

DSSR-BJ PROJECT LAUNCH

Cotonou, Benin

February 2021



- 1) Dr. Alphonse Affo, project coordinator and manager
- 2) chief guest Prof. Eleonore Yayi-Ladekan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research
- 3) Other attendees from partner institutions
- 4) Ms. ir. To Tjoelker Kleve, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Benin, talking to Prof. YAYI-LADEKAN
- 5) Prof. Nelly Kelome, Benin project director

The project “Building Capacity of Education Institutions in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for Youth Inclusion in Benin,” (DSSR-BJ), was officially launched in Cotonou on January 29, 2021.

DSSR-BJ is a response to the call for proposals on institutional collaboration in SRHR through the Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP). This is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by Nuffic. The project is set within the context of significant SRHR challenges faced by young people in Benin. These include early sexual debut, early pregnancy, maternal mobility/mortality and sexual and gender-based violence.

Taking a gender-transformative and youth-sensitive approach, the project strengthens the capacity of higher education institutions and partners to integrate youth-focused SRHR training. Additionally, the project supports an evidence-based platform for diverse stakeholders (including youth) to network for SRHR dialogue, policy engagement and advocacy.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

DSSR-BJ Project Beginnings

Perspectives from overall project director and Benin project director- page 2


DSSR-BJ: At a Glance

Key components- page 3

Youth Voice

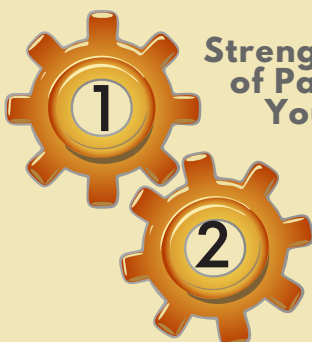
Winners and Fellows- page 4

Follow or contact us:

 dssrbj@gmail.com

 @Dssr-Bj

 Dssr-Bj



Strengthening the Capacity of Partner Institutions in Youth-focused SRHR Education

Establishing a Research-Based Platform for SRHR Dialogue, Policy Engagement and Advocacy

INTERLINKED OUTCOMES



"Supporting youth voice is a critical aspect of inclusion which ensures that project activities are responding to their articulated needs rather than adult assumptions of what youth need."

-Dr. Auma Okwany, overall project director

Below is an excerpt from the pre-recorded speech of Dr. Auma Okwany:

"This launch is the beginning of a very exciting journey of partnership and collaboration which started in a world turned upside down by the Covid-19 pandemic... ISS has over 10,000 alumni from 100+ countries worldwide. One of our alumna Dr. Flora Chadare [from UNA] together with the Benin project director... approached me and proposed that we collaborate in responding to the call. I was very intrigued by this proposal for two reasons. From an institutional perspective, it was consistent with the broader ISS strategy - the pursuit of social justice and equity in international development. On a personal level, it aligned well with my interests and passion as an African scholar-activist in enhancing contextually grounded research and strengthening capacity in the region in order for the African experience and story to be told from an African perspective. Indeed, I am currently coordinating several ISS-EUR projects that are facilitating collaboration and capacity exchange in SRHR training, research and capacity-strengthening between partner projects in East and Southern Africa.

This invitation to collaborate on the proposal for Benin therefore was an excellent opportunity to extend these regional capacity exchange initiatives and networks to West Africa. Such collaboration would also provide an opportunity to bridge the artificial language divide between the so-called Anglophone, Lusophone and Francophone countries in Africa... A specific focus is on youth who are the majority of the population in Africa, including in Benin... [whose] right to access, quality health services and to make SRH decisions free of discrimination, coercion, and violence is not assured. This is worse for marginalized youth who are excluded and ill-served because of a range of structural barriers. Our project strategies respond to the significant youth SRHR challenges, by adopting a gender-transformative and youth sensitive approach to emphasize inclusion and amplify youth voice and engagement in meaningful ways... capacity exchange of diverse institutions and professionals in mutually reciprocal ways including meaningful engagement with young people, is inclusive and valorizes the input and knowledge of all partners including youth. The open dialogue enables the exchange of ideas at different levels and intergenerationally... In this way we heed to the words of the wise that, 'If you want to go fast, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together.'"

DSSR-BJ: BEGINNINGS, AIMS & MOTIVATIONS



Prof. Maxime da Cruz,
Vice-Chancellor, University of Abomey Calavi, lead institution, Benin

"The DSSR-BJ project aims to contribute to universal access to health, including sexual and reproductive rights for all adolescents and youth in Benin, in a fair and inclusive manner. Sexual and reproductive health education has for a long time remained a taboo subject, which led to marginalization."



Prof. Eleonore Yayi-Ladekan
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, chief guest

"Almost every day, every week we read about unplanned pregnancies, cases of sexual or moral harassment, and other kinds of abuse, which occur in the education sector.... At the national level, universities and secondary school teacher training and technical and vocational training institutes and non-governmental organizations have come together to take up the challenge of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education."



"I remain confident that we will sustain this spirit of collaboration and commitment..."

-Prof. Nelly Kelome,
Benin project director

"A month away from the closing date, as we searched for a Dutch partner, the [ISS] [came] in the person of Dr. Auma Okwany... A frantic race against time began... with many challenges... the proposal had to be submitted in French, but our ISS partners do not speak French. We translated the necessary documents... So the language barrier did not get in the way of the team's collaboration and commitment. Our Dutch partners are proactive... We worked amidst university closures in both Benin and the Netherlands due to COVID-19 restrictions, endless working days, online meetings lasting more than 6 or 8 hours, and nightly telephone discussions sometimes lasting until 1 am... It was not an easy task, but we believed in it... I remain confident that we will sustain this spirit of collaboration and commitment..."

DSSR-BJ: AT A GLANCE



OUTPUTS AND INDICATORS



Output 1: Curriculum is reviewed and integrated

Indicators:

- 30 departments/faculties/schools within the 4 HE/TVET partner institutions supported directly to review training modules and integrate SRHR
- Gender transformative and youth sensitive SRHR curriculum with 8 training modules developed
- 5-degree courses and 5 certificate short courses (either online or face-to-face) updated with SRHR content



Output 2: Curriculum is delivered (education and training)

Indicators:

- 100 staff members (50 male/50 female) have gained relevant knowledge and skills to develop and offer SRHR Tailor Made Training and update their courses
- 3 SRHR Masters scholarships offered to staff of partner institutions (3 females)
- 1000 students (males 500 and 500 females) enrolled in updated/newly created SRHR courses (attention to marginalisation- ethnicity, gender, disability, etc.).
- 80% of diverse youth are satisfied with the training received 1% increase of participation of students from marginalized groups



Output 3: Institutional capacity is strengthened

Indicators:

- Training Needs Assessment (TNA) is undertaken to identify competency gaps to inform curriculum review and training of staff
- Improved awareness of gender equality and equity in participating organizations (at least 50% of staff)
- A system to evaluate youth programs developed and implemented in participating institutions
- Training infrastructure including equipment (laboratories, libraries/resource centers, classrooms) is upgraded or refurbished
- Participating consortium organizations have functional policies and procedures to ensure a gender sensitive environment



Output 4: (Applied) Research is conducted

Indicators:

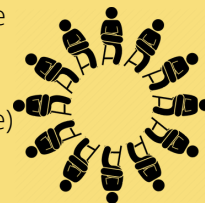
- 1 Research programme implemented
- 2 Academic research publications submitted
- 2 Policy briefs produced and disseminated



Output 5: Policy dialogue and engagement platform is operationalised

Indicators:

- 5000 youth beneficiaries in society reached with comprehensive SRHR knowledge, skills and attitude change
- 4 memoranda of understanding signed between consortium partners in Benin and in the Netherlands
- 300 students doing an internship or practical work (male/female)
- 3 SRHR policy and programme engagements organised (a youth-focused intergenerational dialogue forum, breakfast meeting with senior policy actors and youth peer-to-peer engagement via edutainment strategy).



CONSORTIUM PARTNERS



International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS-EUR)



University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC)



Rutgers (NGO)

Pour la santé et les droits sexuels et reproductifs



National University of Agriculture (UNA)



National University of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (UNSTIM)



Association of Cultural, Musical and Oral Arts Initiatives (RICMAO ASSO) (NGO)



National Institute of Engineering, Training and Strengthening the Capacity of Trainers (INIFRCF)

FUNDED BY:



the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of the Netherlands' development policy



managed by Nuffic



YOUTH VOICE



VIDEO COMPETITION Winner



Osee Anani
Aspiring Animator

What was your inspiration for your entry?

"As soon as I became aware of the theme, I conducted a survey, among my nephews and nieces, who are students in public and private schools. I also spoke with friends who are college professors on this topic. It is the synthesis of these various exchanges that made it easier for me to write the script for this animation produced for the competition."

What does it mean to you to have won the prize?

"As an aspiring animator, this award only reinforced one of my convictions, which is: that our talents must be used to make the world a better place, by educating, and raising awareness. You also have to keep the "entertainment" aspect, which helps attract the attention of the public. I was honored to receive this award, and proud that my video will help raise SRHR awareness for young people."



LOGO COMPETITION Winner

Imrane Kouchele

Third Year student-
University of Parakou



What was your inspiration for your entry?

"In my view, the advent of information & communication technology (ICT) in the 21st century has shaped our generation and made us starkly different from our parents. There is therefore a lack of communication between these generations. Adults are often in-charge of health and education institutions, but we feel, as young people, that there is lack of support, information and opportunities to voice our concerns regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This inspired me to create an image symbolizing the coming together of the older and the younger generations, to highlight the relevance of inclusion and synergy between them in effectively safeguarding SRHR and promoting awareness of gender issues in Benin."



The logo's color scheme are the colors of the Benin flag. **Green** symbolizes the renewal brought by this large-scale project; **Yellow** represents the potential results from various project interventions and actions; and **Red** symbolizes the courage the implementing partners will demonstrate in achieving project goals.

Overall, the logo symbolizes the importance of actors at various levels walking hand-in-hand to overcome and address the problems our generation faces."

What does it mean to you to have won this prize?

"I would like to thank the project team and partners for coming up with the idea of DSSR-BJ and for the opportunity it provided us with. As a winner in the logo competition, it was a joy for me, a relief when my creation was selected, because it allowed me to share a symbolic message to contribute to the development of our society and to represent the young people in Benin. It was an honor for me and I am proud to have convinced the jury to select my logo. It also encourages me to stay on this creative path and give more of my best."



THREE MASTER'S SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED



"A scholarship to pursue a Master's is a chance that is not given to everyone... For me, it represents a windfall that I seized to boost my CV and support the project."

Florence Ahoton

National University of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (UNSTIM)



"Pursuing a Master's is a great opportunity that will enable me to fulfill my duties effectively as the person-in-charge of the center for gender based violence at UAC."

Hermione Adenidji

University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC)



"My being granted this scholarship to do my Master's degree is a great asset for me and comes at the right time to strengthen my capacity in particular on gender and youth issues."

Christiane Somehe

National University of Agriculture (UNA)



DSSR-BJ is a project under the Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP) funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by Nuffic. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of TVET/HE institutions to integrate and strengthen youth-focused SRHR training in Benin. It is implemented by a consortium led by the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS-EUR), in collaboration with Rutgers in the Netherlands, and University of Abomey-Calavi as Benin project Lead, National University of Agriculture (UNA), National University of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (UNSTIM), National Institute of Engineering, Training and Strengthening the Capacity of Trainers (INIFRCF) and Association of Cultural, Musical and Oral Arts Initiatives (RICMAO ASSO).