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Midline survey results: Integrating adolescent livelihood activities within a reproductive health program for urban slum dwellers in India

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PROJECT UPDATE

Mid-line Survey Results:
Integrating Adolescent Livelihood Activities within a
Reproductive Health Program for Urban Slum Dwellers in India



INTRODUCTION

Within the developing world, little attention has been paid to preparing girls for future livelihoods and fostering their social mobility. Yet legitimate income-generating work is likely to transform the nature of girls' adolescent experience by providing them with a degree of autonomy and freedom from traditional gender roles. Most importantly, work should help to reframe the second decade of girls' lives from a period devoted to preparation for marriage and childbearing to a time when they can develop as individuals and gain knowledge and skills that are the foundation for a more productive adulthood. Moreover, it should provide girls, who are often confined to the home with heavy domestic responsibilities, with a degree of mobility and with networks and peer support groups outside the family. By offering girls an alternative source of social status, work is also likely to delay marriage. It is hypothesized that girls who contribute income to the household have greater control over their sexual and reproductive lives. The importance of livelihoods programs in delaying marriage is particularly relevant in India where over one-quarter of girls are married by age 15 and over one-half by age 18 (Jejeebhoy 1996).

POPULATION COUNCIL'S ROLE

The Population Council in collaboration with CARE India has been conducting an Operations

Research (OR) study to investigate the impact of adding a livelihoods component to the Action for Slum Dwellers' Reproductive Health, Allahabad (ASRHA) Project in Uttar Pradesh run by CARE, India. The ASRHA Project selected peer educators from the slums and then trained them in the provision of reproductive health information, communication skills and group formation techniques. A set of five flip books, containing stories based on a fictional

adolescent girl named *Paro*, has been used to share reproductive health information with adolescent girls. After their training was complete the peer educators led group sessions on reproductive health. Sessions began in the experimental sites in June, 2001 and continued through the Spring of 2002.

After the peer educators completed the reproductive health education series and after they had been trained by project

Participation in Vocational training courses

Course name	Location	Duration	No. of batches
Mehndi	Slum	1 week	25
Creative painting	Slum	1 week	14
Dhari weaving	Training Centre	1 month	2
Tailoring	Training centre	4 months	7
Mending and embroidery	Slum	10 days	5
Candle making	Training centre	1 week	4
Crochet	Training centre, Slum	2 months	5
Jute doll	Slum	1 week	2
Jute craft, Jute bag	Slum	3 weeks	2
Food preservation	Govt. Institute	15 days	1
Bee keeping	Govt. Institute	45 days	1
Fabric Painting	Slum	1 week	2
Macramé	Slum	2 weeks	1
Personal grooming	Training centre, Slum	2 weeks	5
Pot decoration	Training centre, Slum	1 month	5
Soft toys	Training centre, Slum	2 weeks	2
Basic cooking	Training Centre	2 weeks	1
Chinese cooking	Training centre	2 weeks	1
Total			85

Note: 18 different courses were run, of which 2 were run by the respective govt. institutes. Around 5 girls attended courses like carpet weaving, macramé, cooking and block printing at the 'women's polytechnic'. The number of different individuals who participated in vocational training courses = 525. The maximum number of courses an individual could attend was limited to 5 to enable different girls to get opportunity to participate in various vocational training courses.



The Mid-line Questionnaire

The mid-line questionnaire used several similar items from the baseline to compare responses from the two surveys. Information on the following indicators was collected from the adolescents:

- Demographic information
- Adolescent group attendance
- Experience of vocational counseling and training
- Livelihood and employment history
- Experience with savings counseling and savings formation
- Follow-up
- Time use pattern
- Self-efficacy
- Connectedness and friendship
- Mobility, autonomy and attitudes towards gender roles
- Knowledge of reproductive health and contraceptive methods
- Education history



staff to provide information about livelihoods and savings opportunities they then conducted group sessions about livelihoods and savings using IEC materials developed for this purpose. Reproductive health sessions were held alongside vocational counseling sessions.

Population Council staff worked to provide a number of vocational training courses, both in the slums where the girls reside and in the city of Allahabad. The project developed 21 short-term vocational courses that were offered in a series of 6 - 10 courses each. Courses began in the Fall of 2001 and continued through June 2002. The selection of courses given was based on the interest (e.g., enrolment) shown by the girls - a minimum of 10 girls was required for a course to be offered. *Mehndi* (hand or feet painting) was the course almost all the girls were interested in. Other courses arranged by the project included tailoring, creative painting, *dhari* weaving, mending and embroidery, candle making, silver ornament / link making, pot decoration, crochet, jute doll, basic cooking, personal grooming and fabric painting. The project also made arrangements for older girls (18 years and above) to attend government-run courses, for example, bee keeping, food preservation, jute craft, macramé, cooking, carpet weaving, and block printing. Since many girls wanted to participate in more than one course, the project set a limit of five courses per girl, in order to allow as many newcomers an opportunity as

possible. Concurrently with the vocational skills training, counseling and assistance was provided for creating savings accounts at banks or post-offices. (See Huntington et al. 2001 and Sebastian et al. 2002 for more information on the ASRHA project and the OR study).

The rationale behind this intervention program is that livelihood activities are likely to improve participation in the reproductive health program's activities, increase girls' mobility and visibility in the community, establish safe public spaces for girls, promote supportive relationships with non-family members, and help develop girls' social and economic skills. In addition, livelihood activities are thought to change the attitudes of adults so they become more accepting of girls' physical mobility and have a greater appreciation of girls' economic potential. The project assists interested girls in linking up with other organizations for future livelihood activities. In addition, it helps to identify shops to sell products made by girls. However, it is not the objective of the project to find jobs for the girls completing the vocational courses.

STUDY DESIGN

The OR study uses a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design that compares the intervention (experimental) group with a comparison (control) group of adolescents. A baseline and endline survey of all adolescents living in the slums, and one of their parents (or guardians), will

measure the differential effects of exposure to the various elements of the intervention. Previous Project Updates have presented information on the findings from the baseline survey (Sebastian et al. 2002). In addition to the surveys that are being conducted prior to and following the intervention, the study also includes a mid-line assessment that measures the experiences of girls six months after they completed the first round of vocational training courses, or one year after the baseline survey.

The goal is to examine the extent to which the livelihoods and savings interventions have 1) increased girls' physical mobility and contact with individuals outside the family, 2) enhanced girls' skill development and sustained use of skills, 3) altered the girls' work aspirations and encouraged progressive gender role norms, and 4) increased time spent with peers and time spent in productive activities.

MID-LINE SAMPLING RESULTS

The mid-line survey was conducted in early April 2002 in the experimental slums only. Girls who took part in the first batch of vocational training courses offered in August/ September 2001 were eligible. Of the 232 girls identified, 206 were successfully interviewed, yielding an 89 percent response rate. Of the 26 girls who did not take part in the survey, five girls had

married and moved away from their previous residence, 13 girls were unavailable either because the family moved from the area or the girls were not staying at home at that time. Seven girls declined to be interviewed and one interview was only partially complete. Unfortunately only 62 cases have been linked to baseline responses. The failure to link all of the cases in the mid-line to their baseline responses was because girls either did not participate in the baseline survey or used different names (many variations are common in India). The low rate of successfully matched cases limits our ability to examine changes in the girls' lives. Further investigation of the study's impact will be undertaken by the comparison of the baseline and endline surveys.¹

BACKGROUND INDICATORS

Of the 206 adolescent girls interviewed, 104 were aged 16 years or younger and 102 girls were aged 17 years or older. Most (94 percent) resided in Allahabad since birth, while six percent had settled there within the past 10 years. Virtually all (96 percent) of the girls were unmarried. The girls selected for the mid-line survey were those who participated in the first set of vocational courses. Thereafter many more new individuals attended other courses. Few new groups of adolescent girls were also formed during the following months.

Eleven percent of the girls interviewed in the mid-line survey

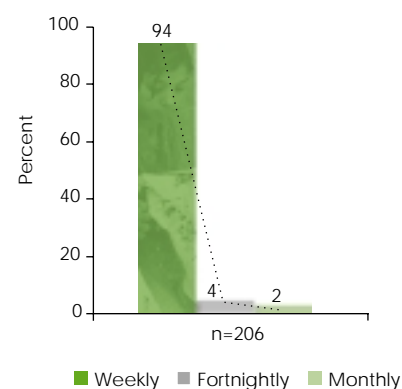
were working as peer educators. In all, 44 of the 206 girls (21percent) were working as peer educators with the CARE ASRHA Project.

Approximately 85 percent of the adolescent girls had attended school. However, only 39 percent of the girls – 53 percent of those aged 16 years or younger and 23 percent of those aged 17 years or older – were currently attending school at the time of the survey.

ATTENDANCE AT THE ASRHA PROJECT GROUP MEETINGS

All respondents had attended at least one reproductive health meeting; indeed the vast majority (94 percent) of the girls in the mid-line survey reported that they regularly attended these meetings (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Frequency of Attending Adolescent Meetings



The adolescents were asked if they required permission of their parents before attending the adolescent meetings (Figure 2). Three-fourths (75 percent) said they required permission of parents or guardians the first time only. Fewer than 10 percent of girls needed to seek permission

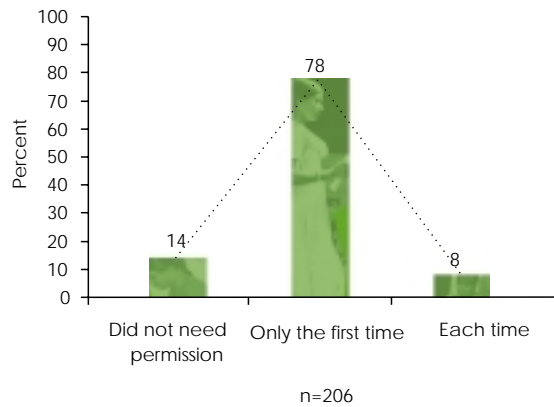
¹Because of the difficulties encountered in matching mid-line responses to the baseline, for the endline survey considerable effort is being devoted to developing procedures for linking respondents to the baseline survey.



A flip book was prepared with information about the 21 different vocational courses offered by the project including details about the duration, fee and the skill involved. A photo of the item to be produced during the training was also provided to help the girls understand the skill.



Figure 2: Permission from parents/guardian before attending adolescent meetings



each time before attending the adolescent meetings. It is noteworthy that one-half of the girls reported that their parents encouraged them to attend the adolescent meetings. One contributing factor could be that about one-fourth (27 percent) of the girls' mothers had been a member of CARE's women's health associations (a sister project to the adolescent reproductive health project of CARE).

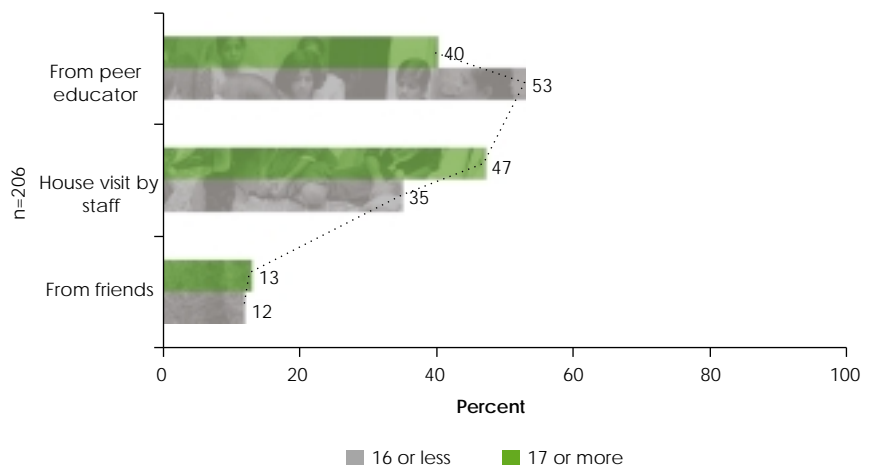
Respondents reported that they first heard information about vocational training from friends, peer educators and home visits by project staff (Figure 3), more so than at the adolescent meetings. The most frequently cited source of information about vocational

training was a ASRHA project peer educator, followed by CARE ASRHA project staff. The results presented in Figure 3 suggest that for the younger adolescents, a visit by the project staff was more important than the peer educator in conveying

information about the vocational training courses. Overall, this shows that most peer educators are well accepted by their peers and pass on information quickly. In addition, home visits by staff are also a good means to communicate information to adolescents.

A flip book was prepared with information about the 21 different vocational courses offered by the project including details about the duration, fee and the skill involved. A photo of the item to be produced during the training was also provided to help the girls understand the skill. Each adolescent group was given a flip book and most of the adolescent girls found the information provided in the

Figure 3 : Person from whom respondents first heard about vocational training



vocational training flip book sufficient (80 percent) or somewhat sufficient (18 percent) to make a decision about which course they wanted to attend

felt that it was not enough in all the courses.

Reported levels of satisfaction with the trainers were high ranging from 80-95 percent.

However, given the level of poverty and the absence of programs for girls in the slums, it is likely that participants were so grateful that vocational training courses were available,

that a high level of criticism was not expected. Of the few who were critical felt the trainer went too quick for them to fully follow the instructions. Five of the girls who had attended training complained that they did not get

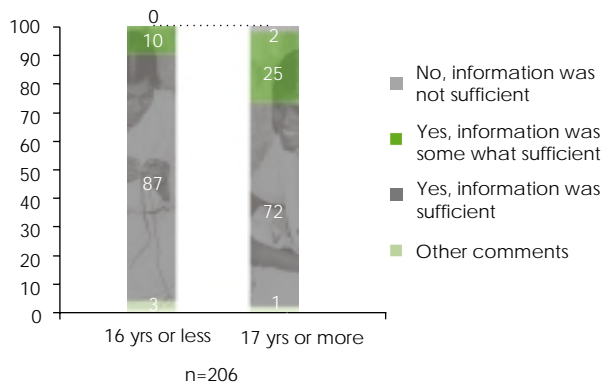
enough personal attention and that the trainer lacked patience.

USE OF VOCATIONAL SKILLS

The majority of the girls who took part in one or more vocational training courses reported six months later that they had used the skills learned (Figure 6). This includes more than 70 percent of those trained in food preservation, pot decoration, creative painting, mending and embroidery, 64 percent in *mehndi*, 59 percent in crochet and jute doll making and less for other courses including tailoring (53 percent), bee keeping (40 percent) and candle making (33 percent). Both during and after training the items made or skills learned were mainly used within the home and for gifts.

Among those who had not used skills, the main reasons reported

Figure 4: Adequacy of information in the vocational training flip chart



(Figure 4). All of the 42 girls who found the information in the vocational training flip book to be insufficient were asked to specify the areas that needed modification. Interestingly, those who wanted more details asked about the material expenses, demand for the product in the local market and income generation potential.

The girls were asked if they found the vocational course curriculum sufficient (Figure 5). The large majority (77 percent) felt that it was sufficient in all the courses, 11 percent felt it was sufficient in some courses while 11 percent

Figure 6: Use of skills learned in vocational training courses

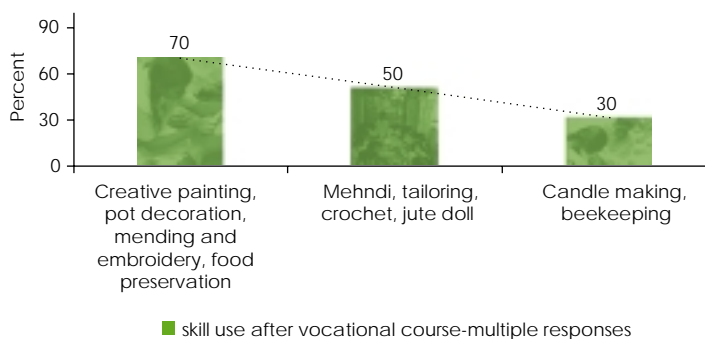
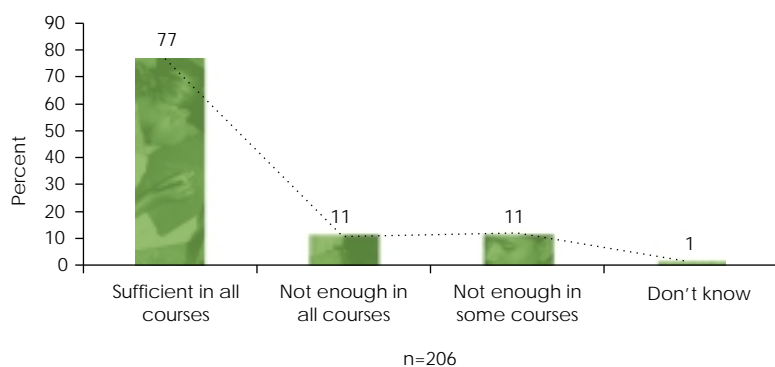


Figure 5: Percentage found the curriculum covered in the courses sufficient



for not utilizing the skills learned were lack of time (100 percent), no money to buy materials (85 percent), lack of necessary equipment (50 percent) or no demand or opportunity to sell the product or service (35 percent).

While most of the girls were not engaged in paid employment after the courses ended, approximately one-fifth



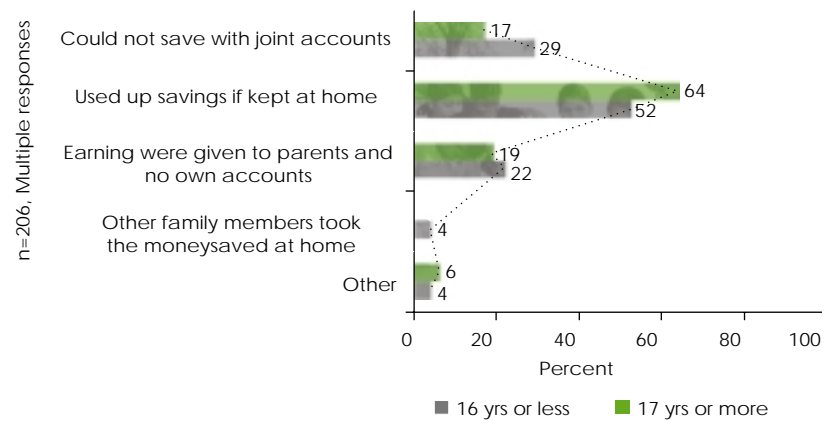
(21 percent) reported that they had worked for pay. Of these, only 34 percent (15 girls) got the present jobs as a result of the skill they learned during vocational training.

SAVINGS FORMATION

According to results from the baseline survey, girls were interested in opening a savings account in their name before the project began. About half of the girls had

saved. Only 29 out of the 63 girls (46 percent) who had savings accounts had definite plans. Five of these 29 girls wanted to purchase a sewing machine and four of the girls wanted to spend the saved money for household expenses or on themselves. A few of these girls (n=3) wanted to purchase raw material to start an income generating project or to assist in the marriage of a younger

Figure 7: Reason for opening savings account



The results from the mid-line survey show that after the adolescent meetings began, 61 percent of the girls opened a savings account in their name in a post office close to their slum. Almost all of these girls (95%) who had a savings account said that it was very important for them to save.

some savings but only 7 percent used a formal savings institution (see Sebastian et al. 2002). The results from the mid-line survey show that after the adolescent meetings began, 61 percent of the girls opened a savings account in their name in a post office close to their slum. Almost all of these girls (95 percent) who had a savings account said that it was very important for them to save. Girls opened accounts in their own name because they felt that money kept at home gets spent (59 percent) because they could not save with joint account (22 percent), or because earnings were given to parents in the absence of savings accounts (21 percent).

The girls were asked if they had plans for the use the money

sister. Saving money for marriage, helping a mother in crisis and buying a bicycle were some of the other ideas the girls had.

COMPARISON BETWEEN BASELINE AND MID-LINE RESULTS OF THE MATCHED CASES

This section discusses the comparisons for the 62 girls who were interviewed in both the baseline and mid-line surveys.

Time Use

While the sample of matched respondents is too small from which to generalize and also may be somewhat selective, there are some findings from the analysis of the linked data that suggest the project has had



some impact. It is interesting to note that average hours spent on household chores, including sweeping, cleaning, cooking, and washing clothes, decreased, and average hours spent on recreation and personal care increased from baseline to mid-line. There was an increase in time spent on

mid-line comparisons show that only 29 percent were allowed to visit their friends during the baseline survey, while at the mid-line 77 percent said they could visit their friend (Figure 8). Similarly, only 45 percent could visit a shop alone at the time of the baseline survey, but 77 percent of the girls at mid-line

aware of the project's intervention and in the process allow new adolescents to participate in the intervention. It also hoped to show the community the quality of work produced during training. Some girls were able to get work orders from the community after the exhibition. Only one-third of the girls had participated in one or the other exhibition. 66 girls who participated in the exhibition mentioned it helped them. Mainly they learnt skills required for organizing sales (55 percent), the importance of neat work (38 percent) and new ideas about designs (33 percent).

Reported activities during the day before the interview		
*Average hours in previous day spent on:	Baseline	Mid-line
	Average hours	Average hours
Chores	2.9	2.1
Education	3	2.9
Personal care (including napping)	2.2	2.7
Recreation	1.4	1.9
Unpaid work	1.6	2.2
Paid work	2	2.4
Others	2	2.7

*does not include time spent sleeping at night (n=62)

paid work, but time spent on unpaid work – using skills at home that were acquired during vocational course, helping mother in the shop or making things for sale – is seen to have increased as well, among others. As expected, there was an increase in time spent with peers and paid work.

Mobility

One of the objectives of the project is to test whether the livelihoods interventions will increase girls' physical mobility and contact with individuals outside the family. To assess this, the girls were asked if they could go alone to visit a friend, a shop or nearby village. The results from the baseline and

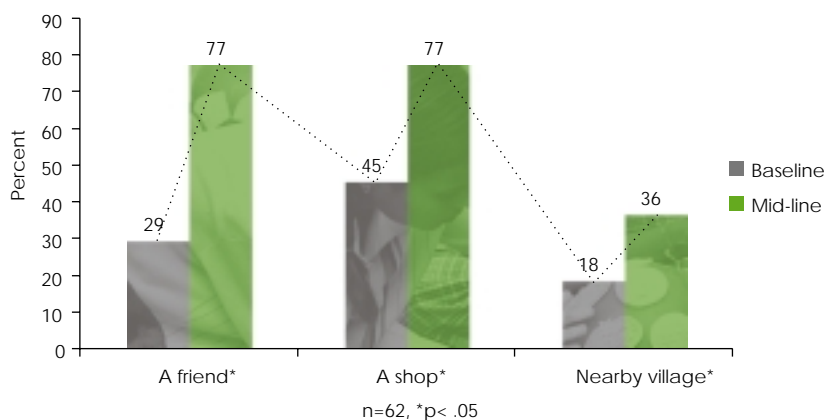
reported being able to visit a shop alone.

The project helped the girls to organize exhibition cum sales in their own slums and in some places outside slums. The purpose of organizing exhibitions in their respective slums was to make others in the community become

Attitudes and Behavior

The girls' attitudes about the roles of men and women in carrying out different tasks were explored. The results shown in Figure 9 (refer to the next page) indicates significant changes in the attitudes of adolescent girls between the baseline and mid-line survey. Of the matched sample, 45 percent of the girls at the time of the mid-line survey felt that they could convince other people of something they believe in, which was a significant increase from the 18 percent

Figure 8: Can you go alone to visit ?

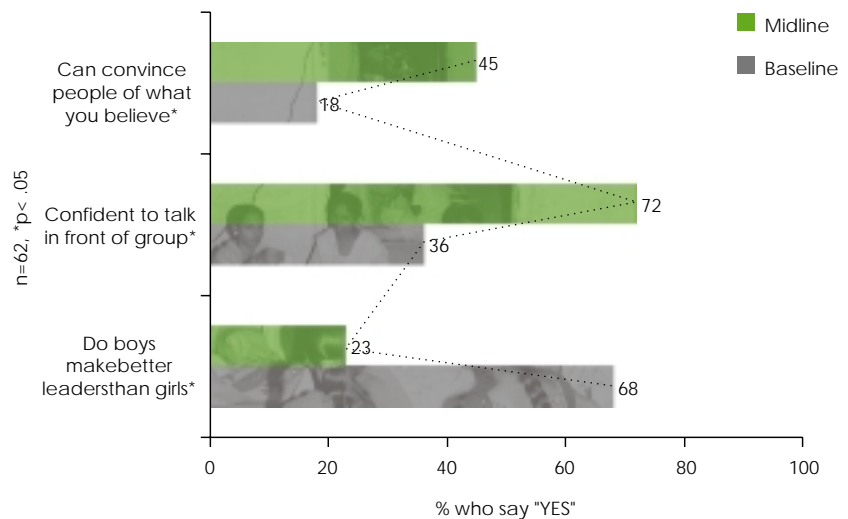




Girls' reproductive health knowledge increased from baseline to mid-line, in some cases significantly. While 89 percent could correctly name contraceptive methods at baseline, 97 percent were able to name contraceptive methods at mid-line. As compared to 67 percent in the baseline, 94 percent were able to name a sexually transmitted infection at the mid-line.



Figure 9: Attitudes and Behavior



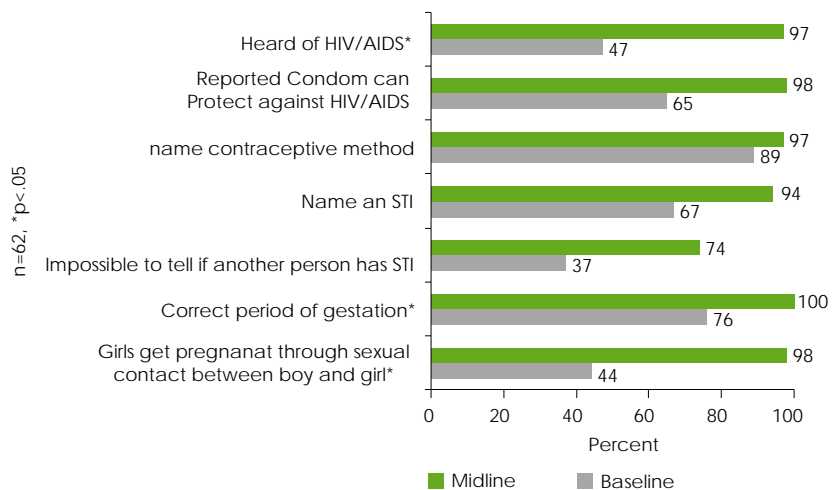
during the baseline survey. Seventy-two percent were confident talking in front of a group now, whereas only 36 percent reported that they had confidence at the baseline. When asked at the mid-line whether "Boys make better leaders than girls?" 23 percent said "yes", down from 68 percent at the baseline.

Reproductive Health Knowledge

The results presented in Figure 10 show that the girls' reproductive health knowledge increased from baseline to mid-line, in some cases significantly. While 89 percent could correctly

name contraceptive methods at baseline, 97 percent were able to name contraceptive methods at mid-line. As compared to 67 percent in the baseline, 94 percent were able to name a sexually transmitted infection at the mid-line. While only 37 percent at baseline said that it is impossible to tell if a person has STI, at mid-line 14 percent said so. Similarly while 18 percent believed that it is always possible to tell if another has STI, only 2 percent believed so at mid-line. While only 56 percent had heard of HIV/AIDS during baseline, at mid-line, 97 percent mentioned that they had heard

Figure 10: Reproductive health knowledge

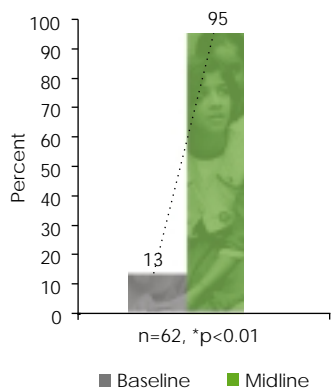


of HIV/AIDS. Ninety-eight percent were aware that condom could protect against HIV/AIDS. Thus the knowledge of STIs and HIV/AIDS risen compared to their baseline responses. All of the girls were able to correctly answer the question on the gestation period during pregnancy and 98 percent knew that girls get pregnant through sexual contact between a boy and girl, whereas only 44 percent knew this at the baseline survey.

Safe Places

Having a safe place for girls to convene assures that girls and their parents will not only be willing to take an active part in project interventions, but also may be more likely to participate in future community activities. At the time of the baseline survey, only 13 percent of the adolescent girls indicated that there was a safe place in the community for unmarried adolescent girls to meet, but after the intervention began, 95 percent identified a place. Whether girls and their parents will continue to identify such

Figure 11: Percent who say there is safe place for unmarried girls to congregate



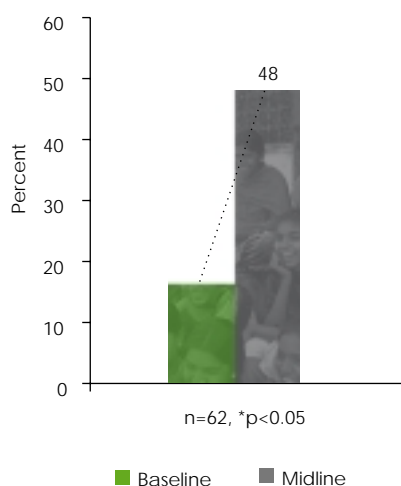
places after the end of the intervention is unclear but that will be investigated at the endline survey which will take place over six months after the intervention period has ended.

Seventy nine percent attended the adolescent meetings after vocational courses began and 97 percent want the adolescent meetings to continue after the intervention ends. 20 percent said adolescent meetings are always enjoyable and is an opportunity to relax, 35 percent said it is usually enjoyable and 39 percent found these meetings somewhat enjoyable, while 6 percent did not comment on the adolescent meeting. There were various health topics other than reproductive health; the girls were interested to learn more about. Singing and dancing after the reproductive health meeting made these sessions enjoyable.

New Friends

In the survey, a few questions were asked to determine whether the girls developed friendships and felt connected to their peers. In the three

Figure 12: Girls who made new friends in the past three months



months preceding the mid-line survey, over half of the girls had made a new friend (52.9 percent). The matched sample revealed that the proportion of girls making new friends had increased from 16 percent in the baseline survey to 48 percent in the mid-line.

CONCLUSION

The mid-line survey results point in the expected direction in terms of increased skill use, changing time use patterns, increased work aspirations and more progressive gender role attitudes. Girls expressed satisfaction with the courses, the trainers and used the skills after the vocational courses ended. They also expressed a desire for the adolescent meetings to continue (97 percent) and talked of these meetings as a time to relax and mix with their peers.

The finding that 13 percent felt there was a safe place in the community for adolescent girls to congregate during baseline survey in contrast to 94 percent at the mid-line reinforces this conclusion. A large number of participants opened a savings account and felt confident to go to the post office on their own to deposit money. The full effect of the intervention will not be known until the endline survey is conducted and the control and experimental groups are compared. However, the results from this mid-line survey of a partial sample suggest that the livelihoods project is having the desired effect on adolescent girls.



The mid-line survey results point in the expected direction in terms of increased skill use, changing time use patterns, increased work aspirations and more progressive gender role attitudes. Girls expressed satisfaction with the courses, the trainers and used the skills after the vocational courses ended.



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