



Stream: Intersecting inequalities

Title: Gender Equality in Rural Education: Women's Global Education Project

Authors: Amy Maglio, Adji Senghor and Aniceta Kiriga.

Women's Global Education Project (WGEP), founded in 2003, is operational in the Fatik region of Senegal and Tharaka district of Kenya, two diverse geographic and socio-economic areas. We address the education needs of rural girls from marginalized families through a multi-level approach engaging entire communities. Through a wide array of strategies, we have begun to break down the barriers to girls' education in the communities in which we are working.

In Senegal, WGEP partners with Union Démocratique Des Enseignantes de Sénégal (UDEN), a national association of school teachers who formed a special women's commission aimed at helping women teachers gain equal benefits and rights. In Kenya, we partners with Tharaka Women's Welfare Program (TWWP), a grassroots initiative which began by addressing Female Genital Mutilation by offering an Alternative Rite of Passage.

Our programs are funded by a variety of supporters including individuals, foundations, and corporations

Aim of Research

The goal of our program is to ensure a different, better future for our project participants. The objective of our research is to evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies in achieving irreversible change in the path their future holds. Our program has evolved to include a unique combination of interventions each addressing an obstacle to girls' education. We continue to assess these strategies, fine-tune our program, adding or adjusting as necessary.

The research draws on reports from teachers and outreach staff, highlighting findings from qualitative data collected from participant observations and interviews. To measure success we examine retention rates, academic achievement, reasons for non-attendance and early dropout, disaggregated attendance rates, and parent/community attitude shifts and trends.

Participants

Due to the manageable size of our program, we are able to collect data for 100% of our project participants. A corollary set of data, regarding overall attendance in the region, is provided to us by school officials. This data reflects a random sampling of attendance profiles in the area. Additionally, unscheduled visits allow spontaneous and candid observations by project staff, giving us a snapshot of project activities underway. For parent and community member qualitative data we are deliberative in our pursuit of a representative sampling of different family make up and geographic perspectives.



Methodology

A baseline is provided through our program participant selection criteria tool. This information on girls' household and economic environment, allows for a transparent determination of eligible scholars.

The on-going program monitoring includes both quantitative data collected from each scholar, their school and their teachers and qualitative data collected from parents and community members.

Each semester we receive information for each scholar, collecting attendance, report cards and teacher evaluations. Other data includes attendance rates received from schools district. This quantitative data gives us specific information on retention and performance of program scholars as well as trends in education within the larger community.

Each semester we also receive survey and interviews conducted with parents, girls and other community members. This qualitative data informs us on changes in attitudes and expectations.

All of this data combined continues to inform programming decisions.

Limitations

Limitations experienced include the continued challenge of unreliable data disaggregated along urban/rural and regional/district lines.

A more detailed analysis of passing rates by grade and by gender would help to inform us of trends that compliment or contradict our findings. If this information were available, we could more readily direct interventions to those communities most underserved.

Additionally, our program has grown and reached the point where collecting data is both labor and time consuming hence the recognized need to develop an effective sampling tool.

Findings

Initial data collected by our project found that scholarships alone were insufficient to ensure high retention rates. Therefore a range of strategies have been developed to address retention and success in school, including role models, mentors, tutoring, girls and boys clubs, community outreach, women's literacy, scholarships, health education workshops, parent workshops, alternative-FGM strategies.

The current program has proven to be a highly effective model for rural girls' education, achieving and maintaining a retention rate of 90%. Additionally, as girls excel, they are less likely to succumb to pressures that result in premature dropout rates. Our program maintains a high level of academic achievement. In addition, we have seen a documented multiplier effect in schools across the region. We



have also found a shift in attitudes especially among fathers and girls out of school.