



The Gambia

Partner Organization:

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Research Site: Greater Banjul, The Gambia

I AM my own person, unique. I am doing things on my own. I can admire and respect people but have no real role model. The closest possibly is my father, who taught me a lot; his determination, communication, dignity, honesty and integrity ... time to self inspire.

—Gambian girl

Context and Risk Factors:

THE Gambia, located on the Atlantic Coast in West Africa, is one of the continent's smallest countries. Its capital city, Banjul, has a population of just 42,326 people. The Gambia gained independence from the UK in 1965 and since then has experienced relative stability. Despite a large river running through the country, the soil is poor and has not resulted in prosperity for The Gambia's citizens. The agrarian economy largely consists of mono-crop peanut farming. Another main industry is tourism, which creates medium to low income jobs. Approximately 69% of the population lives below the poverty line¹. Unemployment and underemployment rates are extremely high and the country relies heavily on sustained bilateral and multilateral aid.² Approximately 45% of the Gambian population is under age 14; life expectancy is 55.2 years (Male: 53.14 years, Female: 57.31 years).³ Other risks faced by youth in The Gambia include poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender-based

violence, barriers to school enrollment (particularly for girls), early marriages, and teen pregnancy.



WHAT is the International Resilience Project (IRP)?:

The IRP is a mixed-methods, culturally sensitive approach to understanding how youth around the world effectively cope with the diverse challenges they face. The IRP now has partnerships with researchers and community-based organizations on six continents in over 25 communities. The IRP is currently bringing to a close the first three-year phase of research, in which data was collected with over 1500 children in 14 communities worldwide. The Greater Banjul area, in The Gambia, was one of those communities. In The Gambia, youth spoke with us about how they were able to tackle obstacles like poverty and cultural disintegration by remaining spiritual, working hard, and believing in their abilities.

For further information:

For a full discussion of the *International Resilience Project*, please see the accompanying Project Report contained with this package or visit us at our website www.resilienceproject.org

For copies of this report, please contact:

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Participants: Of the 81 youth that participated in the study from The Gambia, 62% (50)

were female and 38% (31) were male. The average age of participants was 19 years, with ages ranging from 13 to 28. The average education level was grade 12, with grade levels ranging from 6 to 12. Their communities of the participants saw the youth as coping well, based on culturally appropriate norms for behaviour.

What does resilience mean in Greater Banjul? Qualitative interviews, consisting of nine 'catalyst' questions, were conducted with youth considered by the community to be 'coping well with adversity.' In Greater Banjul, 1 girl, 1 boy, 3 adults (1 female, 2 males), and members of one adult focus group spoke to us about what resilience means in The Gambia. Participants highlighted the extreme tensions they felt between the demands of traditional culture and western society, and the importance of spirituality and good advice. One boy said that it is his sense of personal responsibility and good leadership qualities that see him through a lot and help to create opportunities in his life. Youth in The Gambia told us for example:

"I am my own person, unique. I am doing things on my own. I can admire and respect people but have no real role model. The closest possibly is my father, who taught me a lot: his determination, communication, dignity, honesty, and integrity... time to self inspire." (Gambian girl)

Studying Resilience:

A team of international researchers created the content for the Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM), a 58-item instrument administered across all 14 research sites. Local research teams also added 15 contextually and culturally specific questions to the CYRM during its administration in their communities. Questions were scored from 1 (do not at all agree) to 5 (agree a lot) by the youth themselves.

Sample of The Gambia CYRM Mean Scores

(Highest, lowest, and largest variance when compared to overall CYRM mean)

Order	CYRM Question listed by Mean Score	Site mean	Global mean	Variance	Color codes
1	Is getting an education important to you? (CYRM 10)	4.9	4.4	0.5	■
2	Are you proud to be (Nationality: Gambian)? (CYRM 53)	4.8	3.9	0.9	■ ■
3	Do you think it is important to serve your community? (CYRM 47)	4.7	3.5	1.2	■
4	Are you proud of your ethnic background? (CYRM 25)	4.6	3.9	0.7	
5	Do you have people you look up to? (CYRM 6)	4.5	3.6	0.9	■
6	Do you participate in organized religious activities? (CYRM 46)	3.8	2.7	1.1	■
7	Do you feel you can solve your own problems? (CYRM 30)	2.9	3.5	-0.6	■ ■
8	Do you think having fun and laughing can help solve problems in life? (CYRM 1)	2.8	3.2	-0.4	■ ■
9	Are boys and girls both treated fairly in your community? (CYRM 56)	2.7	3.4	-0.7	■ ■
10	Can you openly disagree with your parent(s) and elders when you believe things different from what they believe? (CYRM 55)	2.6	3.4	-0.8	■ ■
Overall Mean across 58 CYRM questions		3.78	3.4	0.38	

- Highest Site Scores on CYRM
- Lowest Site Scores on CYRM
- Largest Variance Below Global Mean (-)
- Largest Variance Above Global Mean (+)

The Gambia CYRM Results:

- Across all 58 measures of the CYRM, The Gambia's mean (3.78 out of a possible 5) was higher than the global sample mean across all sites. Youth in The Gambia gave the highest scores to CYRM questions: 10 'Is getting an education important to you?'; 53 'Are you proud to be (Nationality: Gambian)?'; 47 'Do you think it is important to serve your community?'; and 25 'Are you proud of your ethnic background?'
- The CYRM questions scored the lowest by Gambian youth included: 30 'Do you feel you can solve your own problems?'; 1 'Do you think having fun and laughing can help solve problems in life?'; 56 'Are boys and girls both treated fairly in your community?'; and 55 'Can you openly disagree with your parent(s) and elders when you believe things different from what they believe?'
- When compared to the global sample, Gambian youth showed the most positive variance (scoring higher than the overall mean for youth globally) on statements: 53 'Are you proud to be (Nationality:)?'; 47 'Do you think it is important to serve your community?'; 6 'Do you have people you look up to?'; and 46 'Do you participate in organized religious activities?'
- Gambian youth showed the largest negative variance (scoring lower than the overall mean for youth globally) on questions: 30 'Do you feel you can solve your own problems?'; 1 'Do you think having fun and laughing can help solve problems in life?'; 56 'Are boys and girls both treated fairly in your community?'; and 55 'Can you openly disagree with your parent(s) and elders when you believe things different from what they believe? These

The Gambia Site Specific Question Mean Scores

Site Specific Questions	Mean/5
SSQ 5: Is the most important influence in your life your religion?	4.4
SSQ 7: Do your parents give good advice when you talk to them about things that worry you?	4.4
SSQ 15: Do you agree that man should be willing to work (like construction, farming, fishing, driving and labor) in order to support his family?	4.1
SSQ 2: Is the most important influence in your life your family?	3.9
SSQ 9: Do your parents' friends believe you are successful?	3.6
SSQ 14: Do people who go abroad earn more respect than those who stay home and work?	3.2
SSQ 3: Is the most important influence in your life your culture?	3.2
SSQ 1: Do you believe that your successes are a result of your efforts only?	2.9
SSQ 6: Do you sometimes want to get away from pressures and expectations put on you by your parents?	2.9
SSQ 4: Is the most important influence in your life your friends?	2.8
SSQ 13: Does your parents' security depend on your income?	2.4
SSQ 8: Do your parents favor one or more of their children over others?	2.3
SSQ 12: Would your family be disappointed if you chose to work in a technical trade?	2.3
SSQ 11: Do you need to show that you have money to prove that you are successful?	2.1
SSQ 10: Do you trust your parents to choose the person you will marry?	2.0

The mean score across all site-specific questions for the Gambian site was 3.9/5, which was higher than their overall mean on the 58 globally administered CYRM questions (3.78).

Understanding the Results "Ecologically":

The IRP team reached a consensus that the 58 global CYRM questions could be separated into four unique and important aspects of resilience: *individual traits and characteristics, relationship factors, community contexts, and social and political aspects of culture*. Of the 58 CYRM questions, 23 related to individual traits and characteristics, 7 related to relationship factors, 15 to community contexts, and 12 related to aspects of culture. Focus on these four areas of resilience shows which aspects are most relevant to children's success in difficult contexts. One can see from the chart below which aspects of resilience are more or less important to youth in The Gambia when compared to youth across all 14 research-sites

Four-part Ecological Model:

Gender Comparison of The Gambian Site Means with Overall Sample Means (All Sites)

Ecological Model (Aspects of Resilience)	Site	Global	Girls		Boys	
			Gambia	Global	Gambia	Global
Individual Aspects	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.4
Relationship Aspects	3.8	3.4	3.8	3.5	3.9	3.3
Community Aspects	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.9	3.5
Culture Aspects	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.7	3.3

Endnotes

- 1 Gambia At A Glance. Unicef. Retrieved from Unicef Website November 6, 2005 from Website: <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/gambia.html>
- 2 The Gambia Demographics. GE World Source. Retrieved November 6, 2005 from GE World Source Website: http://www.gesource.ac.uk/worldguide/html/888_people.html
- 3 The Gambia Demographics. GE World Source. Retrieved November 6, 2005 from GE World Source Website: http://www.gesource.ac.uk/worldguide/html/888_people.html