
2024

Safe spaces

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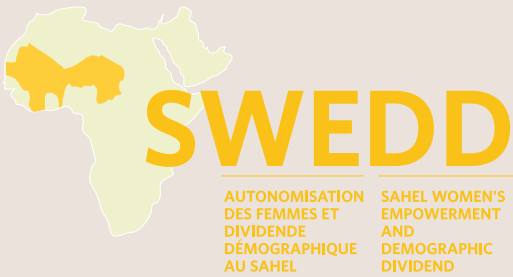
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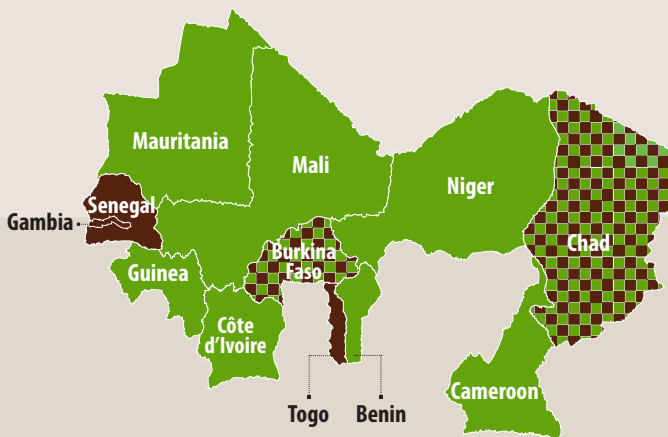
SWEDD SERIES: BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

SAFE SPACES

The research informing this Guide was led by the Population Council and relates to the SWEDD project. The information will guide the implementation of SWEDD+



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■ SWEDD (2015–2024)
 ■ SWEDD+ (2024–2028)
 SWEDD & SWEDD+

The project covers countries in West and Central Africa

Safe Spaces are an intervention model targeting adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), aimed at improving their knowledge, skills and attitudes, particularly concerning reproductive health, gender and human rights, financial capability and economic empowerment. In the SWEDD initiative, Safe Spaces can be implemented in schools and in the community. In the community, Safe Spaces also offer literacy courses for adolescent girls from disadvantaged backgrounds who have never been to school or who have dropped out. A curriculum outlining the themes covered during the meeting sessions is developed, taking account of the socio-cultural realities of each country, and is delivered to beneficiaries by mentors from the community who are well trained in the various themes. This curriculum is one of the fundamental elements for the success of Safe





Spaces¹, and is complemented by the identification and training of mentors², whose role remains one of the most crucial in the development of this activity. The mentors facilitate the learning sessions during the meetings, help to build trust between and with the participants, and help to cultivate the spirit of a space that is safe, where AGYW can express themselves freely.

This Guide aims to offer lessons learned and best practices, and to present the challenges encountered in delivering community Safe Spaces³ during the first phase of the SWEDD project. The implementation experiences documented in this Guide are used to inform the development of Safe Spaces strategies for SWEDD+ and the programming of empowerment techniques for AGYW.

Sample: Experts from 3 SWEDD countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Niger

Main data source: Conversations with key informants on the development, implementation and monitoring-evaluation of Safe Spaces activities. A complementary summary evaluation report and a report on another project were also consulted and informed the Safe Spaces.

Data collection methodology: Qualitative, using a conversation guide drawn up with input from a group of experts

Analysis methodology: Transcripts, audio recordings and notes, analysed manually by the Population Council.

Date: January 2023 (data collection) and February 2023 (data analysis/writing of the Guide)

See the annexes for more details on methodology and sampling.

¹See Guide 3 on Curriculum Development of Safe Spaces for details.

²For more information, see Guide 6 on the role of mentors in safe spaces and the role of facilitators in husbands' clubs/future husbands' clubs.

³This Guide does not provide details of the lessons learned from the implementation of SWEDD School Safe Spaces, but some of the content is relevant given the similarities in model, remit and programme content with Community Safe Spaces.

DESIGNING SAFE SPACES⁴

A period of learning: In most of the SWEDD countries, the Safe Spaces concept was perceived as an entirely new model for the national planning teams, except in the cases of Niger and Burkina Faso. Even though the approach had been documented as best practice for AGYW, the stakeholders had to devise a completely different programmatic approach to what already existed. In 2016, consultants working on SWEDD presented evidence to country governments on the promising practices of interventions focusing on adolescent girls such as Safe Spaces. Each government thus contextualised the Safe Spaces intervention in their SWEDD programming, followed by stakeholder visits to existing Safe Spaces projects, such as ILLIMIN (Knowledge for Dignity) in Niger⁵ to learn more about the overall approach and basic guidelines. The lessons and experiences drawn from these site visits were shared at a workshop. There were also phases of regional consultation between the national members of the Project Management Units (PMUs), the implementing bodies and those responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The support of consultants, regional experts and UNFPA during the Safe Spaces design phase was also necessary to make up for the lack of familiarity on the part of some PMU members.

Safe Spaces planning: The SWEDD teams used mainly local government data as a basis for Safe Spaces planning, modelling their guidelines on studies and analyses of pre-existing documents on global best practice. This planning followed several stages, starting with the development of checklists and forms for startup and supervision. These monitoring tools were numerous. They included forms such as the monthly attendance form for beneficiaries at sessions, pre- and post-tests on curriculum modules and home visit forms (see the full list in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning section). The selection of localities to host the Safe Spaces was based on rigorous criteria using predefined socio-economic criteria, additional studies and suggestions from the communities themselves. National stakeholders were also involved in selecting the locations for the Safe Spaces. Finally, the bodies responsible for implementing the Safe Spaces interventions were chosen by tender. Most were NGOs, except in the case of Mauritania, where implementation was carried out by a consultancy firm, BUMEC (Bureau Mauritanien d'Études et de Conseils).



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⁴ In Niger and Côte D'Ivoire, only one of the informants interviewed for this Guide had been involved in the initial planning and design of the safe spaces.

⁵ According to a UNICEF/UNFPA Niger profile, the contextualisation and local acceptance of the ILLIMIN programme and its objectives were the inspiration for the programming of interventions for adolescent girls in the other SWEDD programme countries.

Key design lessons learned



LESSON 1: Draw on the experience of other projects similar to SWEDD and learn from visits to the project countries, given that the Safe Spaces model may be unfamiliar to certain key actors.

Informants described the importance of drawing on the experience of other existing projects and learning more about how Safe Spaces work, through visits to some SWEDD countries with more experience in planning and/or implementation. Budget and time constraints may limit the number of people who can make country visits, which is why it is important to plan for experience sharing between those who travel and the rest of the team. This can be done by organising feedback workshops. Aware that the Safe Spaces model was limited in the region at the beginning of SWEDD, the Mauritania team had to travel to Zaria, Nigeria, to learn about an example of Safe Spaces called the Centre for Girls' Education (CGE).⁶ The Côte d'Ivoire team travelled to Niger to learn about the ILLIMIN programme. The informants also described the experience gained from using tools from other projects to maximise efficiency. With the ILLIMIN tools already in existence, Niger did not need to design specific tools for the SWEDD Safe Spaces.



ILLIMIN programme tools were used as a guiding framework in the design and planning of the Safe Spaces, as it is the same model as SWEDD.

SWEDD PMU member, Niger



LESSON 2: The national planning team must visit the field regularly before implementation in order to understand the context, meet the communities and develop an environment conducive to Safe Spaces.

Informants in Côte d'Ivoire stressed the importance of the national planning team making regular visits to the field before implementation: *"To produce effective planning, you have to make regular field visits"*, said the SWEDD-Côte d'Ivoire Coordination Unit expert. Engaging with communities is essential in the development of a favourable environment for Safe Spaces, as it is a fairly sensitive intervention in that it is aimed solely at adolescent girls and young women. In Mauritania, informants found that the time available for the identification mission was not sufficient to identify the number of sites needed for the Safe Spaces, which explains the implementation of all 188 Safe Spaces in 100 localities. It has also evident that bringing together several target groups within the same community is a global best practice (Population Council, 2021). **Observation: Reaching a larger proportion of eligible AGYW in one community can have a more lasting impact on families and communities than reaching a smaller number of eligible AGYW in several scattered communities.**

⁶ For more information on the CGE's safe spaces model, visit: <https://centreforgirlseducation.org/safe-space-videos>.



LESSON 3: Throughout the project, and especially during the design phase, engage with additional community actors, in particular traditional and religious leaders in the intervention areas.

Collaboration with local leaders worked well and their involvement was seen as an indispensable aspect of the programme. “The local authorities are the gateway to a village”, said a service provider from an NGO in Côte d’Ivoire. All the informants agreed that the role of community leaders was important not only in the design of the Safe Spaces, but also throughout their implementation and monitoring and evaluation. They also emphasised that the project has also been a factor in changing community leaders’ perceptions of AGYW and their role in society.

Informants described the importance of involving religious and community leaders in communication⁷ and recruitment. In Côte d’Ivoire, religious leaders have been a major help in recruiting communities because they are listened to and followed. They have even been involved in the development of the Safe Spaces strategy. In Mauritania, community and religious leaders played an active role in awareness and advocacy campaigns, which enabled communities to better understand, accept and embrace the idea of Safe Spaces. This was achieved by using verses and examples from the Koran to illustrate to communities that child marriage is not a religious obligation and that birth spacing was not forbidden by religion either. To mark this initiative with concrete actions, religious and community leaders agreed to sign a pledge stating that they would not take part in child marriages; parents in turn signed letters stating their agreement to their adolescent daughters taking part in Safe Spaces activities.



“*The SWEDD project has left its mark on people’s hearts and minds, both at administrative level and among community leaders.*”

Member of the Project Management Unit (PMU), SWEDD Côte d’Ivoire

⁷ Component 1.1 of the SWEDD project concerns Social and Behavioural Change Communication and is led by John Hopkins University. This involves working with religious leaders. See Guide 1 on engaging religious and traditional leaders for more information.



LESSON 4: Select intervention areas and beneficiaries through a systematic review of information.

The informants described the importance of using data, especially statistical and up-to-date local data, to select intervention areas. In addition, according to global best practice, the use of current local information is a key element of an intentional design programme, focused on AGYW in order to *“increase the likelihood that interventions will be implemented with quality and effectiveness and that they will achieve their intended objectives”* (Population Council, 2021). In Mauritania, an independent survey was conducted to help with site selection. *“This survey produced a list of sites with poverty criteria”* (Project management unit expert).



LESSON 5: Avoid the red tape that slows down the approval of planning documents and their implementation.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the informants had to wait for their initial plans, their design documents and all their programme plans to be approved by the project authorities. This took a long time and greatly delayed the progress of activities. They found that *“(t)here was a lot of red tape delaying aid to beneficiaries”* (PMU member, SWEDD-Côte d'Ivoire). They suggest ensuring that not too much time elapses between the enrolment of communities, the recruitment of beneficiaries and the start of programme activities - at the risk of losing many of the AGYW already recruited. In Mauritania, informants described red tape problems at both national and World Bank level. The latter was slow to grant its approval, which also resulted in a delay in the implementation of certain planned activities.

PHASE

2

IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFE SPACES

The implementation of the SWEDD Safe Spaces was characterised firstly by the adaptation of the regional curriculum⁸ to create a national version specific to each country and which would accurately represent the realities of the participants. The next step was to select the communities that would host the programme and the likely AGYW beneficiaries, recruit the mentors⁹ to manage the Safe Spaces and then train them in the basic rules needed to carry out their tasks. The primary role of the mentors is to facilitate the sessions in a healthy and safe environment for the participants. However, they may also manage group dynamics, advise the AGYW, discuss with stakeholders, direct participants to appropriate community resources, and support the AGYW and their families in dealing with socio-economic conflicts that may arise, among others. However, mentors cannot do everything; they need appropriate training, effective supervision and organised coordination with other programme staff to ensure that they have all the tools they need to play their role effectively.



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⁸ Guide 3 is entirely dedicated to the curriculum development process for SWEDD safe spaces.

⁹ For more information on recruiting and training mentors, please consult joint Guide 6, developed with the Equipundo team on mentors and facilitators.

A number of consultations were held with stakeholders and the decentralised authorities in the selected communities to kick start the implementation process. Community leaders actively participated in awareness and advocacy campaigns, which enabled communities to better understand and support the Safe Spaces. In Côte d'Ivoire, "(t)he mobilisation of communities was achieved through major involvement of local public authorities, particularly prefects and sub-prefects and of the customary and religious authorities, especially through the state body governing all the country's religions, ARCIP" (NGO provider).

SWEDD's multi-sector, multi-level approach makes it possible to address multiple aspects of gender transformation programmes. Despite the potential for synergy between the Safe Spaces and other activities, the project elements were sometimes perceived as not being very well integrated with each other. For example, in Niger "(a) real synergy has not been created between the Safe Spaces, the clubs for future husbands and the Vocational Training Centres (CFM)"¹⁰ (evaluation summary report).

KEY IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS LEARNED

Key lessons for the participation and retention of adolescent girls



LESSON 6: Calibrate the number of Safe Spaces and mentors to the size of the community and the target beneficiaries.

It is essential to plan the number of Safe Spaces in a community in line with the size of the adolescent female population in that community. In Côte d'Ivoire, informants stated that village density was not considered when deciding how many Safe Spaces to set up. This was a missed opportunity, as some sparsely populated villages ended up hosting several Safe Spaces while others with a high density received very few. The number of mentors to be recruited¹¹ also depends on the size of the community hosting the programme. Enough mentors to run the sessions are needed. Mentors must be available to assist the girls, listen to them and act as role models. An insufficient number of mentors would increase the demands on them both during and outside of the meetings, thus limiting their availability to all the girls.



LESSON 7: Adapt the schedule of activities to the availability of beneficiaries, especially in peak agricultural periods, in line with best global practice.

The agricultural calendar has a major influence on the availability of AGYW beneficiaries. Hence the importance of taking account of their seasonal needs in order to promote regular participation in Safe Spaces. In Niger, informants described good attendance and a high level of participation by adolescent girls in Safe Spaces outside the harvest period, when absenteeism was at its highest. In Côte d'Ivoire, the agricultural calendar often conflicted with the activities of the Safe Spaces, making the AGYW unavailable. One of the informants said that in response to this, the Safe Spaces managers reorganised the programme with the sessions held at night to enable the participants to attend.

¹⁰ Note: this comment is taken from the evaluation summary report, a document that complements the conversations undertaken for this Guide.

¹¹ For more information on the mentor recruitment process, please consult Guide 6 on mentors and facilitators, developed in partnership with Equimundo.



LESSON 8: Encourage the active participation of AGYW by developing an engaging programme of activities and involving them in the choice of the Safe Space venue.

The informants emphasised the importance of encouraging the participation of AGYW by creating an engaging environment in the Safe Spaces. This recommendation is in line with best practice, which encourages practitioners to use a wide range of strategies to engage participants in sessions. The experts in Mauritania referred to the strategies used to retain beneficiaries. Support for economic integration given to the Safe Spaces participants was used during SWEDD, enabling all participants aged 16 and over who so wished to benefit from training leading to qualifications in various fields (soap production, animal health, dyeing, sewing, dairy processing, baking, etc.). They also received materials and equipment, and business start-up funds.

In the same vein, informants in Côte d'Ivoire suggested continuing to run the sessions with a range of activities. These include singing, games and knitting; introducing images that resemble the participants in the image boxes; and holding community activities such as skits in front of other members of the community to show what they are learning. This role falls in particular to the mentors, who must ensure that the sessions are interactive, dynamic and lively, but also engaging in order to facilitate learning. They must also follow up with participants who miss sessions to learn why they were absent and find an appropriate solution.

In line with global best practice, venues should be chosen based on specific criteria. For example, select locations that are secure and easily accessible to a sufficient number of targeted participants. The informants also thought that when selecting the sites, the adolescent girls should be involved in choosing a place that they would actually go to, i.e. one that was not too far away, accessible, very safe and private. All these conditions combined should create an environment where participants and mentors are free to discuss sensitive subjects. This space should be reserved exclusively for their meetings, where they can develop close friendships, self-confidence and social cohesion in their living environment.

Key lessons for the use of resources and choice of Safe Spaces activities



LESSON 9: Offer a range of opportunities to participants to meet their multiple needs.

To be useful and relevant, Safe Spaces must be seen as an instrument that adds value to the lives of adolescent girls and young women and their communities by adopting a multi-sectoral strategy (Population Council, 2021). Obviously, it is not possible to do everything due to limited resources (budget and time) and the specific aims of the programme. However, the content of the programme and the services offered must focus on the priority needs of adolescent girls and their communities. In light of the challenges of food insecurity in certain regions, informants in Côte d'Ivoire cited the importance of offering snacks and meals to participants. In Mauritania, Safe Spaces activities had been halted because of COVID-19, an unforeseen situation that prompted decision-makers to redirect the budget towards the purchase of basic necessities such as rice, sugar, milk, soap, bleach, etc. These products were distributed to the participants and their families, creating excitement among some parents who finally registered their daughters. To respond effectively to the multiple needs of adolescent girls, Safe Spaces activities could be carried out in conjunction with those of clubs for husbands/clubs for future husbands (CdM/CdFM). Safe Spaces and CdMs/CdFMs must coexist in the same communities to facilitate changes in attitudes and behaviours and have a greater impact on SWEDD project beneficiaries.



“

Participation in Safe Spaces programmes helps teenage girls develop skills to strengthen social cohesion in their villages.

Expert NGO service provider, Ivory Coast

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What does global evidence tell us about safe spaces? The essential elements of safe spaces programmes

- ▶ Up-to-date local information is key to shaping the intentional design of programmes focused on adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), which must be adapted to the target demographic and the specific context.
- ▶ The success and added value of a programme for AGYW require a curriculum tailored to the specific participant demographics (for example, by age), engaging and dynamic sessions, and links to other relevant community resources.
- ▶ Sessions need to be attractive and activities must focus on engaging topics, including access to financial education and potential income-generating activities. In addition, the families of AGYW and their communities should see a benefit in allowing their daughters to participate.
- ▶ An appropriate and achievable Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan will help to confirm that the safe spaces programme is achieving its planned activities and programme objectives, and will strengthen implementation. It will also help to measure the success of your programme by monitoring the types of changes that occur in the lives of the target groups (Population Council 2021).

Common features of successful programmes using young girls' community groups (Temin and Heck 2020)

- ▶ Most of the programmes target single girls aged 13 to 18, both in and out of school.
- ▶ The girls meet weekly in groups of 15 to 25.
- ▶ Almost all programmes use multi-sectoral approaches focusing on life skills and often on economic and financial content, such as financial literacy and micro-savings.
- ▶ Accompanying activities with community members, boys and health services are ongoing.

It is important to have a fairly consistent budget in community programmes to avoid implementation challenges. In Tanzania, during the implementation of the ELA (Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents) programme, which had been successful in the other countries where it had been implemented, the BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) teams encountered several types of difficulty. According to the implementation report, these included a lack of physical space to accommodate all the AGYW, a shortage in the quantity and quality of materials used in the clubs, inadequately trained mentors, and limited capacity for proper monitoring and supervision. This was due to the reduced budget allocated to them. The researchers who evaluated this programme concluded that it would have been a success if it had been implemented as initially planned, without the desire to save money by cutting costs (Tofte, 2023).

In a systematic review (Haberland, McCarthy, and Brady, 2018) identifying lessons learned and gaps in the evidence base, seven of the eight studies reviewed revealed that when **girls were exposed to a programme for a longer period of time the resulting benefits were more evident**. However, these results must be interpreted with caution, as these studies did not use the most rigorous evaluation models available. It should be noted that for many, the degree of exposure to the programme may reflect a selection bias, as the session times were determined by the participants themselves.

References for further information: Haberland, McCarthy and Brady, 2018; Population Council, 2021; Temin and Heck, 2020; Tofte, 2023; and references not cited above, Austrian and Ghati, 2010; FPHIP, 2022



LESSON 10: Ensure an adequate budget to design the programme.

The Safe Spaces model is often perceived as being cheaper than other programmatic models. However, too small a budget can be a risk in terms of achieving the desired impact. Devising a realistic budget based on available cost information is essential for ensuring coverage of the basics.¹² In Niger, informants described the importance of a proper valuation of the cost of essential activities and *"budgeting accordingly so that these activities can be implemented effectively"* (NGO provider, Niger). They also suggested that, resources permitting, the duration of the programme should be extended, as suggested in the literature, from a 7-month cycle to a 10-month cycle to enable the AGYW to better absorb the programme content. Suggestions to lengthen the programme are not always realistic, but care must be taken to avoid having a programme that is too short and too simple. An appropriate, well-crafted budget can also cover all the costs associated with running the programme, including the payments to the staff involved, such as mentors and supervisors, and the costs of running the Safe Spaces.



The cycle of the modular sessions should be extended - 28 sessions in 07 months is a lot to assimilate; it could be adjusted to 10 months.

NGO provider, Niger

¹² For more information on the costs of Safe Spaces, see Sewall-Menon et al, 2012; Ebbeler, 2009.

PHASE 3

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

The informants commented on the most important MEL components, mainly relating to data collection during the Safe Spaces interventions and the monitoring techniques put in place to measure the effectiveness of the interventions, the programme, and the mentors. For example, an expert from Côte d'Ivoire observed that the results frameworks for Safe Spaces interventions were established through existing evidence and regional recommendations. Monitoring committees were organised by the communities to carry out monitoring, and organise visits to the Safe Spaces. According to the informants, the individual interviews and/or focus groups with local stakeholders (village chief, parents) that the supervisors organised during their monthly monitoring missions were an essential source of data. Decentralised bodies of the various ministries were also involved in monitoring community Safe Spaces. Beyond enabling the various PMUs of the SWEDD project to monitor and feed into several aspects of the programme, monthly reporting also meant that the progress of the participants could be monitored and the effectiveness of the programme and the mentors noted. A respondent from Côte d'Ivoire pointed out that a qualitative analysis of the participants had identified the AGYW who had shown progress and whose capacities had been genuinely enhanced.

In Niger, a number of tools had been developed to guide and document the monitoring data, as displayed in the box. Mauritania put in place a monitoring mechanism to collect data on adolescent girls' attendance at Safe Spaces and the impact of the knowledge acquired on their daily lives.

Example of monitoring tools used by the implementing NGO in Niger

The forms for:

- ▶ Monthly attendance at sessions (monthly)
- ▶ PRE-TEST evaluation of modules I, II, III and IV in the initial stages of the programme and POST TEST of the same modules at the end of each one
- ▶ Monitoring of family planning for sexually active girls (monthly)
- ▶ Home visits (monthly)
- ▶ Monitoring girls' ASSETS (quarterly)
- ▶ Monitoring of savings plans (quarterly)
- ▶ Admission of girls to the programme (as soon as they are recruited)
- ▶ Modular sessions after each session (monthly)

A table with data on:

- ▶ Attendance of girls at sessions (monthly)
- ▶ Summary of savings plans (weekly)
- ▶ Summary of home visits (after each visit)



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KEY LESSONS LEARNED IN MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

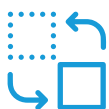


LESSON 11: Give adolescent girls and young women an active role in monitoring, including through qualitative contributions.

Respondents in Côte d'Ivoire suggested adding a monitoring tool that would involve AGYW themselves because *"the adolescent girls and young women who participate are one of the surest ways of evaluating your programme"* (NGO provider, Côte d'Ivoire). All the informants agreed on the importance of having quantitative and qualitative measures in the monitoring and evaluation process in order to engage the AGYW. In Côte d'Ivoire, it was suggested that qualitative data collection could shed light on participants' opinions. The recommendation to involve adolescent girls directly in monitoring, evaluation and learning is consistent with the "Meaningful involvement and partnership of adolescent girls and young women" approach as displayed in the box below.

Meaningful engagement and partnership of adolescents and young people means an inclusive, intentional and mutually respectful partnership between adolescents, young people and adults. Through meaningful engagement and partnership approach with adolescents and young people, power is shared, respective contributions are valued and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are incorporated into the design and implementation of programmes. This approach recognises young people as experts in their needs and focuses on developing their leadership skills.

For more information, visit <https://www.fphighimpactpractices.org/guides/meaningful-adolescent-and-youth-engagement/>



LESSON 12: Measure changes in the community in addition to changes in adolescent girls and young women.

In Côte d'Ivoire, it was suggested that the communities themselves should be involved in reflecting the changes brought about by the programme. In Niger, informants expressed a preference for measuring changes in adolescent girls at the community level: *"It would have been interesting to measure changes in mentality and behaviour at community level as a result of the participation of adolescent girls in Safe Spaces"* (NGO provider, Niger).



LESSON 13: Use the lessons learned from MEL throughout implementation to avoid potential problems and inform programme decisions.

Ongoing real-time learning was not integrated into the monitoring and evaluation system from the outset in any of the countries. As a result, it was not possible to leverage the monitoring information to remedy the problems identified, or to make adjustments as the interventions moved forward. In Niger, for example, there was no data collection to measure changes in community perceptions of Safe Spaces participants, and no data collection to assess changes in the learning of participating AGYW. Pre-tests were organised by the NGO managing implementation covering different cohorts, but post-tests could not be carried out.

Monitoring and evaluation must be conducted on a regular basis. One shouldn't have to wait until the end of the activity to start a monitoring and evaluation process. It will be absolutely necessary to engage in regular monitoring.

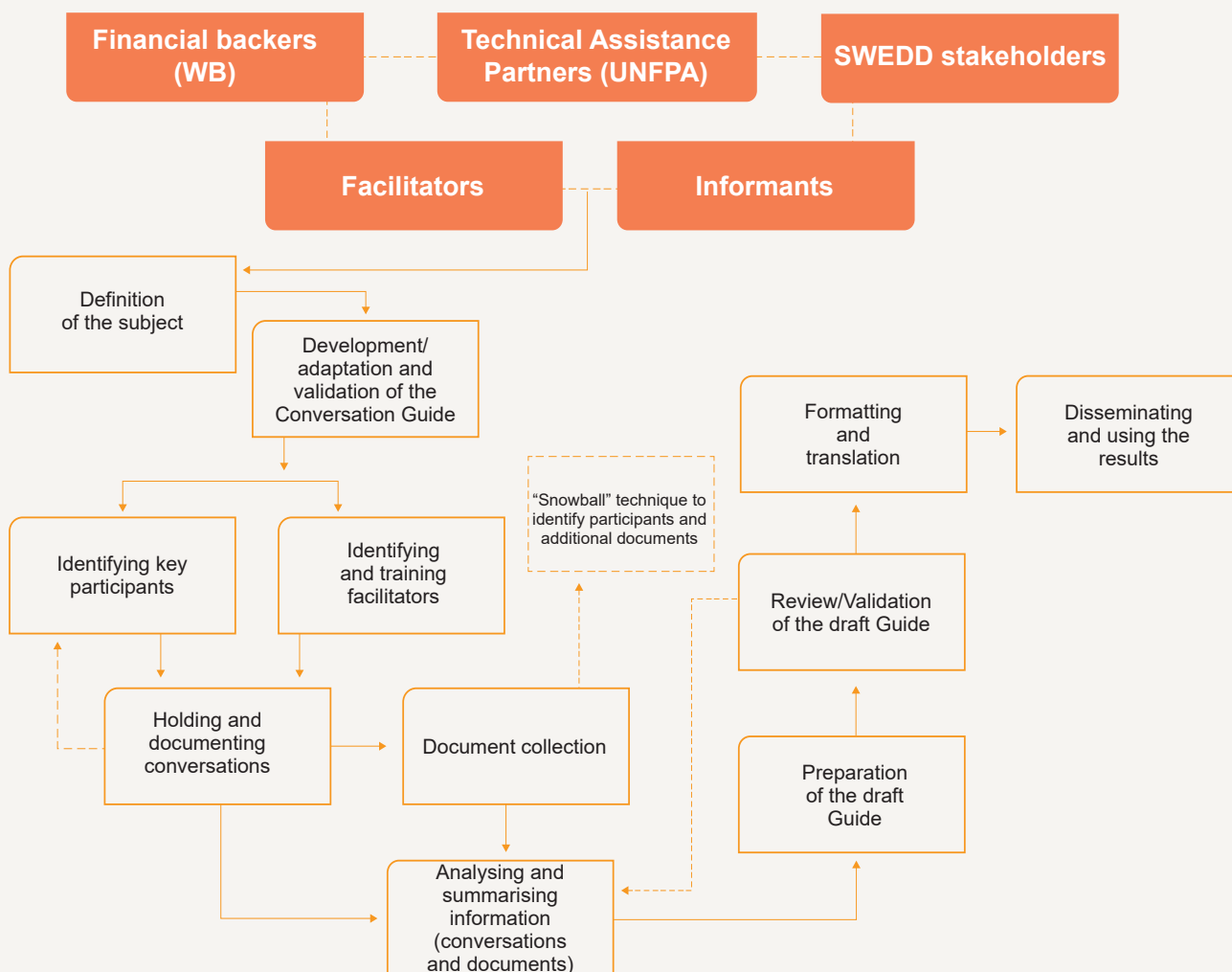
SWEDD Project Management Unit expert, Mauritania

SUMMARY OF KEY LESSONS

Phase 1: Design and planning	1	Draw on the experience of other projects similar to SWEDD and learn from visits to the project countries, given that the Space Spaces model may be unfamiliar to certain key actors.
	2	The national planning team must visit the field regularly before implementation in order to understand the context on the ground, meet the communities and develop an environment conducive to Safe Spaces.
	3	Throughout the project, and especially during the design phase, engage with additional community actors, in particular traditional and religious leaders in the intervention areas.
	4	Select intervention areas and beneficiaries through a systematic review of information.
	5	Avoid the red tape that slows down the approval of planning documents and their implementation.
Phase 2: Implementation of Safe Spaces	6	Calibrate the number of Safe Spaces and mentors to the size of the community and the target beneficiaries.
	7	Adapt the schedule of activities to the availability of beneficiaries, especially in peak agricultural periods, in line with best global practice.
	8	Encourage the active participation of adolescent girls and young women by developing an engaging programme of activities and involving them in the choice of the Safe Space venue.
	9	Offer a range of opportunities to participants to meet their multiple needs.
	10	Ensure an adequate budget to design the programme.
Phase 3: Monitoring, evaluation and learning	11	Give adolescent girls and young women an active role in monitoring, including through qualitative contributions.
	12	Measure changes in the community in addition to changes in adolescent girls and young women.
	13	Use the lessons learned from MEL throughout implementation to avoid potential problems and inform programme decisions.

ANNEX 1: Methodology and sampling

I. The process followed to carry out the documentation exercise and collect the data



II. Data sources

1 The information was gathered through key informant interviews in three SWEDD countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Niger): these informants do not represent a systematic sample, but are a “a convenience sample using accessible experiences from the three countries”. They also make it possible to make the most of SWEDD's existing capacity.

2 An evaluation summary document was also consulted as an additional source for the information gathered from informants in Niger, and an ILLIMIN project report was also consulted.

III. Sampling

The sample of country informants includes: 1 officer from a technical support ministry, 3 members of the implementing NGOs, and 5 members of the country Project Management Units (PMUs).

IV. Data collection methodology

Potential respondents were identified by contacting the PMU coordinators. The coordinators provided a list of potential respondents, based on their involvement in Safe Spaces activity. The informants were contacted directly by the facilitators to organise the conversations. The conversations took place face-to-face (or virtually if face-to-face was not at all possible) and were recorded by the facilitators using personal recording devices.

The facilitators used a conversation guide - developed by the technical partner - during the conversations with the informants. The conversation guide includes a series of questions designed to guide the conversation. A Training Guide was created for the training of facilitators, who were trained in the use of the conversation guide before their first conversation.

V. Analysis methodology

A Summary Guide was created to help facilitators consolidate notes from all their conversations with informants (notes taken directly from the conversation guide). Based on each summary guide, an overall summary of the conversations was created by the technical partner. The overall summary was used as the basis for creating an outline for the Best Practice Guide. Notes from the conversation guides were used to supplement each section of the note, where necessary.

ANNEX 2: Table of people consulted

Key informants	Country
2 SWEDD and government representatives 1 NGO representative	Côte d'Ivoire
1 representative of the National Ministry of Education 2 SWEDD representatives	Mauritania
2 NGO representatives 1 SWEDD representative	Niger

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This Guide is one of a series that retrospectively documents the process of implementing the interventions of the SWEDD project, and documents good practices, challenges and lessons learned. The "Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend" (SWEDD) project was launched in November 2015 with financial support from the World Bank, and technical support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the West African Health Organisation (WAHO). SWEDD aims to accelerate the demographic transition, trigger the demographic dividend and reduce gender inequalities in the Sahel. The motivation for this series is the fact that SWEDD has become a strategic framework for political decision-makers, opinion leaders (traditional and religious chiefs, and other community leaders), and the community to work together on issues considered sensitive in the region. This is why it was considered important to share the processes through which the project was developed. This includes descriptions of experiences, lessons learned and recommendations. This evidence could be used to enrich interventions in SWEDD+ and other initiatives on gender equality and the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women.

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