

PROJEUNES WATCHDOG 2018-2021

PREVENTING EARLY, CHILD AND FORCED MARRIAGE
IN BENIN



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Main Objective

ProJeunes aims to promote adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRHR) and adolescent/youth rights in Benin, including the prevention of child, early and forced marriages (CEFM).

Background

Like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Benin has a young population, with 48% of the population under 15. These young people, particularly adolescent girls, face significant challenges related to sexual and reproductive health. 37% of women are married before the age of 18, while 20% of girls aged 15-19 have given birth at least once.

Partners

ProJeunes is a partnership between CARE, the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) and the Government of Benin. Youth organizations were also involved during the project. This project is funded by Global Affairs Canada (Government of Canada).

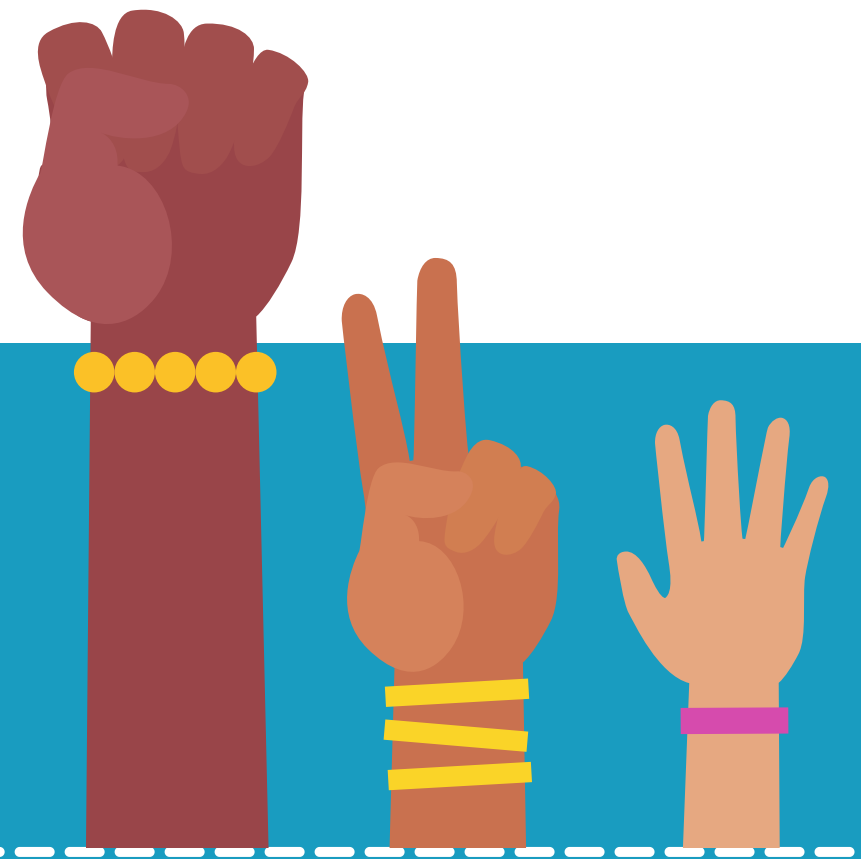
YCSRR's Role

The YCSRR is one of the co-leads of the project. The organization works to empower benenise youths in relations to their sexual and reproductive health and rights in Benin through capacity strengthening, awareness building, and advocacy.



TIMELINE

2018



OCTOBER

The first activity of the project consists of multi-participatory stakeholder consultations with 25 participants from youth organizations on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and early and forced marriage in the north of Benin, particularly in Parakou.

An indicator document was developed to monitor the progress of this project.

DECEMBER

Following a request for letters of intent in the newspaper La Nation concerning secondary grant projects, the Youth Parliament of Benin (PJB) and the West African Network of Young Women Leaders (ROAJELF) were selected.





2019

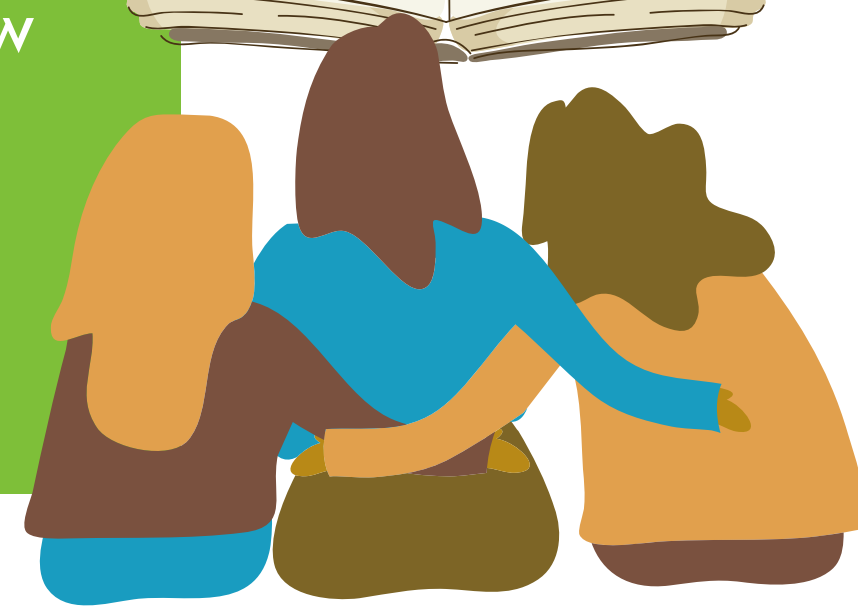


JUNE - AUGUST

Facilitation of advocacy training for youth in Benin, including six youth organizations. Followed by a selection process of three participants for ICPD+25. Marked by an invitation to UNFPA to collaborate on the post-ICPD event.

JULY - DECEMBER

Collaborative activities with PJB and ROAJELF, the first one an awareness campaign and then the creation of a comic strip for and by Beninese youth on the MPFE. Two consultants were recruited to evaluate and follow up these activities.



NOVEMBRE

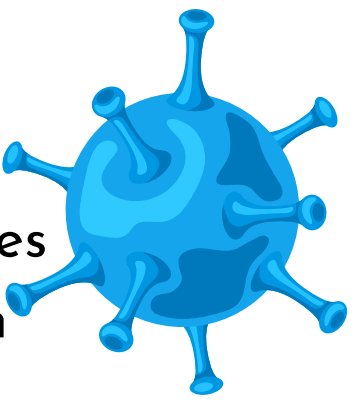
ICPD+25 was held at Keyna, and three Beninese youth participated in the activity, representing three organizations: PJB, ROAJELF and Jeunes Volontaires pour la Santé (JVS). The youth who participated in the ICPD created and shared an advocacy slam on the MPFE at the event. Following the activity there was a post ICPD conference to share with youth and stakeholders the findings and conclusions of the ICPD. There was also an appearance of this activity on a Beninese television station.





2020

Due to the pandemic, activities were reviewed in May 2020.

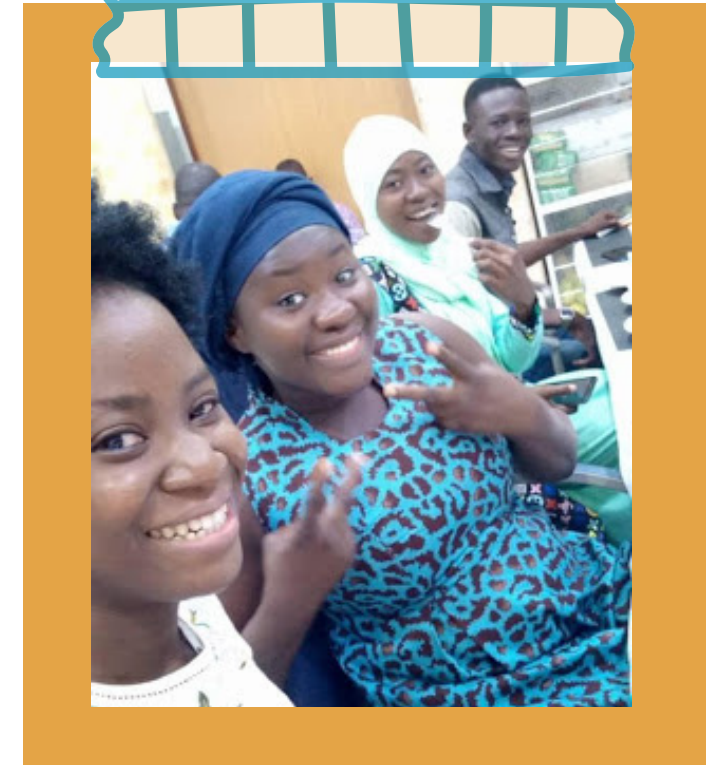


AUGUST

DECEMBER

Workshops on SRHR advocacy for youth in Cotonou, and the chance to participate in the 26th Youth Assembly. Ten participants were able to attend a workshop on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and worked together to draft an advocacy plan by and for Beninese youth.

Four capacity building workshops were facilitated for 12 youth organizations in Cotonou and Parakou. The sessions covered resource mobilization, including funding and research, feminism and intersectionality, advocacy on SRHR and the power and role of youth.

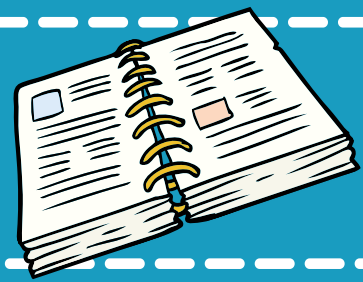


WORKSHOP IN PARAKOU

WORKSHOP IN COTONOU



2021



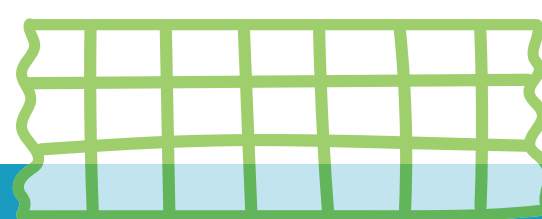
JANUARY

Youth in Benin worked together to develop an advocacy guide on SRHR, by and for young people in Benin. YCSRR then provided a grant to the Yonba Organization for the implementation of this advocacy guide.



FEBRUARY

The SRHR Advocacy Guide is completed and advocacy activities are being implemented by the Yonba Organization and a team of youth. A grant is given to EACEB for the creation of artwork on the MPFE and the art exhibition.



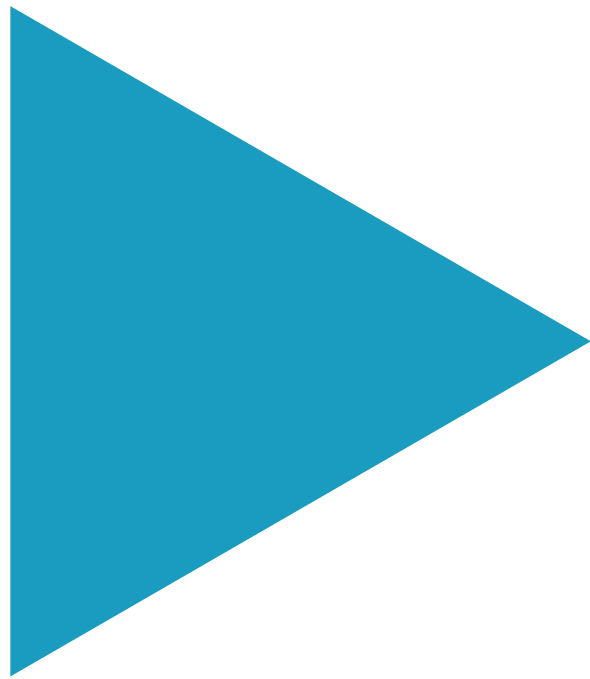
MARCH

The YCSRR sent art materials to 20 young people in Benin from the north to create an exhibition of artwork. On March 27th, all the participants of Projeunes over the last three years are invited to a closing conference for this project.



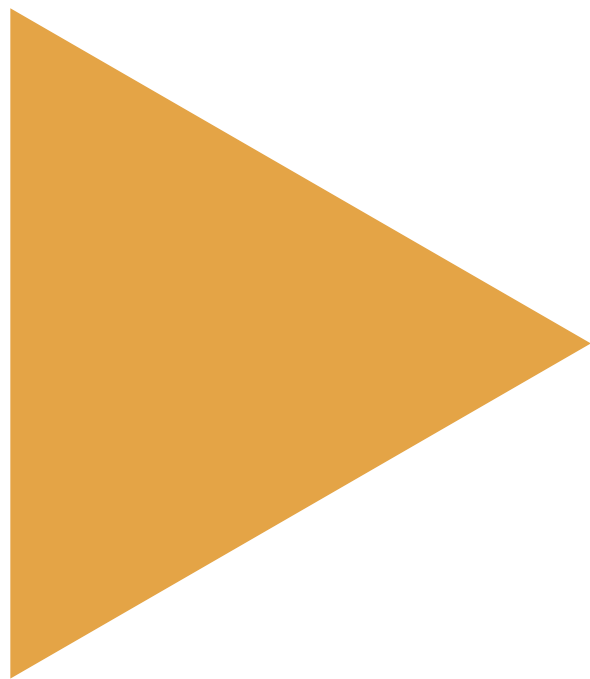
SUCCESSSES

Immediate Outcomes




Initially, girls at risk or affected by MEPF in Alibori and Borgou have increased access to sexual and reproductive health services, followed by strengthening the protection of adolescent girls' rights in these two villages. Finally, there has been a strengthening of government and civil society policies and programs that respond to MEPF, gender-based violence, and adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Successes for Young People in Benin



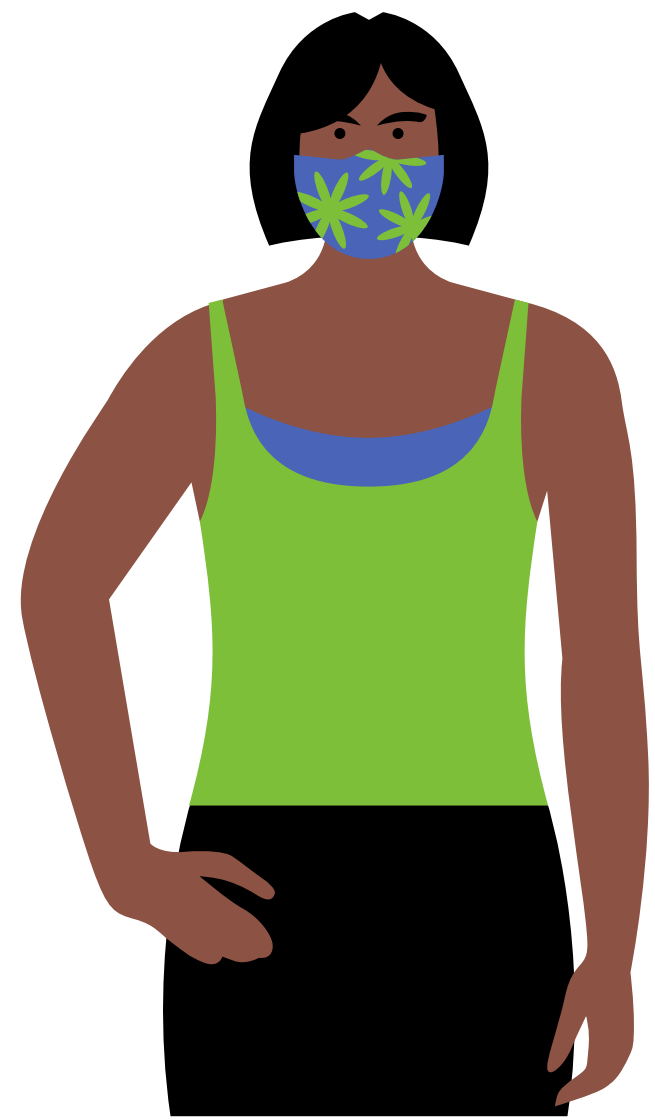
Four projects have been created, directed and implemented by youth in Benin through grant channels. Youth organizations participated in three advocacy trainings and a capacity building workshop on SRHR, feminism, intersectionality, funding, and research. Finally, three young people from Benin had the chance to introduce themselves to international events, namely ICPD25 and the post-ICPD25 conference.

Successes for YCSRR



The Youth Coalition was able to create links with more than 15 different youth organizations, as well as mobilize more than 50 young SRHR activists in Benin. With these activities, YCSRR promoted the active participation of Beninese youth during this project from beginning to end.

CHALLENGES



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, activities and budget had to be reviewed several times, and security measures had to be put in place during activities. Due to the interruption of travel in Benin, communication with Beninese youth had to be done mostly on Whatsapp, but the internet connection sometimes brought difficulties for communication. The political instability in the country during the three years of this project resulted in some trips being postponed and reorganized.

In addition, the Youth Coalition does not have a full team of staff in Benin, which has had impacts on the project, including a lack of communication and leadership among partners.



Some financial requirements of the donor have brought challenges in the organization and implementation of some activities. That being said, several bids for grants did not meet the requirements, so only two grants were selected.



Some messages from youth...

“
I AM VERY PROUD TO SERVE MY
COMMUNITY THROUGH ADVOCACY
AND PROUD OF PROTEUNES.

-INÈS

“
THE ADVOCACY TRAINING
AND YOUTH ASSEMBLY
WAS TRULY INFORMATIVE
AND IMPRESSIVE.

-CARINE

“
I HAVE BEEN VERY POSITIVELY
IMPACTED IN TERMS OF MY
ABILITY TO INTERVENE AND
PARTICIPATE IN YOUTH
ORGANIZATIONS.

- INGRID

“
THANKS TO THE
PROTEUNES PROJECT, I
GAINED MULTIPLE
THEORETICAL
EXPERIENCES IN
ADVOCACY. I ALSO HAD
THE CHANCE TO
PRACTICE IN THE FIELD.

- BARIZATH

“
I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE
YOUTH COALITION FOR THIS
PROJECT WHICH HAS HAD A
GREAT PERSONAL IMPACT ON
ME.

-YANNIK



AN OVERVIEW OF PROJEUNES

BY KIFAYATH TOKO CHABI

"Today we are talking about Projeunes, which is an initiative of Care Canada in partnership with the Youth Coalition. This initiative started as early as April 2018 and will continue until March 2021, when it will be properly evaluated.

1:36

This activity taught me the importance of fighting the differences in youth abuse today, whether it be in relation to climate, sexual and reproductive health, or especially in relation to early and forced child marriage. From this aspect, I was able to learn more about my leadership, which allowed me to network much more with other young people, both from Benin as well as from other countries in West and North Africa. Through this activity, we were also trained on advocacy; the importance of advocacy, how to do it and how to practice it. It is an initiative that has allowed many young Beninese to be truly involved in the realization of the struggle that is being prevented for adolescent girls and youth here in Benin. Thanks to this project, there have been massive reductions in cases of forced marriages in areas of Benin, mainly [in] the areas of northern Benin. The advocacy led by the youth in these areas of northern Benin and today has made it possible to achieve key objectives in relation to this project"

-Kifayath TOKO CHABI (Youth Activist DSSRAJ)

PROJECT IMPACT ON AYOUBA AND EUPHROSINE



When I came to this workshop I only saw my usual activities revolving around recalling the concepts already acquired and updating the content, this workshop also started with the basics in SRHR. But so many important elements were added, namely new knowledge acquired in the field of SRHR promotion. This was the very first step of collaboration between BARIKA Association and the Youth Coalition, but it was a strong capitalization of new knowledge, both on advocacy techniques, youth power, gender, feminism and intersectionality. These newly acquired experiences have allowed me and my team to carry out our advocacy project for the fight against MEPF and how to respond to the basic principle of leaving no one behind. It is an experience that I wish to repeat and I think it is important to extend it to other youth organizations for a more productive intervention.

- Ayouba Orou Gounous
(Association Barika)

The advocacy training organized by the Youth Coalition in Benin was the beginning of a story for me with a great experience. It allowed me to learn about advocacy issues in general and SRHR in particular. The training taught me how to write an advocacy plan, how to write a budget and how to write sample media advocacy messages. It also allowed me to go deep into my country, into the most remote villages, to see firsthand the realities of forced and early marriages. It was also an opportunity for me to meet women who were truly victims and affected by this phenomenon. I was truly amazed during my exchanges with women who have suffered with this.

- Euphrosine OGOUTEIBO



ANSELME AND CARINE'S TESTIMONIALS

"I think if I have to talk about a story that embodies change, I would talk about the impact that [the ProJeune project] has had on my organization. What has impacted me the most is the change we can bring to our community. I feel that through this training, we now have the skills and assets to implement advocacy actions that will bring real change. I am the change now. I work to advocate and I will work to make decisions that will positively affect youth. The training allowed us to better understand the issues of advocacy and lobbying on early and forced marriage, especially in key areas of Benin. After the training, we strengthened our actions in these areas to better fight against early and forced marriage and gender equality. Now, working in the most at-risk and affected areas is one of our priorities. As young activists, we have a lot of work to do. We need to strengthen our skills to better defend our rights because knowing our rights is being able to enforce our rights."

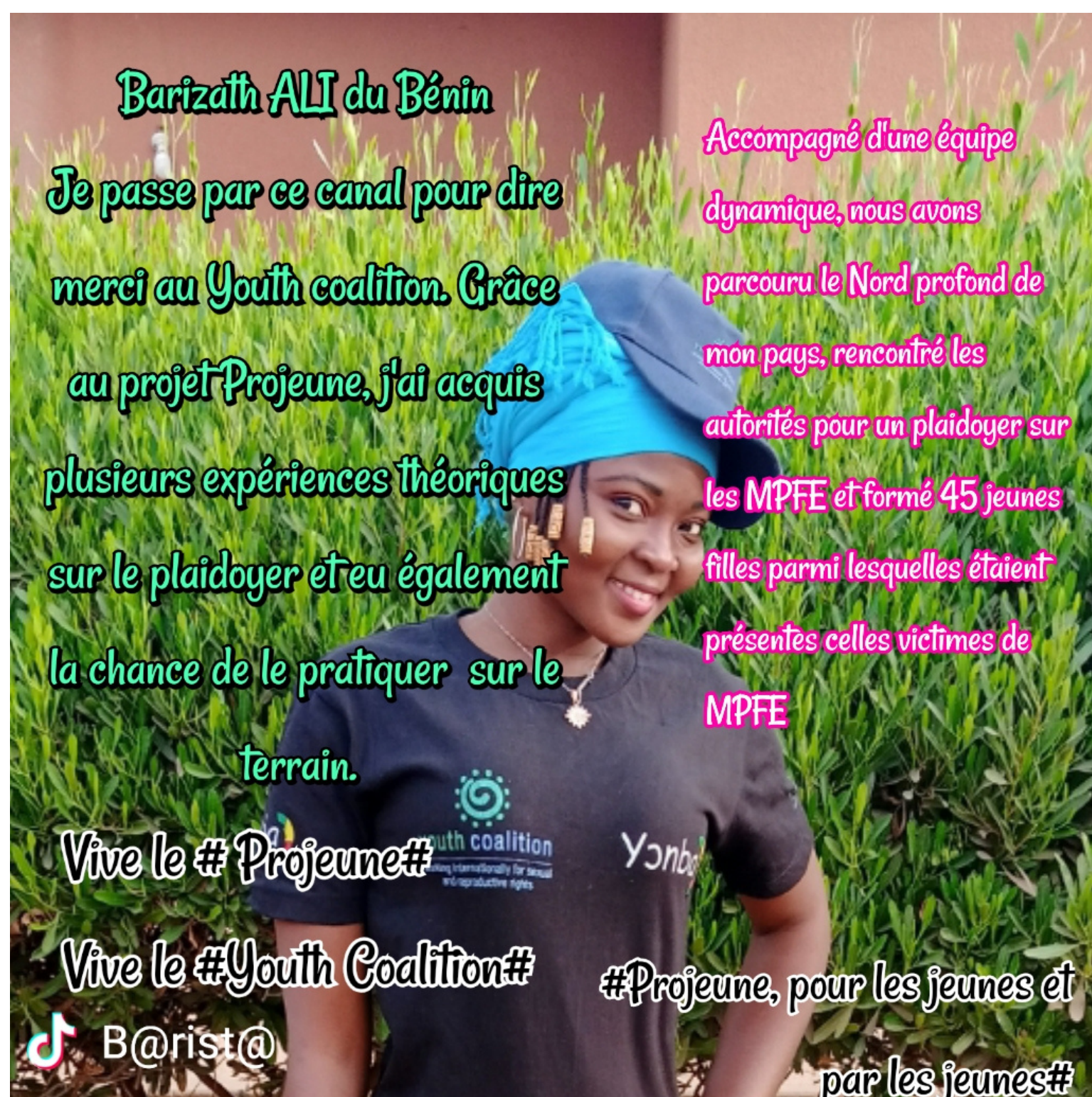
-Anselme Sènan Kossouho, Youth Volunteers for Health (JVS)

These times are some of the richest moments of sharing experiences and information that I have had in my life. I learned a lot of things that I shared with my community on the following themes: advocacy, peace, sustainable development, early and forced marriage, and SRHR. Indeed, these different themes allowed me to understand my roles and values in society and in the development of the world. After this rich assembly, I had the motivation and courage to participate in information and experience sharing sessions with other youth in my community. I also had the opportunity to participate in other training and conferences related to the topics discussed during this 26th Assembly. As well, I had the pleasure of being part of the team that wrote the advocacy guide with the necessary information, themes, and solutions to sensitize the youth on several topics.

-Carine ADJASSA, VIA-ME



BARIZATH, LAFIA AND YANICK'S TESTIMONIALS



Barizath ALI du Bénin

Je passe par ce canal pour dire
merci au Youth coalition. Grâce
au projet Projeune, j'ai acquis
plusieurs expériences théoriques
sur le plaidoyer et eu également
la chance de le pratiquer sur le
terrain.

Accompagné d'une équipe
dynamique, nous avons
parcouru le Nord profond de
mon pays, rencontré les
autorités pour un plaidoyer sur
les MPFE et formé 45 jeunes
filles parmi lesquelles étaient
présentes celles victimes de
MPFE

Vive le #Projeune#
Vive le #Youth Coalition#
#Projeune, pour les jeunes et
par les jeunes#

B@rist@

Barizath Ali (Association Africa Shine)



Through the ProJeunes project, I participated in several trainings on advocacy, resource mobilization, and sexual rights. After these trainings, I participated in the drafting of a mini-project and the implementation of the advocacy project in the communes of Segbana, Karimama and Malanville. During this project, I had the chance to train young girls on comprehensive sexual education, and finally I brought an advocacy message to the authorities of these communes on behalf of young girls who are victims of FGM. My dream is that by 2022, I will be among those who have reduced FGM in Northern Benin. Thank you to the ProJeunes project and the Youth Coalition for this beautiful experience!

- Lafia Houchamou BIO YERIMA
(président MAJ/ABPF Région Nord-Est)

Personally, I got to know the Youth Coalition's ProJeunes project through the capacity building that we had in Cotonou in December 2020. It was a great opportunity not only to get to know other young activists like me, whom I did not know, but also to have important tools for successful advocacy, fundraising and other interesting topics. It was also a great opportunity to get clarification on SRHR, feminism and intersectionality. Writing the current guidebook, which is my first experience in terms of writing a guidebook, greatly enhances my creative and innovative skills. I would like to thank the Youth Coalition for this project that has personally impacted me and a special thanks to Caro for her efforts to make Benin's youth more informed and vibrant.

- Yanick Zountchegbe (WAACIS)

MELODY'S EXPERIENCE



0:52

"I'm Melody, it's a pleasure for me to make this video today through the Youth Coalition. I can say that, thanks to this project, it has helped me personally in my professional life to have self-confidence, to be able to take responsibility for myself as a trans woman, and to know my sexual and reproductive rights. I am very happy to have participated in this project, because it has allowed a great evolution within the trans community, especially in Benin, and it has allowed transgender people to be able to take care of themselves, to know the law and to know how to behave. Thank you to the Youth Coalition, thank you to everyone [who participated] and may the fight continue! Thank you."

-Melody Queen (Synergie trans Benin)

TESTIMONIALS FROM ESTHER AND INÈS



I am very proud. Thanks to the program, I have seen a reduction in early and forced marriages in Alibori. I have really seen a real change. JS3 works in two different communities from ProJeunes, which helps each other and increases our targets for change. Having similar goals related to early and forced marriages, I can say that we complement each other a bit in the fight in Alibori. I can even say that I also promote the Youth Coalition and the ProJeunes project, because I really see their veracity and importance on the ground.


- Esther

This experience has really changed the way I interact with people in authority. In fact, today I finally feel like I can face the eyes of authority. Before, I couldn't express myself well in front of big leaders. I was more comfortable in front of the youth and the grassroots. But because of everything I learned and experienced through ProJeunes, I learned what to say, how to say it, when to say it, and how not to get stressed out in the process. I learned how to say things clearly and in a better way.

- Inès

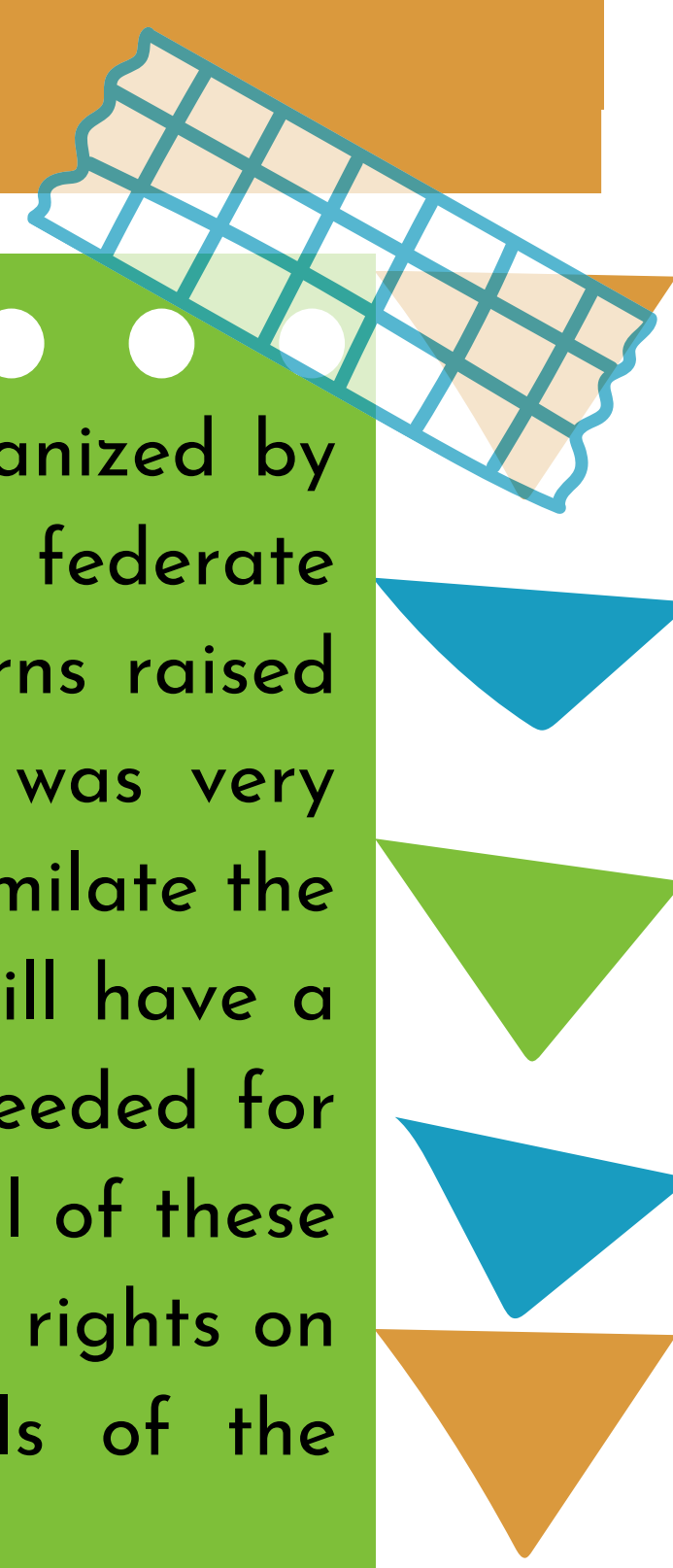


PROJECT IMPACT ON ABDOU, TATIANA AND INGRID



When we hear or read about ProJeunes, the highlights of this project come to life with their own set of fond memories. We remember as if it were yesterday the Skype discussions and the meeting with the Youth Coalition leaders and we still relive the pleasure we felt that day. We also remember the ICPD conference feedback workshop where we made contact with youth organizations. We even had the opportunity to discuss with some religious and otherwise men. We cannot be fair and explicit in our choice of words. It is simply a unique experience. It was both an honor and a privilege for us to have participated in the implementation of the ProJeunes project. If the project did not exist, it had to be created. It was for us an ideal framework of "giving and receiving". In such a short time we have learned a lot from this adventure. We will gladly do it again and again, as long as we are given the opportunity to do so.

- TAMADAHO Hermence Tatiana Ingénieur Statisticienne Economiste Consultante et MOUSSA ABDOULAYE Abdou Fassath, Sociologue-Consultant



The participation of the youth in this capacity building session organized by the YCSRR, revealed the willingness of the youth organizations to federate their strength. The enthusiasm for the sessions held and the concerns raised testify to the need to continue supporting these organizations. I was very impressed by their ability to participate in the exchanges and to assimilate the concepts discussed. Beyond these two days of capacity building, I still have a very good relationship with the participants and support them if needed for the continuity of their actions. I was able to note the strong potential of these activists to contribute effectively to the respect of girls and women's rights on the one hand and their inclusion and participation at all levels of the development process on the other.

- Ingrid Adovi (Consultant for ProJeunes, Décembre 2020)



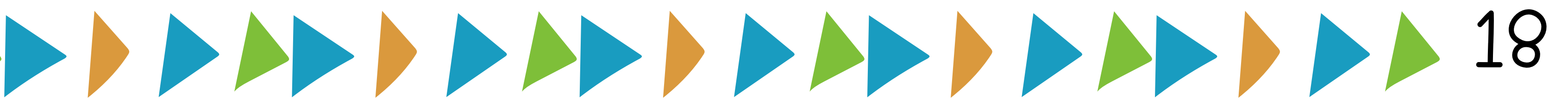
DAVID'S EXPERIENCE

The ProJeunes project allowed me personally to discover my personality, another dimension of activism at the national and international level. My address book grew during the three years of the project. I met and worked with many CSO leaders from Benin, and from around the world following my participation in the ICPD+25 summit in Nairobi in November 2019. I have received several advocacy capacity-building training sessions from the Youth Coalition, which now reinforces my position as an expert in advocacy for children and youth rights. As a key influencer of the YouthProm, I was able to work on the flagship activities at the implementation level at several levels. I was able to participate in the drafting and review workshops of the Orientation Manual (OM) of the Social Promotion Centers (SPC) with Care Benin Togo, World Affairs Canada, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance of Benin.



I went to the summit on behalf of the Benin Youth Parliament with the full support of the Youth Coalition as part of ProJeunes. Indeed, it was my participation in this summit that led to the creation of the organization of youth aged 15 to 35, Action For Youth Rights (AFY). The birth of this associative machine is an inspiration from Nairobi and was possible thanks to the technical support of YC. A youth-led organization, AFY is a post ICPD+25 organization that aims to accelerate the realization of promises made by African leaders at various summits. In this context, YC has equipped the members of the organization on key issues such as feminism, financial resource mobilization, intersectionality, advocacy on SRHR, and others, which has enabled this newborn organization to have a good base of tools to accomplish its mission

- David GNAHOUI
President of Action For Youth Rights (AFY)





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Youth Coalition would like to thank all of the people who participated, in one way or another, in the ProJeunes project!

Your involvement was the key to success!
Power to the youth! The floor is yours!



-  Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights
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-  youthcoalition.org
-  info@youthcoalition.org