Breaking the barriers between researchers, interviewers and populations in DSS

A participatory approach on reporting results back to participants

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What is at stake

- **Increasing number of DSS sites**

- **A DSS is a scientific platform:**
    - **Longitudinal follow-up**
    - **Additional studies/interventions**

- **A heavy operation and constant research activity with potential drawbacks:**
    - **Populations' fatigue, sometimes exasperation**

Ma question est la suivante: elle a interrompu tous mes travaux pour faire son travail et par ses questions j'ai encore, pour donner des réponses, dévoilé ma vie privée en partie et je me demande dans tout ça qu'est ce que je peux attendre d'elle ou de son travail?

Est ce que tu vas faire comme les autres [chercheurs], une fois que tu auras fini ton travail tu vas partir et on ne saura jamais ce que tu as fait avec ces informations qu'on te donne?

(extraits d'entrevue de 1999, Niakhar, Sénégal)

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Main issues

- **Scientific issues**

  - Ensure the continuity of DSS activities
  - Ensure the quality of the answers

- **Ethical issues:**

  - The right of populations to have access to the results
  - Ensure that they will benefit from the scientific activities

Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:**

  It is the lack of information or perceived lack of information that lead to populations' weariness

- **Hypothesis 2:**

  Researchers' attempts to better inform have not always succeeded because they do not master the local communication channels and norms properly

Objectives

- **Identify the information which should be reported back**

- **Identify the appropriate communication tools to make the information understandable <u>directly</u> by the populations**

- **Design a communication process which can be repeated**

The DSS sites under study

	Niakhar (Sen.)	Bandafassi (Sen.)	Nouna (Burkina)	Ouaga (Burkina)
Institution	IRD, Fr.	INED, Fr.	CRSN, BF	ISSP, BF
Start	1983	1974	1992	2002
Area	30 vill.	42 vill.	52 vill 7 sectors	2 neighb.
Int. visits	quaterly	yearly	3 times/y	quaterly

Data and methods

- **Qualitative**
- **Focus groups and individual interviews**
- **Using the same interview guide**

DSS sites	Nb villages	Individual interviews		Group discussions			Nb interv.
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Both	
Niakhar	30	28	11	14	13	9	75
Bandafassi	26			9	5	13	27
Nouna	19	41	22	10	5	1	79
Ouaga	2	13	16	1	1		31

Results (1): questions, topics

Reactions …	… to certain questions	because… (interpretation)
Not understandable; meaningless	Entry / exits Household composition	Routine; no major changes between visits *(esp. Niakhar, Nouna, Ouaga)*
Embarrassing	Fertility (sexuality) Households' assets	Local socio-cultural norms, traditions
Annoyance, anger	**Verbal autopsies**, health issues, households' assets	Situation of economic and health vulnerability; poverty *(esp. Bandafassi, Ouaga)*

Results (2): understanding the research process ...

- **In general: <u>perceptions</u> of no or poor information about the DSS activities**

Results (2): understanding the research process *and motivations to answer*

- **In general: <u>perceptions</u> of no or poor information about the DSS activities**

- **However respondents rarely ask questions about it…**

- **… but they still continue to answer because:**

  - 1- hopes to see more health programs implemented and their situation improve

  - 2- relationships with interviewers (esp. in rural sites)

  - 3- feelings of inferiority

  - 4- skilled interviewers who know how to convince

Interviewers as the key actors?

Questions were asked to a woman about her child's death. She refused to answer. We had to ask the [interpreter] to convince her. She said she didn't want to remember. <u>She finally answered but it was not her choice</u>
(group of men in a village in the Bandafassi area)

Convincing respondents

<u>*People are pushed to answer so at the end, they do not answer properly to the questions.*</u> *But thanks to the relationships existing between us [the interviewers] and the respondents we can get the answers… (…)*

Relations betw. interviewers & respondents

<u>…The real issue is not there. They do not care for explanations.</u> We must show with the explanations that the population is gaining something concrete with the surveys (an interviewer in Niakhar).

What do respondents expect?

How should we proceed?

- **Strictly reporting back the results: not the best idea**

- **A more 'educational' content:**
  - About the community's demographic history
  - About the research process itself, esp. issues related to the long time frame constraint
  - Ensuring that they relate the DSS scientific activities to (some of) the interventions conducted in the DSS

Results (3): how to report back?

New urban site
- Not much data
- Fieldworkers unknown
by the populations

'Old' rural sites
- Lots of data
- Many interventions
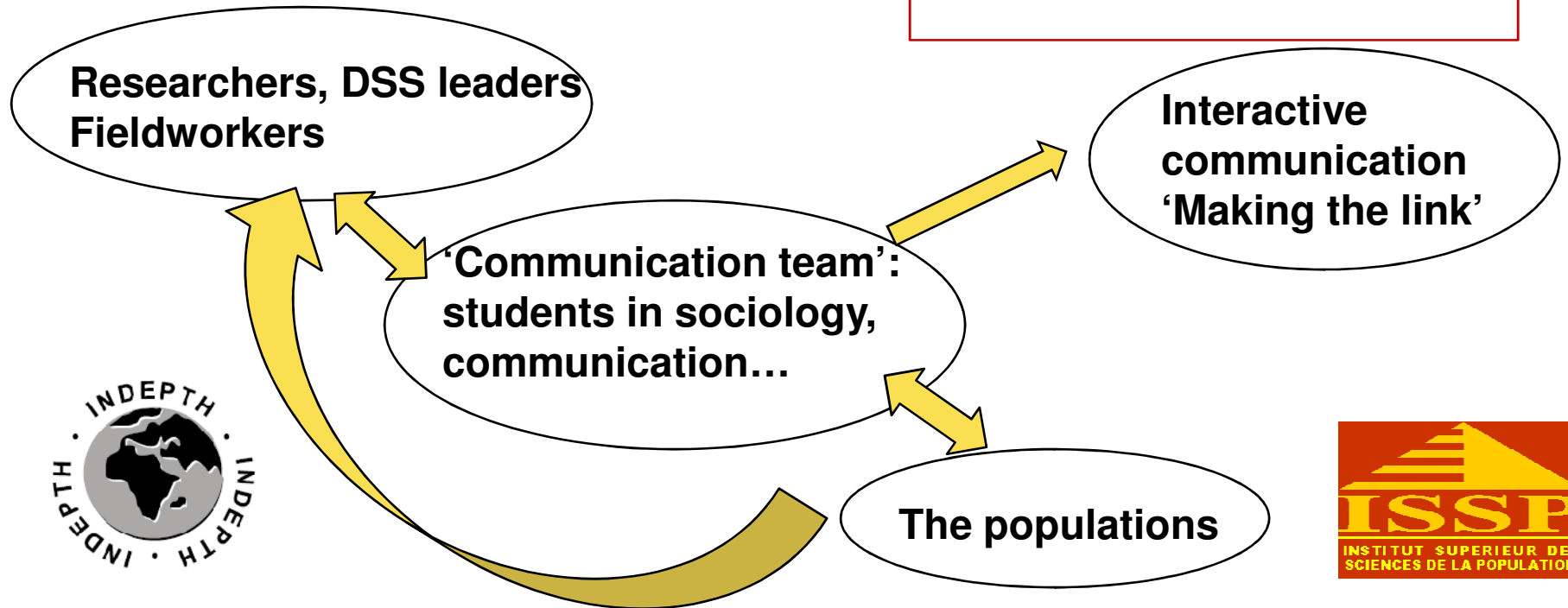- Fieldworkers from the area

'Educational' approach
- Explain the research process
- Links with interventions

'Educational' approach
                    +
Community's demographic
and health trends

**Researchers, DSS leaders
Fieldworkers**

**Interactive
communication
'Making the link'**

**'Communication team':
students in sociology,
communication...**

The populations

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Conclusions

- **Beyond reporting scientific results back, a learning approach:**
  - **In two directions:**
    - from the DSS teams (leaders AND fieldworkers) to the populations
    - and from the populations to the DSS teams
  - **While designing the communication activities and with the final product**

- **Steps forward:**
  - Several sites are making efforts in these directions
  - Evaluate such communication activities
  - No 'compensation' but include 'small actions' showing the DSS team's concerns to people's situations