

Project Title: Picturing Health and Hygiene for the Street Children and Community of Saly Mbour

Institution: University of Pennsylvania Summer 2016 'Projects for Peace'

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Region: Saly, Mbour Senegal

Non-Profits & Partners: ALEFS (Avec Les Enfants et Femmes du Senegal) (With the Women and Children of Senegal); Kids of Kadiogne, the Mayor of Mbour, the Hospital of Mbour and Foundation Sonatel

Date: May 25th to August 15th 2016 (10 weeks)

Introduction and Backgrounds

The City of Mbour, located in the Thiès region of Senegal lies approximately 80 km south of the capital city of Dakar and is home to approximately 200,000 citizens. One of the city's major industries is tourism, and as a result, it has also become a notorious magnet for street children, most of whom are talibés looking for ways to make ends meet. Talibé, meaning disciple in Arabic, is in reference to children usually between the ages of 7 and 17 living under the patronage of Islamic teachers called marabouts who at times are responsible for 20 to 100 children at once. In order to fund their Qur'anic education, and as a repayment to the marabout for their fosterage, many of the children beg on the streets for money and food. Malnutrition and poor health and hygiene are often a result of their condition. This past summer of 2015, Antoinette was awarded the Hassenfeld Social Impact Research grant along with the PennCap International Initiative grant through our university. These grants, served to ground any future efforts in providing solutions to their plight by first allowing her to conduct an eight-week exploratory and analytical ethnography of the children, contextualizing the conditions that led them to the streets in the first place.

This research project, currently pending publication in Brill's International Journal of Children's Rights, has provided her with an in-depth look at the various agencies on the ground in Senegal from government officials to local NGOs, concerned with addressing the problem of street children ranging from their health conditions to the educational barriers they face. Among these NGOs was the French organization ALEFS (Alefs.org) headed by Bernard Lesbros, in the Saly community of Mbour. ALEFS is committed to addressing the health and nutritional needs of women and children within that community. As part of their efforts, they have recently completed the building of a small clinic to cater to the community's needs. Based on what Antoinette was able to gather through observing their treatment of the community's children in a clinical setting, we (the students) decided to partner with ALEFS in the creation of a health and hygiene education program specifically targeted toward the prevention of health crisis and disease burdens that threaten not only the talibés, but also the residents of the marginalized community that the newly erected clinic will serve.

Project Objectives:

The primary objective of this prevention project is to improve the health status of not only the talibés, but also the Saly community of Mbour where they reside, by improving attitudes with respect to both hygiene and health. This promotion program will be designed to provide specific guidance on understanding first the roots and routes of both infection and disease transmission. The program will begin by helping the locals to identify risk practices and the behaviors unique to the community's environment that carry the greatest risk of creating disease; we will then form and lead seminars to advise on effective hygiene practices. This program is meant to look at the concept of health and hygiene from the point of view of the community, the marabouts, and their talibés, focusing on what they need to understand in order to protect themselves and prevent illness. This will require an assessment of the knowledge base of the members of the community in order for us to understand and build on what they already know to help us develop a more operative program. Furthermore, empowering rather than just teaching the community into actively taking charge of their health environment will be a much more effective way to motivate behavioral change. An integrative rather than top down approach to promoting health is meant to uphold the ethos of the Davis Project in promoting peace by bridging gaps, and building trust between the community and the various transnational and local aid agencies we will be working with. Such collaborative approach will empower the community into actively participating in the planning and implementation of the project creating a sense of ownership that will ensure sustainability.

Project Description and Implementation

On top of the support it also provides for the Saly community, our main partner association, ALEFS, has a network of 7 Qur'anic schools through which it meets both the medical and dietary needs of approximately 250 children and adolescents. Many of these talibés have parents from remote villages who lack the ability and the means to follow up with their children in cities like Mbour or Dakar, the capital. To alleviate the burden brought on by such distances, ALEFS has set up a system of fosterage through which older women from the community known as marraines or godmothers voluntarily agree to serve as support links and maternal figures to several children at a time. They cook meals for them and allow them to bathe in their homes. These relationships significantly cut down on the time the children would spend on the streets begging. Aside from their marabouts, these groups of women are the closest thing to parental guidance that the children have; they will therefore be critical to the success of

this hygiene and health promotion program. The first step toward implementation will be to acquire their help alongside the help of community health workers and volunteer doctors from the hospital of Mbour to assess the knowledge base of the community on health and hygiene issues. These individuals' frequent interactions with the talibés and sick members of the community give them insight into the most unique and pressing health problems. Once we receive this input, and prior to our arrival in Senegal, we will categorize these hygiene issues and the common illnesses for which they are the root cause.

Based on the identified issues and categories, we along with the help of Penn faculty members who specialize in global health interventions, will design a curriculum, pamphlets and posters to combat illnesses cause by sanitation issues. The posters and pamphlets will mainly contain images and illustrations that depict and communicate scenarios addressing health or hygiene issues within the community that people will easily be able to recognize and understand. The posters will hang around the clinic and the various murals within the city where they will gain the most exposure. The pamphlets will be made available to anyone who visits the clinic and will also be included in the 250 health kits we will put together for distribution to the talibés. The health kits will consist of items that promote basic yet critical practices in terms of maintaining hygiene and promoting healthy habits. These items will include toothpastes and toothbrushes, hand and body soap bars, vitamin supplements, Band-Aids, nail clippers, etc. The educational component of the program will be laid out in 7 health seminars (taking into account religious holidays) for adults, and 14 seminars for the children broken down into 2 per week with 2 or 3 one-hour sessions on designated days to accommodate for 50 kids at a time. These workshops will continue long after we leave Senegal as a means to maintain community members informed, and accountable for their health. The adult seminars will be broken down into weekly topics that will serve to raise awareness among the godmothers, marabouts and community members about Saly's health crises such as scabies, which has made a comeback in recent years. The adult educational seminars are meant to foster dialogue and create an informal health network where members are encouraged to take an active role into changing the community's perception of what it means to be healthy. The network of adults who will attend the seminars will become trainers and messengers, disseminating the knowledge to the remaining members of their community.

The children's seminar will be based on education by demonstration, meaning we will teach them the utility of every single item in their health kits like proper hand washing and tooth brushing techniques. Through interactive games and songs, we hope to help them in turn to demonstrate and retain the skills and important lessons they will be taught. The last component of the project will be the building of 6 ventilated improved pit latrines for the daaras. These are cheap and effective systems in helping promote the reduction of open-air defecation. The Energy Foundation Sonatel and the Mayor of Mbour have agreed to support this part of the project by providing the labor to execute it. Furthermore, Sonatel is donating new sleeping mattresses and nets to the daaras as a way to commit support to our campaign. Once the project is in place, ALEFS will continue to tap into its networks of donors and volunteers like the godmothers, doctors and supporting organizations in France and Senegal to sustain the project in the long term as part of its mission to continue providing and promoting health care.

Timeline:

Prior to our arrival	Once in Senegal
<p>Feb- Mar--Survey existing knowledge of health practices with communication with doctors and community health workers</p> <p>Mar-Apr--Design health pamphlets and hygiene promotion posters based on their Input</p> <p>Apr -May- Finalize content of health kits for the children based on necessity and needs</p> <p>-Finalize scheduling for community seminars for both the kids and the adult members of the community</p>	<p>May 25th - Jun 5th -Engage in meetings with marraines community health workers, and doctors in finalizing steps towards implementing the health promotion programs</p> <p>-Finalize and print posters and pamphlets</p> <p>June 5th-Aug 15th - weekly workshops (7) for the adults and (14) for the children</p> <p>- Demonstrations & distribution of health pamphlets, health kit, sleeping mattresses and nets.</p> <p>-The building of the 6 latrines</p>

Personal Experience:

In addition to the research project mentioned above, the three of us in collaboration with the non-profit Kids of Kadiogne (kidsofkadiogne.org) have already implemented a successful feeding program called Kids of Dakar (kidsofdakar.org) whose target has been to meet the nutritional needs of the talibés at the temporary shelter of Samusocial Senegal (samusocialsenegal.com) in Dakar. The program had been successfully running now for over a year. This experience in launching a sustainable project has given us the skills necessary to maintain partnerships and engage various stakeholders to meet the needs of communities. Furthermore, having spent part of her childhood in Senegal, and as the current program coordinator for Kids of Kadiogne in Dakar, Antoinette has been able to act as a link between Senegalese communities in the diaspora and on the ground in Senegal through the promotion of awareness concerning crises faced by street children through research symposiums, seminars, and presentations. With our combined backgrounds in global health studies and international relations, we hope that this project will allow us to demonstrate the power of collaboration in effectuating impactful change through the promotion of both peace and health for the most marginalized members of our global community.