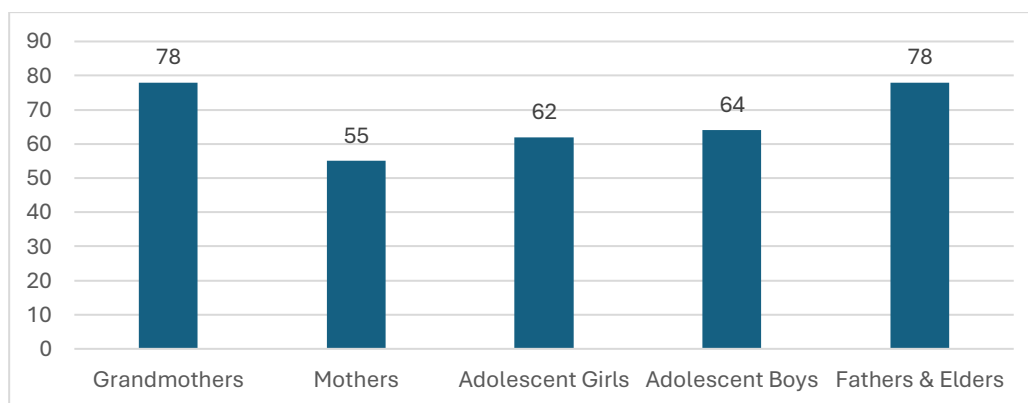
GRANDMOTHERS' INFLUENCE ON FAMILY DECISION-MAKING REGARDING GIRLS' EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

It is often assumed that in African societies where patriarchal traditions are strong that men make all decisions related to family life. In the baseline and endline surveys questions were asked regarding the influence of other family members on men's decisions regarding girls' education, marriage and FGM. The responses of interviewees to several questions related to the roles of other family members revealed the strong influence of senior women/grandmothers on those decisions, often in opposition to men's opinions.

Grandmothers' influence on girls' schooling

Concerning girls' education, one of the questions in the survey deals with a young girl who is going to primary school and whose father plans to take her out of school while she wants to continue her studies. The question asked was "Which family member would be more able to dissuade the father from doing so?". In Table 7 below, it is significant that already at baseline, the majority of all categories of interviewees identified the GMs, or aunties, as those who would be more able to convince the father to abandon his plan (55% of mothers; 62% of adolescent girls; 78% of grandmothers; 64% of adolescent boys; and 78% of men and elders).

Table 7 Percentage of community members, at baseline, who believe that grandmothers have the greatest Influence on fathers' decisions regarding girls' education (prior to GHD intervention)



In Table 8 below, those who thought that the girl's mother would be most able to convince her father to her stay in school were rather few (32% of mothers interviewed; 25% of the girls; 21% of both the grandmothers and the adolescent boys; and only 17% of men).

Table 8 Percentage of community members who believe that mothers can influence fathers' decisions regarding girls' education

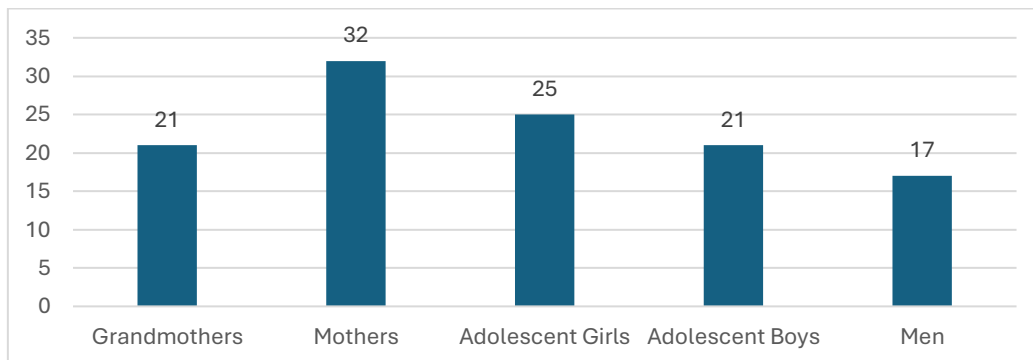
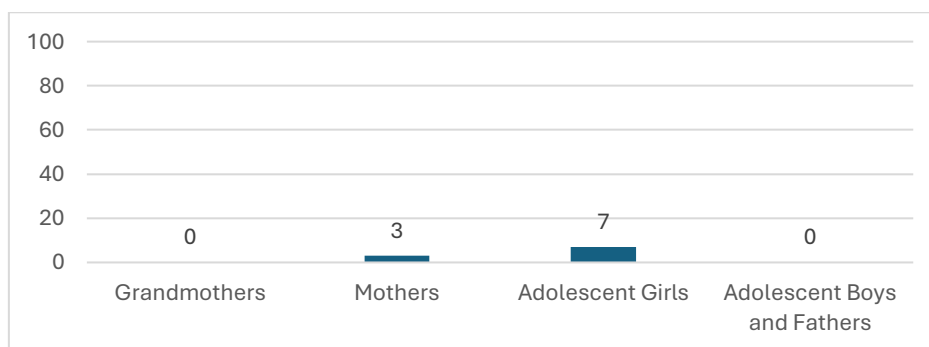


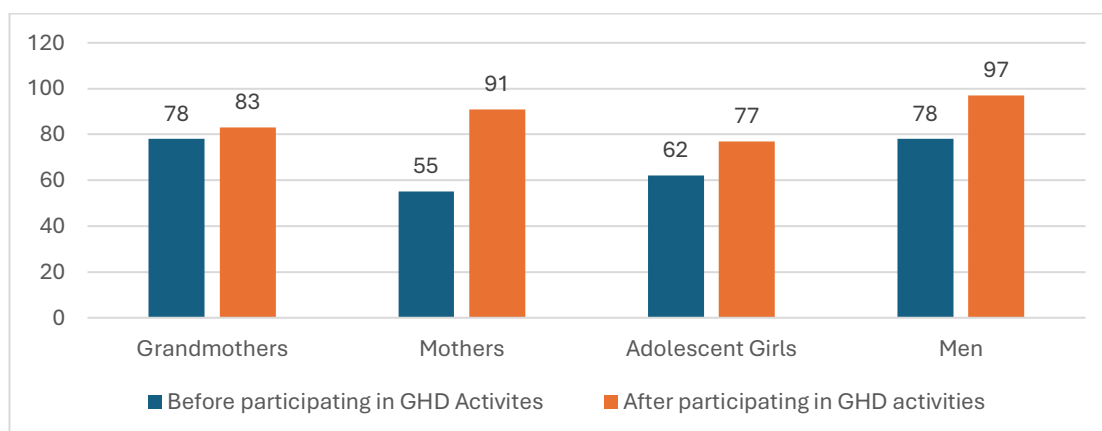
Table 9 Percentage of community members who state that girls can influence fathers' decision regarding their education



Lastly (Table 9), in all categories of interviewees, relatively few stated that girls would be able to change the father's mind (only 3% of the mothers; no grandmothers; 7% of girls; and no boys nor fathers). Already these results show that only a very small percentage (< 7%) of community interviewees believe that a school girl could convince her father to abandon the practice.

In Table 10 below, most significant is the increase, between baseline and endline, among all categories of interviewees, except among adolescent boys, regarding the influence of grandmothers and aunts on the fathers' decision between: among mothers from 55% to 91%; among GMs from 78% to 83%; among girls from 62% to 77% ; and among men from 78% to 97%. In the case of the boys there was no increase from 64% to 61%. Similarly, at endline the percentage of interviewees who stated that the girls' mother could convince her husband had further decreased .

Table 10. Percentage of community members who believe that grandmothers have the greatest influence on fathers' decisions regarding girls' education



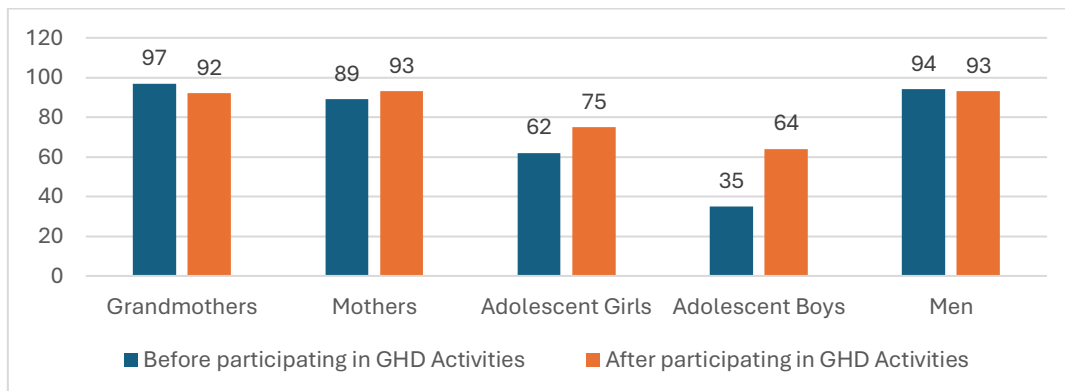
As regards mothers' ability to change their husband's plan, at baseline 32% of them identified the girl's mother as the person who could convince her husband to change his mind but by endline only 5% of the mothers held this opinion. This dramatic change in their view of GMs' influence suggests that over the course of the project they observed a significant increase in GMs' role and influence.

These results suggest the conclusion that GHD activities have strengthened the role of GMs in family level decision-making related to girls' education and development and the confidence in themselves to be able to impose their wishes on men within the family.

Grandmothers' influence on the age of marriage of adolescent girls

Concerning family level decision-making related to the age of marriage of young girls, the survey provides information on the respective influence of fathers and of grandmothers. In a situation where a father proposes to give away his very young daughter in marriage and where she opposes her father's idea, already at baseline, the majority of interviewees in all groups stated that if the girl's GM opposes the father's plan, i.e. of her son, he will most likely follow his mother's advice and abandon his plan. The endline results show a large proportion of respondents who think that the father would follow the GM's advice. In Table 11 below, the shifts from baseline to endline supporting this idea are as follows: for ADOs from 62% to 75%; for M from 89% to 93%; for GM 97% to 92%; for GAR 35% to 64%; and for HOM 94% to 93%. So almost all the men themselves (93%) confirm that the opinion of the GMs, i.e. their mothers, would have a determining influence on their decision, which demonstrates the power of GMs over the decisions of their sons regarding the age of marriage of their daughters.

Table 11 Percentage of community members who believe that a father will follow a grandmother's advice regarding the marriage of his daughters

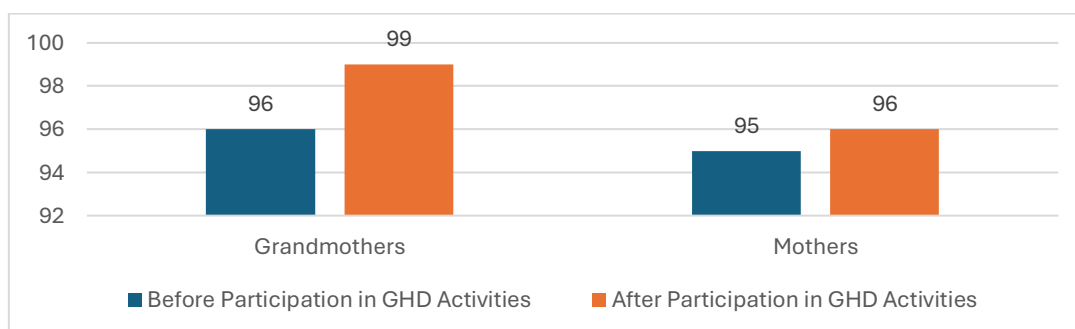


Grandmothers' influence on FGM

The law prohibiting FGM was adopted by the Senegalese government in 1999. In the past, it was carried out with young adolescent girls. Since the law was enacted, in many areas of the country including the Kolda region where Velingara is located, the practice has continued with baby girls in the first weeks/months of life. It is often asserted that men have the greatest influence on deciding to cut a baby girl.

The survey results reveal that a very large proportion of interviewees, especially mothers and GMs, believe that GMs have a determining influence on whether or not a baby girl undergoes the practice. In Table 12 below, almost all mothers (95% at baseline and 96% at endline) and grandmothers (96% at baseline and 99% at endline) stated that “if the grandmother is against FGM it will not be done”.

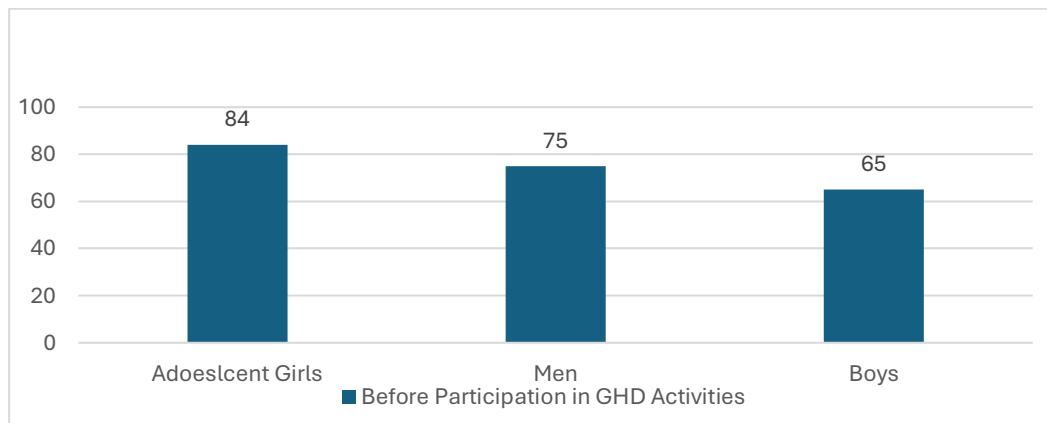
Table 12 Mothers who believe that grandmothers have the main influence on whether a baby girl will be cut



In Table 13, similarly, based on their endline responses, a large majority of other interviewees in the other groups, who are all less directly involved in the case of very young baby girls, believe that grandmothers have a big influence on the practice: 84 % of adolescent girls (77% at baseline); 84% of men (75% at baseline); and 72% of boys (65% at baseline). These results resemble the conclusions of other previous studies carried out in the area which reveal the role and power of GM in the perpetuation of this

tradition. Other studies have shown that this practice is organized by women, in a secluded space and that very often men are not even aware that it has taken place.

Table 13: Percentage of community members, at baseline, who believed that grandmothers have a big influence on whether baby girls are cut



GRANDMOTHERS' SUPPORT TO ADOLESCENT GIRLS

ADVICE FROM MOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS TO AVOID EARLY PREGNANCIES

The DHF primarily targets primary school girls. In local culture, premarital pregnancies of girls are strongly discouraged. Girls receive advice from mothers and grandmothers to help them avoid early pregnancies. Most of these tips encourage girls to abstain by avoiding late-night parties and strengthening the bonds and time they spend with their girlfriends. A minority of mothers (13%) and grandmothers (10%) advise girls to use family planning.

SUPPORT FOR GIRLS FROM GRANDMOTHERS

We know that all girls need social support as they go through adolescence and in African cultures older women, grandmothers and aunties, play a special role in the socialization and support to girls as they grow up. An earlier study revealed that girls accord great importance to the support they receive from mothers and grandmothers and that often they are more comfortable confiding in grandmothers and aunties, rather than in their own mothers who may be very young, very busy and impatient when girls need their support. Unfortunately, in all communities where GHD has been implemented, at the outset, a serious breakdown in communication between the generations was observed. Also, mothers explained that they often discourage children from spending time with grandmothers who have *old-fashioned ideas*. One of the GHD objectives is to strengthen relationships between girls, mothers and grandmothers.

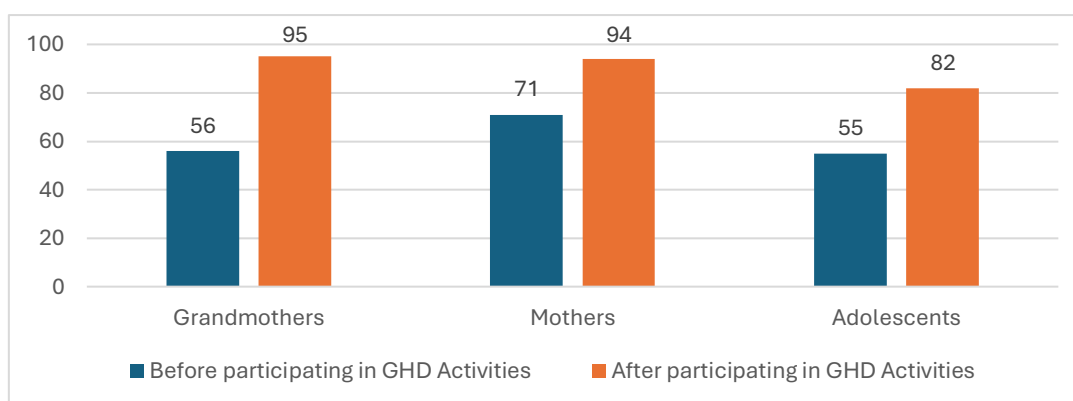
Based on the responses of grandmother and mother interviewees, the baseline and endline survey results suggest that there has been a significant increase in communication between grandmothers and girls. GMs stated that while in the past

only half (50%) of the mothers encouraged their daughters to spend time with their GMs, now all mothers (100%) encourage their daughters to do so.

This change is supported by the answers of grandmothers who, at baseline said that only half (56%) of mothers encouraged their daughters to spend time with them whereas at endline the GMs said that the vast majority (90%) of the mothers do so. This appears to reflect a change in the attitudes of mothers regarding the benefits of strong relationships between their daughters and grandmothers.

GHD has encouraged the revival of storytelling by GMs which contributes not only to the transmission of cultural values but also strengthens relationships between girls and grandmothers. In Table 14 below, the number of GMs who organize story telling evenings with adolescent girls and younger children, has greatly increased from baseline to endline according to mothers (71% to 94%), to GMs themselves (56% to 95%) and to adolescents (55% to 82%).

Table 14 Number of grandmothers organizing story telling evenings with adolescents



CONCLUSIONS OF THE ENDLINE STUDY:

The results of the endline study suggest that there have been positive changes with regard to all aspects of girls' education and development addressed in GHD activities. Among the three generations of women, there have been significant and positive changes in knowledge and attitudes regarding: the importance of girls' education; the risks to girls of marriage before the age of 18; the risks of pregnancies before the age of 18; the position of Islam regarding excision; and abandonment of FGM with very young girls. Concerning GMs, these results refute the frequently held assumption that GMs are incapable of change. A second very significant conclusion is that GMs, compared to daughters and mothers, have greater influence on fathers with regard to decision-making concerning the education, marriage and excision of girls. . These two results support the relevance of the involvement of GMs, with mothers and young girls, in strategies which aim to change harmful social norms which limit the rights, empowerment and development of girls.

As explained elsewhere, the activities supported by the Grand Challenges Canada grant are part of the broader Girls' Holistic Development (GHD) project which includes various activities also aimed at supporting change for girls. For this reason, the results of the endline study of the GCC project cannot be attributed only to the activities implemented in the very short (9 months) project financed by GCC. Rather, these results show the impact of the set of activities in which the 3 generations of women, as well as men of different ages, were involved.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT:

Qualitative documentation of actions carried out by different generations of women:

The objective of the project was to create intergenerational alliances of women (Women's Intergenerational Alliances/WIA) which could carry out individual and collective actions in favor of young girls. In all activities carried out in this project, and in the broader DHF program, positive African values were reinforced including solidarity, generosity, empathy and respect for elders. During the entire process of implementation of project activities with communities, GMP community development agents collected testimonies from three generations of women on the actions that they subsequently initiated themselves.

In all 12 project communities, two types of activities were carried out by women of different generations: 1) activities that brought together women of different ages; and 2) activities carried out with other community groups.

The organization of activities with women of different ages:

In all communities, there was a significant increase in the frequency with which young girls gathered among themselves, and also with grandmothers and mothers. This created spaces for girls to express themselves and to strengthen their bonds with their peers, as well as with mothers and grandmothers. The endline data confirms the significant increase in meetings with girls organized by GMs either to tell stories, or to teach girls traditional dances and songs, to discuss and/or to have fun together. According to the GMs, these informal meetings organized especially in the evening made it possible to "encourage, listen, dialogue and have fun with the young girls. » The GMs, mothers and young girls all testified to the fact that the style of communication on the part of the GMs and mothers with girls has greatly improved, which is very appreciated by the girls. Themes discussed during these meetings include sexuality, the advances that girls experience from boys, marriage and pregnancy. It should be remembered that currently in this part of Senegal, FGM is carried out on young babies and for that reason, this is not a topic frequently discussed in these informal meetings with adolescent girls. In many sites, GMs organized meetings with their own peers to discuss FGM and to propose a collective decision for abandonment, which resulted in such a decision in some communities.

In conclusion, it is the frequency of meetings between women of different ages, the use of an open mode of communication between them and the discussion of subjects that

interest girls that has contributed to strengthening the social connectivity that exists now between the three generations of women. In the past, relationships between the three generations of women were much weaker. This has created a sense of intergenerational solidarity and collective empowerment which constitutes an important source of power to defend and promote the interests of girls in families and in the wider community relating to their education, marriage, teen pregnancy and the cutting of babies in the future.

Collective actions by three generations of women in the wider community

The strengthening of relationships and solidarity between the three generations of women has had positive impacts in the communities. In all 12 communities, actions were carried out by one or more generations of women either to promote DHF among other community actors, or to contribute to other needs and situations in the community.

There are many instances where GM leaders, sometimes accompanied by mother leaders, have held discussions with community elders and other men to advocate for the abandonment of early marriages and to explain to them the reasons for abandoning FGM. In other cases, GM Leaders have organized community meetings to advocate for a collective decision to abandon marriage for girls before the age of 18.

In all communities, GMs have revived the tradition of telling stories to children and young people in the evening. In another study carried out in June 2023 on activities to promote positive cultural values at school and in the community, interviews with children and parents revealed improvements in children's behavior towards their peers and family members. These results reflect the fact that GMs are investing in teaching stories to younger generations, to a much greater degree than in the past 10 years. Concerning the formal education of children, GMs in all communities demonstrate a sense of increased commitment through the following actions: weekly visits to the school to discuss with teachers the behavior and attendance of students; the organization of school canteens; the organization of solidarity funds for the children of needy families.