

**The Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby Project
Senegal**

University of Maine

**Anne Fitzpatrick, Johna Doyle, Taylor Delp, Lila Lyons and Caleb Elsemore; United States of America.
University of Maine**

Section I:

The intended goals of this project were to provide education on the risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth to women in Senegal in order to help decrease maternal and infant mortality rates within the community. Additionally, this project aimed to provide participating students with an opportunity for personal growth and a new perspective on worldwide issues.

The entirety of *The Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby Project* project was funded by the generosity granted by the Davis Foundation's Project for Peace program.

The Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby Project ran very smoothly and the project trip members were very pleased with how everything was executed. There were no major unanticipated difficulties besides minor miscommunication issues with contacts on the ground. This communication was quickly resolved once the team sat down to touch base and get everyone on the same page. No budget constraints were experienced while on the trip, everything that was needed while on the trip was covered by the grant which allowed trip members to focus on the work at hand rather than finances. One of the biggest hurdles to overcome on this trip, as for any other trip to a foreign trip was the language barrier involved. The national language of Senegal is French and most locals speak the native dialect of Wolof. Luckily, talented and well versed interpreters were working closely alongside the project team which allowed for this barrier to go as smooth as possible. Much planning went into the project all in the hopes of the project going seamlessly on the ground. One thing we ensured prior to getting to Senegal was to have the birthing kits prepared and ready to hand out. This preparation as well as becoming well versed in the education that we were providing to the women allowed for the project to work very well and made us the most efficient as possible. In terms of the amount of people we reached while in Senegal, we were very pleased with the result over the course of the project more than 400 pregnant women were given birthing kits and educated on the risks associated with pregnancy, in addition to these women our hope is that our project will benefit an additional 400 lives with the healthy delivery of these pregnant women's children. These women are women from the community of both M'Bour and Touba in Senegal, these are mothers, sisters, aunts, friends and loved ones who will hopefully move forward and share what they have learned with their mothers, aunts, sisters, friends and loved ones. This is the long-term impact and sustainability of this project. The ripple effect of information, especially in a culture very bound to family and the "it takes a village mentality", is immeasurable. The future in our project greatly lies with our strong relationship with the Partners for World Health organization. With the success of *The Healthy Mother, Healthy Baby Project* Partners for World Health hopes to continue providing delivery kits and necessary prenatal education to expecting mothers at multiple other locations around the globe during their medical mission trips. In addition to Partners for World Health continuing this project idea, sustainability comes into play when discussing the follow-up involved with our project design. The contact information for each woman given a delivery kit was gathered so that our contacts in Senegal can follow up with these women in order to see if the kits and education we provided were beneficial throughout their pregnancy term.

Section II:

When thinking about defining peace, world peace can be achieved by extinguishing hate derived from ignorance. Many issues that exist in our world are due to misunderstandings or people not taking time to understand the facts behind the many matters in the world. If people were to take an initiative to understand, not even agree with, but just understand the basic facts of the differences in culture, religion, and background, and accept that people can, and do, think differently, the world would be a much more peaceful and understanding place. This project served as a platform for people to get involved and be able to understand more about the world. It gave 22-year-old college students the opportunity to take part in an experience where they could develop and spread their own ideas, allowing them to influence world peace between. They were there to not only help better the proven issue of infant and maternal mortality, but to get to know and understand the people and culture that make up Senegal as a nation. The experience and perspective derived from this project has built a solid foundation for them to continually strive to make our world a more peaceful place, and to understand and acknowledge all those that we share this world with.

As this trip revolved around OBGYN care, the trip members' understanding of medicine was much further developed, making them more well-rounded as students. Furthermore, after spending quite a bit of time in the operating room, brought the realization of how far behind hospitals can be in terms of supplies and techniques. Having the most up to date surgical procedures is imperative to be the most efficient at saving lives. To realize that these doctors who were trained in France were that far behind in terms of modern medicine, instilled not only appreciation our medical practices, but allowed the gain of perspective. Not only did students learn a lot about medicine, but they learned a lot about culture and how it can influence treatment options and how some things are done due to unique cultural norms. Students also learned about the differences in culture just by interacting with, and educating the patients and community members encountered. When providing education about risks associated with pregnancy, the knowledge gap was extremely evident. Some things that we consider "common knowledge" as educated university students were unheard of to the population they were reaching out to. This instilled a huge amount of gratitude in the group. It inspired them to do the best work they could over there and to make the biggest difference possible in the two weeks that they were there. At the end of the trip, the students reported that they felt they had accomplished this by helping and educating as many people as they could, and developing world peace by understanding and respecting culture differences.

"For me, the most important thing I learned through this experience is that people, no matter where they are from, what they believe in, their problem no matter how big or small, all deserve the opportunity to be treated both medically and socially with the highest quality available and with respect. If more people learn this, the world will become a better place." -Taylor Delp

"The most valuable thing that I learned on my trip to Senegal was the impact that one individual can make on a community when they chose to provide medical care and comfort to those who suffer from poverty; creating a more peaceful living experience for everyone involved." -Lila Lyons

