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SENEGAL

SUCCESS STORY

Learning Starts Early at Summer Camps

Trainings, discussions fill students' minds during weeklong event



Photo: USAID/Senegal/Richard Nyberg

Teenage students at the USAID-financed middle school in Keur Samba Dia sing songs they learned as part of their summer camp activities, which also included sports, art projects, and tree planting.

“Men and women both have leadership roles in their families and communities. It’s important for everyone to play their role,” said Amadou Diallo, a student participating in a USAID-funded summer camp.

Summer vacation is often considered a time to relax. In some communities in Senegal, however, vacation was also a time for students to come together at their new school to learn about each other and their communities, and to gain valuable skills to use in and outside the classroom.

USAID’s middle school education project designed and led summer camps for more than 1,000 students in four of Senegal’s regions. These weeklong camps, held in recently-built, USAID-funded rural middle schools, provided an opportunity for teenage boys and girls to address stereotypes, as well as to participate in computer and English language training, and cultural, sports, and art programs.

Under the camps’ theme of “Celebrating Equality in our Differences”, the middle school students touched on issues related to gender roles, stereotypes, and health (such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases) through group activities, drama, and role-playing.

Inspired by discussions at the camp in Keur Samba Dia, student Fatou Soukeye, 18, believes her role will be to work with friends to create an association to encourage more girls to remain in school, even if they become pregnant at an early age. “We need training, but we have to organize ourselves and act,” she said.

The students learned about the importance of the environment, particularly regarding deforestation. Many of the students and community members took it upon themselves to plant trees in their villages, with more than 200 trees being planted around the school in Keur Samba Dia alone.

Finally, because community members were also involved in the camps, many of these teenagers had a chance to sit with elders and others in the community to learn about the history of their towns and villages. “It’s good that these children learn about where they come from,” said one elder. “It’s important for their future to know about their past.”

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