

Regional Division Sahel and West Africa

Supra-regional project :
Promotion of initiatives to end
female genital mutilation (FGM)



Generation Dialogue about FGM and HIV/AIDS

Method, experiences in the field and impact assessment



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH

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impact assessment**

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Contents

Preface	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Context	1
1. Method	2
1.1 The dialogue approach	2
1.2 The topics for dialogue	3
1.3 The target groups	3
1.4 The preparations	4
1.5 The workshops	5
2. Some important exercises	6
2.1 Proverbs and sayings	6
2.2 The curiosity exercise	7
2.3 Areas of power and of powerlessness	7
2.4 Life paths	8
3. The community dialogue, follow-up workshops and next steps	8
4. The first generation dialogues: the issues	9
4.1 Women's life paths in the past and at present (Conakry, 2002)	9
4.2 Women's dialogue on sexual morality, HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation (Labé and Faranah, 2003)	11
4.3 Men's dialogue on sexual morality, HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation (Labé and Faranah, 2003)	14
5. Impact assessment	17
Bibliography	18

Preface

An estimated 130 million women are affected by genital mutilation worldwide, with another two million girls being added to these figures each year. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – as it is termed internationally – is an overarching term describing various forms of operative procedures on the external female genitalia. International organisations and declarations condemn such practises as a violation of human rights and as an infringement of the rights of the child and the right to health and physical integrity.

The endeavour against FGM is not just one for basic human rights or women's right to physical integrity and reproductive health. Indeed, commitment to this cause also stands for the empowerment of women.

The Federal German Government has responded to requests of partner countries where numerous local institutions and organisations, already engaged in the struggle against FGM, are looking for support in this regard. On behalf of the Federal German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the GTZ has been implementing the supra-regional project "Promotion of initiatives to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)" since 1999. The project is located at the Africa Department of GTZ headquarters in Eschborn and is supporting initiatives and projects in a number of African countries, currently in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Mali and Mauretania.

The project objective is to inform the public in our partner countries about the consequences of FGM and to generate the openness needed to be able to overcome such harmful practices. In this context, it is aimed both to evaluate and make available successful approaches and to support local initiatives. It is further aimed to integrate FGM into projects of German Technical Cooperation. The potential for integration is, for example, given in sectors dealing with health, education, youth, gender, human rights, legal counselling, good governance, the reform of state and society, decentralisation and rural development.

In the context of the activities developed in Guinea, the project has designed and piloted an approach called "Generation Dialogue" which aims at stimulating communication and exchange between the young and the old on topics related to sexuality, including FGM and HIV/AIDS. The approach has proven to be successful both in terms of creating opportunities for reflection on difficult subjects and in terms of changing attitudes and behaviour.

This publication describes how the approach was applied in Guinea, explains its main steps and exercises, illustrates the issues that were discussed and provides a summary of the impact on participants and their families. Since its pilot phase, the Generation Dialogue has been further developed in Guinea by local NGOs and has been introduced in Mali and Kenya.

We hope that this publication raises further interest in an approach that has been able to move from mere information and awareness raising on FGM and related topics to a method that allows for a genuine dialogue and mutual understanding between generations and sexes and leads to changes in attitudes and behaviour.



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Regional Manager
Sahel and Westafrica 1



Kerstin Lisy
Team leader Supra-regional
Project "Promotion of initiatives
to end FGM"



Acknowledgements

The Generation Dialogue approach, its development, implementation and evaluation as described in this report, are an outcome of the constructive partnership between the GTZ supra-regional project "Promotion of initiatives to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)" and the network of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that it supports in Guinea.

In this context we would like to thank our Guinean partner NGOs, the 'Fraternité Médicale Guinée' (FMG), the 'Association des Sages-femmes Guinée' (ASFEGUI), 'Cellule de Co-ordination sur les Pratiques Nefastes' (CPTAFE Labé and Faranah), the 'Association d'aide pour la promotion des femmes Faranah' (AAPF), the 'Association des femmes pour la formation et l'appui d'accoucheuses villageoises Faranah' (AFFAAV), the 'Club des amis du monde de Labé', and the 'Club artistique Amadou Hampathé Bah de Labé'.

The Generation Dialogues in Labé and Faranah were organised in cooperation with the GTZ-supported Guineo-German Health and AIDS Control Programme (PSS). We would like to thank the PSS for supporting this project and for encouraging us to include the important issue of HIV/AIDS in the approach.

Furthermore, we should like to thank the GTZ Office team in Guinea, and in particular our honorary member, Guy Ablefoni, its director, for their ready administrative and moral support.

The fact that we were able to field-test this approach on several occasions in less than a year's time is a solid indicator for the Guinean team's positive spirit and sincere commitment. The collaboration with our partner NGOs and between us in the coordination team, including, in addition to the signatories, Madeleine Tolno, consultant to the FGM project in Guinea, and Fatoumata Binta Bah, medical director of the FMG association, have been an important learning experience for all of us: The time we spent together, and everything we learned throughout, continues to enrich our lives.

In 2005, we plan to transfer the Generation Dialogue approach to Kenya. The Kenya-German health programme works for young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the ending of female genital mutilation, a serious problem for many young Kenyan women. The methods and findings from Guinea presented in this report will be the guideline for the challenges ahead of us.

Conakry and Eschborn, January 2005

Dr. Jeanne Manguet
GTZ-FGM-National Coordinator

Anna v. Roenne
Psychologist and CBC consultant



Context

'I've seen a fair amount in my life and taken part in a good deal of projects. But, believe me, what we've started here is really important. We've launched something in the communities that no one can stop now.'

Madeleine Tolno, aged 60, project coordination team

Since 1999, the supra-regional project "Promotion of initiatives to end female genital mutilation (FGM)" has provided financial and technical support to several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Guinea. By means of training and the facilitation of regular exchanges between the partner organisations, the coordination team supported the discussion, monitoring and evaluation of methods, achievements and constraints encountered in their work.

At an internal review, in 2001, one important finding was that the supported NGOs mostly continued the same approach that had been used in Guinea for over a decade to no avail: NGO teams invited communities to attend speeches and films where the harmful effects of the practice on women's and girls' health were listed and shown, with the aim to convince their target groups to "learn and understand" and, consequently, to stop their age-old tradition. Although these events tended to be well attended, they did not seem to be very effective: In 1999, 98% of women stated that they had undergone female genital mutilation (DNS, 1999), making Guinea the country with the highest known FGC prevalence in the world. Curiously, even leading members of the NGOs organising these campaigns admitted to having had their own daughters undergo the cutting procedure – in order to comply with the strong social pressure to respect their people's customs.

Against this background, the coordination team suggested that the NGOs try out a new approach. It seemed that many families in Guinea were well aware of the health risks and harmful effects of the practice on their daughters. Yet there were other reasons due to which they continued with it nonetheless. The challenge was to open the debate on these other, more hidden factors. To get this debate going, the NGOs were trained in action research methodology. In the action research framework, their role would change: it was no longer their task to educate the communities; as researchers, they had to ask open questions, listen and facilitate frank and respectful discussions where all contributions were accepted and not judged as "right" or "wrong".

In 2000, the partner NGOs launched the new 'listening and dialogue' approach among their target groups, including health care staff, male and female youths, religious leaders, teachers and women. They organised 'peer reflection days' for each of these groups, always separating the different age groups and the two sexes and assuring that each group was facilitated by someone who matched the group in terms of age, sex and socio-economic status.

The enthusiastic response of the population, the active participation in the 'peer reflection days', the frank discussions and honest testimonies took the associations and the coordination team by surprise. In several communities, additional peer reflections days had to be organised because more and more men and women wanted to join in the discussion and contribute their point of view. The most important lesson for the NGO members was that, overall, the target groups were well informed about the harmful effects of the practice on their women and girls. However, they were also keenly aware of the negative social implications, both for them and their daughters, on resisting this important tradition. In weighing advantages and disadvantages, most of them were faced with a painful di-

lemma. And most of them admitted that they would rather not be the first to stand up for a change in their customs.

Currently, many actors in the field of behavioural change communication (FGM, HIV/AIDS) wonder why their campaigns that effectively increase the knowledge of their target groups do not result in the envisaged behaviour changes. The 'listening and dialogue' approach is based on a different concept of individual and social development. Information in itself is not enough to make people change. Rather, they need to be able to relate it to their particular, personal situation in ongoing discussions and exchange with peers and trusted community leaders. New points of view and new behavioural options can only emerge when ambivalences and dilemmas have been expressed and acknowledged, and when acceptable ways of resolving them are jointly and gradually explored and tested.

One result of the peer reflection days with the young women was their request that similar open and respectful discussions be organised for them together with their mothers and grandmothers. During their own discussions with the facilitators, they had been able to express and compare their ambivalences, fears and visions. Now they hoped to share this experience with their elders: staunch guardians of the customs and traditions they dared to challenge.

The first generation dialogue was organised in response to this request, and in its context we developed this set of tools. Throughout, it has been our goal to enable the young and the old to reflect on their values and aspirations and to consider, in their own time, whether, when and how changes of respected traditions should come about.

1. Method

"I thought, at my age, nobody could teach me anything anymore. But these last few days have changed me. In fact I no longer know how to behave. I've got a great deal to think about. I thank you."

El Hadj Fodé, aged 75, dialogue participant and influential person from Labé

1.1 The dialogue approach

The Generation Dialogue approach is based on a narrative philosophy of personal and cultural development. Individuals understand themselves and what happens in the world around them through, and as part of, their evolving collective and their personal (hi-) stories. In order to make both personal and social development possible, it is essential that the involved communities' stories and histories be respected and that any projected changes fit into their respective narratives, their concepts, imagery and metaphors.

Hence it is doubly important that personal and cultural narratives (which are mutually determining) are listened to in the generation dialogue workshops. In this way, participants can see that they are taken seriously and that their values, fears and hopes are understood and taken into account in the forging of new narratives or (hi-)stories that reflect the views of both the young and the old.

The dialogues create spaces for reflection, for listening and for exchange, enabling the two parties to treat each other with mutual respect and appreciation - in spite of differing views on a number of issues. The conditions for such appreciative listening must be carefully prepared and sustained by the moderators throughout the dialogue projects. The



language should be the local rather than the official language and the terms and metaphors used should balance tradition and modernity. The age and sex of the moderators, the aids utilised, the workshop setting and its atmosphere – all these aspects must be adapted to the needs and worlds of the two groups, so as to avoid that one generation would feel disadvantaged.

The methods used during the workshops ensure that each generation has the opportunity to express itself and be heard by the other, and that the two generations begin to reflect on their own convictions:

What are the differences between our history/ies and the history/ies of the others? How did we arrive at our point of view?

If we were in their position would we see things differently?

Where can we come closer together, and where do we want to maintain our differences?

In our experience, the fact that, in the course of the workshops, the participants experience dialogues in the plenary, in small groups and in pairs, makes them recognise and point out the way in which the personal, cultural and political spheres of the issues they struggle with are interlinked. The gender dimension of their problems, for example, emerged at all levels and helped create a new solidarity, and a range of new and shared ideas on taking action, between younger and older women.

1.2 The topics for dialogue

The dialogue approach does not dictate any particular topics that should be discussed: it is a generative method that creates an enabling environment in which the urgent issues will automatically emerge. It has been our experience that the meeting of two generations to discuss topical themes in a respecting and appreciative context leads quickly to the heart of the matter: a changing world with changing demands on young people, gender relations and sexual morality.

It is easier to interest and motivate older people to participate if traditional values and stories from the past are included in the discussion. We observed that older people felt more at ease and more confident when they were asked to make a contribution on these subjects, rather than on burning issues such as sexuality or HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, these themes will come up in the discussion in their own time because they are the priority issues between the generations.

1.3 The target groups

In Guinea, our local partner NGOs selected the target groups and their representatives who would participate in the dialogue workshops. It must be remembered that the generation dialogue method was not an isolated intervention but an integral part of a range of activities (see page 4) aimed to encourage reflection, listening and dialogue in the target communities.

To stimulate discussion in fairly traditional Moslem communities, it is essential to involve religious leaders. Their explicit approval of the dialogues, or better still their participation, will enhance the visibility and the impact of the dialogues.

The number of participants should not exceed 15 per generation. And in order to have a real impact on a community, these participants must be carefully selected. For the younger participants, the criteria are based on their capacity to become multipliers for the dialogue approach. We tried to find young people who were already active in the context of a project or association, who commanded the respect of their peers and possessed

good interpersonal skills. Often these are the same young people who have already been trained as peer educators.

This same multiplier criterion is valid for the older participants too. Clearly, the visibility and impact of the dialogue are heightened by the presence of persons in positions of authority and influence in the community. This is so firstly because the public is interested in what such persons do and what they support, and secondly because they can pass on ideas that have emerged from the dialogues to people within their circles of influence.

1.4 The preparations

Planning in partnership

It is crucial for the success of the approach to involve, and assign responsibility to local partner NGOs from the planning stage of an generation dialogue. NGO managers have a thorough knowledge of the settings in which the workshops take place: if they are in favour of such a project, they will help in every way to bring it about. They can approach and try to interest influential people, they are familiar with local politics and local conflicts, and they have access to local administration officers and can help with the practical organisation of the workshops.

Adapting the programme

Motivated NGO members with the necessary skills and experience in workshop facilitation will be trained as local dialogue facilitators. There should be representatives of both sexes and of the two age groups. These local facilitators will help to adapt the dialogue guidelines to the local culture. In an "adaptation workshop", a master trainer will take them through every exercise and get their feedback of the relevance and adequacy of each exercise for the target community. Are the exercise instructions clear and easy to understand? Should the content be changed? How can you say that in the local language?

Training the local facilitator teams

Local teams must be meticulously prepared for their role and their responsibilities. The best training in dialogue facilitation is to experience the workshops as participants, exercise by exercise. Two experienced moderators guide and supervise this apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship helps the future facilitators to experience the dialogues themselves and to discuss amongst themselves the effects the exercises have. The master trainers



invite them after each exercise to imagine they were facilitating it themselves: What has to be explained to the participants? Where does one need to tread carefully? What is the potential and what are the risks of each exercise?

Each co-moderator receives a "Dialogue Facilitator Guideline" containing the programme, exercises and objectives of the dialogues day by day. Ideally,

the local facilitators should have the opportunity to attend a dialogue as an observer or as assistant to an experienced facilitator before taking on the complex role themselves



1.5 The workshops

The programme

The programme of a generation dialogue must ensure that the workshops do not interfere with the ongoing professional (or, in the younger generation's case, studying) responsibilities of facilitators and participants. That is why we have structured the dialogue schedule in the form of two consecutive workshops linked by a one-month practical phase.

Each day follows a well-defined plan: the moderators create opportunities for the two generations to come closer and get to know each other, and to define their common ground and their differences. Once a basis of mutual understanding has been established, the more conflict-prone subjects can be broached.



In order to give the workshop pace and to create a variety of opportunities for an exchange, the exercises require that the size and composition of the groups vary: at one moment the participants are reflecting on their own generation in small groups, at another their group will come together with a small group of the other generation to compare their results. Subsequently, elected speakers for each group report on the discussions of their exchanges to the plenary session and, finally, volunteers from each generation demonstrate what they learned in role-plays.

Balancing the habits and abilities of the two generations

The conflict between the traditional and the modern is reflected in the different expectations, habits and abilities of participants, and this may present a challenge for workshop facilitation. Although today the rate of school enrolment for girls is increasing, the vast majority of older women - and many older men - in Guinea are illiterate and have not received any schooling.



That is why the language of the workshops is the local language, because it is spoken and understood by all the participants. When the facilitators are trained, every exercise in the "Dialogue Facilitator Guideline" should be translated into the local language, to preclude any translation problems during the workshops.

Many older men and women may not be used to the typical modern workshop setting. To make them feel more comfortable, the room can be decorated with traditional fabrics and there can be woven mats next to the chairs as these are what village men and women usually sit on.

The workshop approach and methods make use of the African oral tradition. One of the interesting characteristics of the oral



tradition is the indissoluble link between the spoken word, the context (culture) and the relationship between the people engaged in conversation. In Guinea's oral tradition, the social and moral education of young people still takes place through the use of proverbs, folk songs and dances that evoke a range of different periods and tasks of life.

During the dialogues, participants are encouraged to utilise all these forms of exchange. The joint identification and interpretation of well-known proverbs brought the generations together at all the workshops. Between younger and older women, song and dance also played an important role. Traditional local instruments, drums and strings, had been placed in the room to encourage participants to communicate and interact through music. Every day the women began their dialogues by singing together, and every day there were moments when they felt inspired to dance together, either to evoke local ceremonies or to mark moments of joy (cf. the documentary "Women and girls discuss FGM", 2002).

As far as the men are concerned, quoting from the Koran and joint prayers were the ritual element that united the younger and older men. We invited them to include this area of their lives in their dialogues and to exchange traditions by reciting verses from the Koran and religious metaphors and parables when it seemed appropriate to do so. In fact, throughout the workshops, the two generations of men prayed together and referred to their religion to make their point of view more acceptable or more readily understandable for the other generation.

To sum up, the workshops' aim to bring about an exchange between the traditional and the modern, not only in terms of content, but in terms of setting and atmosphere, methods and tools and exercises. Although the approach we are presenting here is new, the exchange between generations has always taken place in all societies and in all cultures. The inclusion of traditional forms of exchange in the dialogue workshops renders more authentic the study of the possibilities of enrichment between the two poles of our subject.



2. Some important exercises

2.1 Proverbs and sayings

In this exercise, pairs composed of one young person and one older person conduct an initial generation dialogue in which they introduce themselves to the other, so that they can later present each other to the plenary. They also have the task to jointly select and interpret a proverb which they consider relevant for the workshop.

Proverbs are a typical medium for the passing on of knowledge and traditions between the generations. They are possibly one of the last means of communicating this knowledge that can still play an important role in contemporary contexts, be they traditional or modern. In this sense they are a perfect starter exercise for generation dialogues.



2.2 The curiosity exercise



One of the functions of the dialogue workshops is to encourage conversations that might otherwise never happen. The challenge for the moderators, therefore, is to create a balance between a sense of respect and discretion on the one hand and a spirit of discovery and daring on the other.

The curiosity exercise aims to allow the generations to become interested in aspects of the lives of the other generation about which they would otherwise never have inquired.

The exercise begins with discussions in small groups of the same generation. In the form of brainstorming, these groups think of questions concerning the other generation that they have always wondered about, yet that they never found the right moment to ask. As a next step, each small group gets together with a small group of the other generation and, taking turns, they put their questions to them. The members of the group can decide freely who of them wants to reply. There will always be one person who feels comfortable enough with the question to come up with a reply.

2.3 Areas of power and of powerlessness

Another exercise aims to highlight the differences in power between the generations. It is preceded by a discussion on the particular skills and strengths of the younger people and the older people - an exercise that affirms each generation's sense of being appreciated. The question relating to their areas of power and powerlessness is more sensitive, but also very important for the dialogue. It shows that each generation has particular power domains as well as feelings of powerlessness, and that both groups can help empower each other.

In this exercise, the same method is used, namely brainstorming in small groups of the same generation followed by an exchange between small groups of different generations.

In the course of this exercise, in assessment, comparison, explanation and discussion, participants identify similarities and differences between their accounts and those of their peers. The exchange with the other generation helps both sides to become aware of stereotypes and prejudices, which they have the opportunity to tackle and "dismantle".

Finally, the two generations share their feelings of powerlessness, an experience which can create sympathy and compassion where before there was only anxiety and a lack of understanding.



2.4 Life paths

"The life path exercise is the spice of our workshops"
Madeleine Tolno, coordination team

The life-course exercise aims to get the two generations thinking about the socio-moral and temporal structures of their lives. By representing the traditional life path of a woman (or man) and a modern life path, participants become aware of the stages and transitions that mark their lives and of how those stages and transitions are determined by the moral discourses of their time.

At the beginning of the exercise, different objects from the daily lives of the younger women (or younger men) today and from the lives of women (or men) previously are prepared by the moderators and spread out in the middle of the room. There are traditional objects like gourds, necklaces or bows and arrows, and modern objects like the condom, the cell phone or a photograph of a modern wedding. The older generation is invited to select objects to signify the stages of their life and to arrange them in the form of a path representing the traditional life of a woman (or a man) in Guinea. The younger participants are also invited to create a path representing the stages in the life of a modern woman (or man) in Guinea.



The life path exercise brings together the essential elements of the generation dialogue: by representing their life course, with their own generation, and portraying it in symbols, songs, role-plays and stories for the other generation, each generation has

the opportunity to be listened to and taken seriously, but also to become aware of the extent to which their views are dependent on the prevailing social and moral conditions. As they experience and compare the advantages and disadvantages of the past and the present, they can develop a critique of the given situation and start to develop a common vision of a better future.

3. The community dialogue, follow-up workshops and next steps

The generation dialogue skills that have been practiced in the protected workshop environment are now tested during a one-month community dialogue phase in the participants' "real lives". In this phase, all participants have the task of realizing generation dialogues with members of the other generation according to a number of "golden rules of appreciative dialogue" that they learned and practised, in role-plays, during the first





workshop. The aim is not to start to talk with complete strangers, but to begin to have conversations with members of one's own family or with acquaintances from one's neighbourhood that one would not usually take the time to talk to.

The objectives of this phase are

- to involve ever more members of the community in generation dialogues
- to adapt the dialogue to the realities of a community and
- to help the spirit of dialogue to become a part of the everyday lives of all participants.

During the community dialogue phase, the local facilitators serve as supervisors who support and monitor participants and document successes and challenging moments, so that these can be discussed during the follow-up workshops.

About one month later, the same groups meet again and exchange their experiences of dialoguing with the other generation in their communities. At all of the follow-up workshops to date, there were moving testimonies of fathers who, for the first time, had begun to take an active interest in their sons and daughters, of mothers improving difficult relationships with their adolescent daughters and of young people reporting how they enjoyed their conversations with the older generation.

Another outcome of the women's follow-up workshops has been their request that a similar project should be organized to address gender conflicts and inequalities. In all women's workshops, a sense of solidarity emerged between younger and older women.

In Conakry, where the first workshops took place, the women participants prepared a proposal for a community generation dialogue targeting a number of Conakry neighbourhoods under the auspices of one of the partner NGOs, Fraternité Médicale Guinée (FMG). Since April 2003, pairs of a young female facilitator and an older female facilitator organise regular generation dialogues at different sites in their communities.

Likewise, participants of the Labé and Faranah meetings approached their local partner NGO for their support in setting up concrete projects to continue the dialogues. In 2004, here, too, pairs of older and younger dialogue facilitators were trained to visit family homes, schools or mosques in their respective areas to facilitate discussions between young and old about, for example, gender relations, FGM and HIV/AIDS.

4. The first generation dialogues: the issues

4.1 Women's life paths in the past and at present (Conakry, 2002)

"A woman's life is just a series of pains: first excision, then childbirth and finally marriage. And marriage is the worst of all because it lasts until the grave."

An elderly woman during a dialogue in a district

Date, place, target groups, partners

The first generation dialogue took place at Conakry, the capital of Guinea, from end of September until beginning of November 2003. The two partner associations of the FGM project in Conakry selected the participants. This first generation dialogue experience brought together 10 young and 10 older women

Themes, discussions, burning issues and agreements

In the course of this first workshop, many important issues concerning the life of girls and women, today and in the past, were raised. From the point of view of the older women, the important points about a woman's life were the following:

- The value of virginity at the time of marriage and, respectively, the concern felt about girls' early sexual activity today, which weakened them and exposed them to the risk of disease;
- The value - and honour - of women's willingness to suffer for the well-being of their children and husbands, including acceptance of as many children as "God sends us" and as many co-spouses as their husband decides to marry;
- The importance of being familiar with the traditional rules of good behaviour, the so-called "Fendani" (which is learnt during the period of initiation and female genital mutilation);
- Their impression - and regret - that young women today are not interested in them and have no desire to listen to them.

For their part, the young women emphasised the following points:

- The importance of girls' schooling and professional training, so that they do not have to depend on their families or their men folk;
- Lack of parental supervision, interest or love on the part of their mothers and fathers;
- The violence against girls and women inflicted by fathers and partners, and their sense of powerlessness in having to depend on these men morally and economically;
- Their opposition to forced marriages: the suffering of young girls who are "sold" without having any possibility to influence the choice of their life partner; their desire for a love match;
- The difficulty of not having any influence on their partners where sex is concerned: it is the men who decided on the time, frequency and manner of sexual contacts, and on the use of condoms;
- The contradictory morals of their families' expectations: on the one hand girls should present as virtuous and chaste, and on the other they are encouraged to present a sexy, modern image to attract rich men who would contribute to the family income.

The generations disagreed in relation to the following subjects:

- Early sexual activity: the young women did not accept the accusation that they were depraved because they did not wait until they were married before having sex. They reminded the older women that they had married (or rather, were married) when they were very young, often just after the onset of puberty. Today, many young women do not finish their training before the age of "twenty something", consequently they cannot and do not want to wait until they are married. However, they do want to avoid sexually transmitted infections (STI) and pregnancy outside marriage.
- Lack of moral education: both generations deplored the lack of supervision and moral education of children today. When the older women accused the younger women of not being well-educated and not knowing the "Fendani", the young women replied that this was not their fault. According to the young women, they would have liked more education and more supervision from their parents, but the parents were not willing or not available.
- The value of female submission: the young women recognised that their mothers had shown courage and perseverance in the face of a very hard life. They thanked them for their sacrifices, but they themselves could not accept such a life today. They explained that in their view it was more important to educate fewer children and feed



them properly than to live in poverty with a large number of children. They reminded the older women that they had seen too many men abandon their wives and children and that it would be better in the circumstances to have fewer, but well educated children.

- The significance of FGM: the younger women unanimously called for an end to the practice of excision. They rejected the argument that FGM was an initiation with educative functions. For them, the cutting had been nothing more than a painful operation without education. Today, however, they knew the risks: sterility, HIV infection, diminished sensitivity and much more. The majority of the older women recognised these arguments but advocated the "pretence" solution: a minimal incision in the clitoris or simply a visit to a health worker who would pretend to perform FGM and apply a plaster. As they saw it, the social consequences for girls and women of not being circumcised would be too difficult, whereas the "pretence" solution would be acceptable for a transition period.

During these discussions, the generations began to redefine the problems between them and some new agreements emerged, for example:

- The need to tackle the educational and moral crisis: Both generations recognised that their communities were experiencing a moral and educational crisis. The traditional forms of education no longer existed and they had not been replaced by more up-to-date equivalents. Living conditions were changing rapidly and required an adaptation of the social and moral norms: the young today must succeed, in terms of employment and social standing, in a modern and globalised world. Nonetheless, families continue to apply traditional criteria to the behaviour of young people without providing the guidance and social support that were important functions of the initiation camps of the past.
- The mutual benefits of intergenerational communication: At the beginning of the workshop each generation accused the other of not having enough time to devote to the other and of not listening to them. Their joint deliberations during the workshop made them more interested in each other and more aware of the benefits of listening and being listened to. Indeed, when we asked them to tell us what they enjoyed most about the workshop, all the participants, young and old, said they would never have thought it possible that the other generation would listen to them and show so much understanding.

4.2 Women's dialogue on sexual morality, HIV/AIDS and FGM (Labé and Faranah, 2003)

"We don't even know what paternal love is..."

Young woman, participant in the Labé dialogue

Date, place, target groups, partners

The second generation dialogue took place in April and May 2003 in Labé and Faranah. This time the dialogues were organised in collaboration with the PSS (Health and AIDS Control Programme) of the Ministry for Public Health and the GTZ. In both regions, two workshops were organised in parallel, one for the dialogue between the women and one for the dialogue between the man. The dialogues were again organised in partnership with local partner NGOs: in Labé, with CPTAFE Labé, the Club artistique Amadou Hampathé Bah and the Club des amis du monde de Labé; in Faranah, with CPTAFE Faranah, AAPF and AFFAAV, all partners of the FGM project in this region.

Themes, discussions, burning issues and agreements

The sensitive points raised by the older women were as follows:

- The lack of respect shown towards them by the young women and their reluctance to listen;
- The lack of respect shown by young women towards their teachers at school and at the Koran school;
- Premarital sex and the fact that young women no longer had any scruples about receiving young men in their homes;
- Mothers' fear that their children could catch HIV/AIDS;
- The fear that their daughters could have trouble finding a husband if they were too independent and demanding;
- The loss of the educative function of female FGM and its initiatory education function: they had learned many things about the household, marital life and social life that they would not have been able to learn at school.

The young women, for their part, put the following problems to the older women:

- The importance they attached to their education and professional training, so as not to become dependent on men;
- Their rejection of forced marriages: the young women of Faranah and Labé raised the problem that many families gave away their daughters in marriage to men from abroad for material reasons, without knowing the men concerned and without asking their daughters' opinion;
- Sexual harassment of girls by teachers at school and after school: the young women of Labé and Faranah spoke about teachers who had made advances to them at school and in local nightclubs, undermining their respect for teachers and disrupting their studies;
- The gender-based violence they suffered and to which they were witness on a daily basis in the home: physical and psychological violence by men towards their wives, among co-spouses and by parents towards their children;
- Double standards with regard to morals: Many older, married and influential men encourage young women to have sex with them in exchange for money or gifts;
- Their difficulty in finding men who will marry them and love them as educated and independent women;
- Their rejection of the practice of FGM, knowing the risks and harmful effects it has; the cutting no longer had an educational function.

Controversial discussions ensued on the following subjects:

- Fathers' threats undermine the mother-daughter relationship: in a heated discussion in Faranah on girls' lack of virtue, women testified that their own situation as spouses was at risk if a father discovered his daughter was going out at night or seeing men.
- Sexuality and material needs ("morals are not edible"): in the two regions, the young women did not conceal the fact that sexual services were often exchanged for money or gifts between well-off men and young unmarried women.
- The contradictory demands of families on daughters: in both regions the young women complained that on the one hand their parents told them to be reserved and virtuous, but on the other, encouraged them to attract well-off men in order to take advantage of their gifts, not least for the good of the family.
- The effects of the AIDS pandemic on morals and sexual behaviour: When discussing their knowledge of HIV/AIDS, the older women in both regions admitted that the



younger women were better informed than they were. At the beginning of the discussions, they argued that, as married women of long standing, AIDS was no longer a concern for them. Only when the younger women challenged them by saying that they had no control over the sexual activities of their husbands or their co-spouses did they concede that no one was safe from the threat of AIDS.

- The superficiality of the campaigns to control AIDS: when discussing the three strategies advocated in Guinea to prevent HIV/AIDS - abstinence, fidelity and the condom - the more extrovert young women of Faranah said that the debate about fidelity was a pack of lies because, judging by what they had seen and experienced, there was no such thing as fidelity in Guinea. The conclusion they had drawn for themselves was that using condoms was the only way to ensure a degree of protection.

As in the Conakry dialogue, the definition of problems raised by the two generations changed during the course of the project. Many stereotypes and prejudices were broken down and new agreements, like the following, emerged between the two groups:

- Ending FGM and adapting girls' moral education: both the older and the younger women recognise that times have changed and require a change in prescribed behaviours and customary practices. The practice of excision can no longer prepare girls for social and married life. Other forms and contexts for the moral education of girls must be explored.
- The value of a greater willingness to listen and of more solidarity between young women and older women: both generations recognise that they had long felt the absence of sympathy and a willingness to listen on the part of the other generation. The dialogue workshops had encouraged them to initiate more dialogues in other contexts.
- The importance of a dialogue between the sexes - to tackle subjects which the two generations of women had recognised as problems but were unable to resolve without the cooperation of men, since they are the ones who hold the decision-making power in these areas (sexuality, treatment of girls and wives in the home).

The innovation introduced by the dialogues in Labé and Faranah was the meeting of men and women of different generations, during the morning of the last day of the two workshops. During these meetings, each group (young women, young men, older women, older men) had the opportunity to prepare and present what they wanted from the other groups, as well as what they wanted to contribute to improving inter-generational relations.

During this big meeting with the men, the young and older women made some courageous appeals:

- The young women called on the young men and older men to condemn and bring to an end the acts of violence perpetrated by men against girls and women. They made the point that they suffered as direct victims of violence and when they witnessed their mothers being beaten.
- In Faranah, the young women urged the older generation to put an end to forced marriages between girls and complete strangers, often from outside Guinea.



- Another demand made on older men was that they should take more interest and become more involved in their daughters' education. The majority of young women hardly knew their fathers. The spokeswoman for the young women in Labé said: "We do not even know what paternal love is."
- The older women supported this demand by the young women. They reminded the men that they must no longer shirk their responsibilities as fathers. It was not just a matter of meeting economic needs, but of participating more actively in their children's education and engaging in dialogue with them.
- The spokeswoman for the women in Faranah raised the burning issue of men's responsibility for HIV/AIDS prevention. "We women cannot protect ourselves if we cannot speak to our husbands and reach an understanding on abstinence, fidelity or the condom. Before we talk to our children, we, the parents, must have the courage to talk about it among ourselves"!

4.3 Men's dialogue on sexual morality, HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation (Labé and Faranah, 2003)

"We are the generation of the damned."

Remy, 22 years old, representative of the younger generation, Labé

The men's dialogue workshops took place on the same dates and at the same places as the women's dialogue workshops. The two groups met for a mixed dialogue at the end of the second workshop.

Subjects, discussions, burning issues and agreements

The atmosphere at the men's workshops was calmer and more reserved. In the first days in particular, the facilitators had to work hard to motivate the two generations to budge from their respective places or positions and carry out the interactive exercises. Gradually, however, the exercises succeeded in getting both young and old to relax.

Generally speaking, the older men presented an image of themselves as representing an intact and virtuous culture. They complained less about the younger generation than did the older women. In their positions of power, in terms of age and sex, they were probably less concerned by these problems than the women. Nevertheless, the majority of them held young people to the traditional rules of behaviour:

- The traditional life-course of a man: the older men took quite a long time to present the traditional stages in the life of a man. They showed the different types of arms, which attracted the attention of the younger men: for boys there were slings, for young men bows and arrows, and, for adults, rifles. In Labé and Faranah, hunting represented the role of head of the family. A man able to use a gun and hunt game was ready for fatherhood.
- No sex outside marriage: they criticised the use of condoms as a method of preventing HIV/AIDS, especially by unmarried men and their girlfriends. According to them, there should be no sex before marriage ("You shouldn't taste the orange before you've paid for it").





- Reference to the Koran on all moral and behavioural questions: in Labé, the Muslim religion was the large (and only) framework of reference for the men. At Faranah, the men also made reference to religion, but outside religion they also talked of local customs they had known and with which they had been brought up. The men of both regions, however, wanted young people to study the Koran and behave in accordance with its precepts.
- On FGM, positions varied: the most conservative wanted to see the custom respected,

but in its reduced form; others were in favour of adapting the practice, for example using the "pretence" method, but they strongly advised against making too radical or too rapid changes. One interesting, respected and influential man from Labé explained in front of the others that, in his own experience, female genital mutilation diminished a woman's enjoyment and, consequently, the sexual enjoyment of her husband. He reminded his fellow participants that FGM was not prescribed in the Koran.

Throughout their life courses, the young men of Labé and Faranah confronted the older men and challenged the content and sincerity of their advice. While they maintained a respectful demeanour throughout, they gradually dismantled, through personal testimony and subtle criticism, the moral superiority of their fathers. They raised the following issues:

- The life courses of the young men: corruption of moral standards and lack of prospects.

The young men of Labé spoke of the social pressures on them to portray a young, modern image by adopting certain attitudes and wearing American gear (baseball cap, trainers, denim). In reality, the external appearance masked their poverty and a lack of self-confidence. They are beginning to drink beer and use drugs to overcome their shyness towards young women and their friends. Drugs also help them to cope with their scant prospects of finding a job, living a life free of poverty and making a successful marriage.



- They also mentioned the sizeable debt they would inevitably incur to pay for the extravagant weddings demanded by today's young women. They also mentioned the difficulty of finding a job and earning enough money to feed their families. Marriages frequently run into crisis, and divorce is common. Men without a future do not avoid risk behaviours. On the life course of a young man, he is infected and dies of AIDS at the age of about 30.
- In Faranah, too, the young men had the courage to challenge the moralistic view on life presented by the older. They also referred to their own and their peers' use of beer and drugs. They reminded their elders that both before and after marriage, men have regular contact with prostitutes. In little scenes, they showed men praying at the mosque and then going off to visit their girlfriends. They refuse to give their wives money for household expenses, but they have money to spend in bars and to buy gifts for prostitutes.



- The older men seemed to be affected and shaken by the serious messages put across by the younger men. The ensuing discussions showed that they were ready to accept a degree of responsibility for the problems presented.

In the course of the discussion, the younger men had the following criticisms:

- The threat of AIDS and the prejudices of the older men: the subject of AIDS came up several times during the men's workshops and the younger men's very real and personal fear of this threat was obvious. They challenged the moralising attitude of the older men and reminded them of cases where people had behaved according to the rules of the Koran

but had still become infected. In spite of the critical attitude of the older men, the more courageous of the younger men explicitly defended their right to use condoms to protect themselves and their partners.

- The problems of polygamy: the young men of Faranah and Labé were all opposed to polygamy. Their ideal of a good marriage was a partnership based on mutual love, and they wanted their wives to be educated and able to contribute to the family income. But they were aware it would be difficult to achieve that ideal because they were at a loss to know how to earn enough money to get married and keep a family. They criticised the older men for marrying several wives and consequently having neither the money nor the time to devote to all their children. Clearly, many of the younger men had themselves suffered from this sort of situation at home.
- Absent fathers: like the younger women, the younger men deplored the fact that fathers shirked their responsibility towards their children and their wives. As represented in their life courses, they told them straight out: "We can do as we please and you're not in least bothered. If we go out at night, if we take drugs, you are not concerned. You criticise our mothers, but you do not talk to us".
- The clans: in Faranah and Labé young men have started to form groups and then get into fights with other groups. They have committed some fairly serious crimes. This phenomenon was the subject of a great deal of discussion by participants who saw it as a new and threatening problem in their communities. The young men considered that the emergence of these clans was additional proof that young people today lacked direction, a moral framework and social support. Notwithstanding their wrongdoings, the clans offered such a framework and support to young men who felt abandoned by their families.
- The problems surrounding the sexual needs of older men: the younger men reproached the older men for continuing to marry younger women and having several wives and many children. They reminded the older men that the children of these late marriages would be without any support when the fathers died.

The appeals of the two groups of men at the meeting with the two generations of women at the end of the second workshop highlighted their positions once again:

- The older men recognised the importance of playing a more active part in





the education of their children. They called upon the older women to work with them so that fathers and mothers together could come up with solutions to the current problems. However, they remained conservative, invoking traditional values and the traditional order and without conceding that some aspects of that order might have become outdated.

- There was a note of despair in the appeal of the younger men. They called upon the older generation not to condemn or abandon them, but to take an interest in them and help them find a moral framework for their lives that could reconcile the commandments of the Moslem faith with the complex demands of contemporary life. They appealed, too, to younger women not to demand extravagant weddings, but to take them for what they are: fairly poor, but full of good will.

5. Impact assessment

In order to attain a better understanding of the effects of the generation dialogues on participants and their families, a survey of 40 participants' families and 40 control families (i.e. families who had not taken part in the generation dialogues) was carried out in Faranah 4 months after the follow-up workshops in October 2003. The aim was to determine whether and how the intervention had influenced family communication on HIV/AIDS, FGM and the quality of the relationships between the generations.

Trained interviewers interviewed the participant and the control families following a semi-structured questionnaire. The data were entered in a database and analysed using the Statview software. A full report on the study is available in French from the GTZ supra-regional project "Promotion of initiatives to end FGM" (www.gtz.de/fgm).

The results of the study showed that, compared to the control families, the participants' families reported significantly more communication between parents and children about sexual morality, about HIV/AIDS, about sexuality and about genital mutilation. Furthermore, the participants' families reported significantly better family relationships and significantly more reciprocity (active interest and listening by the old as well as by the young) in those relationships than the control families.

The generation and the sex of the interviewees had an impact on their replies:

The most obvious gender difference emerged in relation to communications about female genital mutilation. Over 70% of the men (as compared to about 24% of the women) in the control families admitted that in their families the parents had never addressed this issue with their children. In the participant families, the proportion of men who said that they never talked about this issue was 45%. Although this is significantly lower, it is still a considerable proportion of families and this may need to be taken into account when planning future generation dialogues: Perhaps it would be useful to address with the older and the young men more directly why and how this issue could be addressed between the men in their families.

Another gender difference worth noting is that the young men report significantly less communications between their parents and them about sexuality-related issues than the young women. They also feel that their parents are less interested in their problems and they themselves are also less interested in the experiences of their elders.

One might assume that this tendency, which is reflected in the answers of the young men in both the intervention and the control groups, is essentially a result of culturally pre-

scribed sex roles: it may be that it is simply considered less appropriate or “normal” for young men to talk about such issues with their parents. And yet: The young men’s testimonies at the generation dialogue workshops have highlighted that most young men wish to communicate more with their parents, and especially with their fathers.

One more interesting finding is that in the control families, most young people feel that their parents are not interested in their problems while their parents report that they are very interested in their children’s concerns. In the families whose members participated in the generation dialogues, there is no such difference in perception. It could be interpreted that parents in the intervention families know better how to show and live their interest in their children.

Overall, the Faranah survey showed a number of clear differences between intervention and control families four months after the end of the targeted intervention. While these differences cannot prove a causal link between the generation dialogue and the desired patterns of family communication, they allow us to maintain the hypothesis that the generation dialogues have had an impact.

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