

# INFOADOMALI - SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE: A CASE STUDY FROM MALI

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In most developing countries, the subject of sexuality and reproductive health with young people is often seen as a taboo due to local culture and religion. New technologies offer a safe space for young people to engage with information around sexual and reproductive health rights, free from the social taboos that preclude discussion around these issues, and enable them to be empowered to make the right and hopefully, health decision with regards to their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). Launched in 2013, Learning about Living Mali, locally known as Info Ado: Apprendre a Vivre Mali, harnesses the potential of new media to create innovative, dynamic tools that empower young people to speak out and demand their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

This Case Study was a background briefing for Oxfam Novib's 2013 Annual Review and describes the programme in Mali. Although it is not a formal evaluation it does consider lessons learned by both Oxfam Novib and its partner organisations.

These Case Studies are shared in the form in which they were submitted, often written by partners whose first language is not English, and have not been edited since submission. We believe that the meaning is clear enough, and the authenticity of the reporting and the availability of Southern Voices on development makes their inclusion in the Oxfam iLibrary worthwhile for sharing with external readers.

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**Programme Partner: OneWorld UK**

# AIM OF THE PROJECT

1. Young people are equipped with knowledge and skills that enable them to manage their sexual and reproductive health.
2. The creation of a sustainable service to provide young people in and outside of school with information on sexuality, gender, the prevention of HIV and STIs by the use of ICTs including computers, radio, cell phone, social media, website.

## CONTEXT

Many young people of Mali have not mastered sexuality, gender and even their human rights-related problems. This is due to a number of prejudices, often supported by the culture, traditions and religion. In particular, many young people do not have access to the appropriate information (because of a culture of silence surrounding sexuality) and are therefore subject to the sexual vulnerability, in a social context where they are faced with this phenomenon.

Many taboos surround sexual and reproductive health issues, complicating the access of young people to accurate information around SRHR issues. These young people grow up ignorant of their sexual rights and their rights to equality between the sexes.

InfoAdoMali, one of "My Rights, My Voice" program component implemented in Mali by OneWorld UK with our local partners including ASDAP, AMPPF, FAWE and the youth project of the Ministry of Youth, is an ICT program comprising an e-learning program about SRH rights delivered via computers, radio and mobile phones. Available online and offline via CD's and DVD's (for remote areas), the program is delivered by teachers in schools and in training sessions by peer educators for young people out of school. It is supported by a confidential free-to-user text messaging service, Youth Call (Weleli Ado Mali). Children and young people send questions about SRH rights and receive an answer from trained counsellors within a maximum of 24 hours. A monthly competition with a prize of free airtime encourages adolescents to use the service and engage with SRHR issues. Issues raised are explored in community radio programs developed by young people to inform their peers and help change social attitudes.

The project placed particular emphasis on the multi-level and multi – sector partnership. Despite the difficult context that the country faced one year ago, much progress has been done. The project began in 2012 in a crisis context when the Northern part of the country was occupied by the jihadists. While the Southern and central power was victim of a military coup that overthrew democratically elected President Amadou Toumani TOURE (ATT).

OneWorld has established a strategic partnership with the Ministry of National Education through an agreement signed by the Minister at the time. Because of the instability of the country, three Ministers of Education have come and gone, making it difficult to work with these authorities. Young people are the main beneficiaries of the project; they have been involved in all stages of project development and implementation. Teachers and students/peer educators who are implementing have been trained.

## LARGER COUNTRY CONTEXT

Mali is a land-locked country with an area of 2,411,248 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 14 517 176 inhabitants (RGPH 2009 provisional results) 50.4% female and 49.6 per cent men. The majority of the country's population resides in rural areas (73.2%). It is characterized by its youth: 46% of the population are under 15 years of age and more than 50% have less than 25 years (according to the RGPH 1998 updated in 2007). The rate of population growth per year is 2.2 per cent and the total fertility rate is 6.6 children per woman (EDS M - IV 2006).

Although 80 per cent of Mali's children enrolled in primary school in 2010-11, the system struggles to give them a quality education. Almost half abandon their schooling early, while many complete schools without basic reading, writing and mathematical skills. They face a shortage of teachers (only one per 100 pupils in some areas), poor teacher training, a lack of classroom materials and an outdated curriculum. The education authorities' lack of accountability and transparency in financial

management meaning that legal standards are not upheld and policies such as the national girls' education policy are not implemented.

There are still 15 per cent more boys than girls in school. Although many more girls are now enrolling, there are still huge socio-economic barriers for them to complete their education. These include traditional domestic roles, a lack of economic choices for women, the absence of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education, and early marriage leading to early pregnancy or vice versa. Many taboos surround SRH issues, making accurate information unavailable to most young people, who grow up ignorant of their sexual and gender rights.

In Mali, the prevalence of HIV in the general population is 1.3% (EDS M - IV 2006). This relatively low prevalence hides an epidemic of a high level in certain risk groups. Thus, there is a rate of 35.3% among sex workers, 5.9% for itinerant vendors, 2.2% among homemakers, 2.5% for the long road drivers and 2.2% in the street workers (ISBS 2006). These risk groups are mainly composed of young people.

## Direct environment

The project is designed to be implemented at the national level but is currently being piloted in the regions of Segou and Bamako.

# MAIN ACTORS

OneWorld UK, AMPPF, ASDAP, FAWE, Youth project of Ministry of Youth, Butterfly Works, RAES, Ministry of Educations, Ministry of Youth, Private Telecom companies and youth groups.

Oxfam Novib supported OneWorld UK through a co-funding strategy with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in the USA, to develop the initial Learning about Living project in Nigeria in 2006. The aim of the project was to use new technology tools that young people are already engaging with to provide them with an anonymous and confidential space to engage with SRHR issues. Since then, Oxfam Novib also supported the process of replicating a similar project in Senegal to kick-start the development of such initiative in the franco-phone African countries. The project was also supported for Morocco and finally, an opportunity was seen to develop a similar initiative in Mali and OneWorld was invited to conduct a scoping study as a prelude to introducing the InfoAdo project to Mali.

# METHODOLOGY

## Activities, strategies, theory of change

By developing a sustainable information service on sexual health, gender and reproductive rights, InfoAdoMali has equipped young people in and out of schools with the knowledge and skills to manage their sexual and reproductive health, and make informed choices about their future. Backed by community support and sustainable policy change, the project empowers Malian children and young people to grow up with the skills they need to make the most of their lives and help transform their country.

OneWorld and their partners has used new technologies to strengthen young people, strengthen the capacities of the partners to use ICT tools, and facilitate the creation of an e-learning platform and a mobile platform, and also facilitate a collaborative network of partners across sectors in this field. OneWorld has so successfully developed the curriculum in the form of e-learning platform. 18 lessons are taught by teachers in the pilot schools. Trained students are proficient in the use of the tool. Partners mentor schools and follow the implementation in schools.

## What was needed to achieve the changes?

Oxfam provided the funding and dedicated staff to support OneWorld to rather to plan implement and monitor. The change is achieved by other actors OneWorld and their partner Butterfly Works developed the tools with key partners, and manage the project with local partners.

# RESULTS

## Outputs

The key outputs from the program include:

- ✓ **The dynamic E-learning platform - ClickInfoAdo**
  - The manual with 18 lessons is finalised , edited, and 500 of the CD version have been distributed
  - **13** schools are partners in the implementation of the e-learning
  - In total **130** peer educators were trained, including 85 girls and 45 boys
  - Number of teachers/master trainers trained: 73
  - **7435** people were reached by the e-learning component, including 1449 boys and 5661 girls.
  
- ✓ **The Web-based Mobile platform ‘Weleli Ado’:**
  - The short code was obtained and activated
  - The short code was launched via a televised event targeting youth, “Maxi Jeunes” **500** youth 240 girls and 260 boys attended this Maxi Jeunes which is a public broadcast, recorded and broadcast for two hours on national television. The content is developed from the theme of the project namely the sexual and reproductive health of young people
  - **6** Tele-counsellors have been trained on all relevant themes
  - Youth are using the WeleliAdo service
  - 11615 questions were received on the mobile platform
  - Approximately **6 500** people were reached with information about the service during promotional activities engaged in by the counselors
  
- ✓ **The Radio platform – ‘RadiInfoAdo’**
  - Thematic radio shows were developed and broadcast daily on 10 different radio stations.
- ✓ **A project Website**
  - The site has been constructed and is being populated
- ✓ **A project Face book page**
  - The face book page is constructed and use elearning theme for it animation. Also MAQ of mobile platform are use as discussion subject.
  
- ✓ **Monitoring and evaluation**
  - Baseline study completed
  - OXFAM director of monitoring and evaluation and MRMV Mali program coordinator visited the project
  - OWUK program director visited the project
  - Monitoring of activities are done at each level of implementation

## Outcomes

The Ministry of Education has shown a strong interest in the InfoAdoMali project and signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with OneWorld.

The InfoAdoMali initiative launched a website in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. The InfoAdo website provides information on sexual and reproductive health, while users can anonymously post and receive answers to questions on these issues.

As a result of the collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health on the Info Ado initiative, mobile telecom providers agreed to allocate an SMS number to which youth (and others) could send questions relating to sexual and reproductive health. From the release of the SMS number (35155) nine months ago, 11615 questions has been received and answered by a team of six tele-counsellors from Info Ado Mali.

Sexual and reproductive health e-learning activities are now being piloted in thirteen schools.

## Impact

In total 21 549 youths are reached by activities. This number doesn't reflect people reached by radio program.

The final evaluation of the program will assess changes in young people's knowledge, attitudes and practices.

Nevertheless, there are many examples from the field that demonstrate program participants' enthusiasm and interest in engaging with the program, including overwhelmingly positive testimonies from teachers, peer educators, and students engaged in the program and the fact that young people are sharing the e-learning videos with their friends via mobile phone (Bluetooth) and spontaneously creating Face book groups and discussions around the program topics.

This anecdotal evidence, together with data gathered on the reach of the program, suggests that this program is having an important impact on the lives of young people around Mali, who clearly have a significant interest and need for more easily accessible, accurate, confidential, and non-judgmental information about SRHR.

## Policy and practice changes

As the project will continue this year, our advocacy work in terms of policy changes is to integrate the e-learning tool and teaching into the national education official curricula and the MOU with the Ministry of Education will greatly support that and enhance the sustainability of project activities.

## Successes & failures

In the implementation, the cases of success are many:

- Teachers and students have adopted the platform elearning.
- The use of the SMS service by youth continues to increase.
- Ownership of the elearning platform by students through it transfer on Android phones.
- This has led each peer-educator to upload it to at least 5 friends. So close to a thousand of young people today have episodes of the platform on their phone.

The involvement of the Ministry of education in the activities and their appropriation of the concept is one of the big success on which the project will build to advocate for the elearning platform integration in the curricula.

We see as a delay, not really a failure, the fact that we have not been able to connect to the most popular telecom provider in Mali, Orange, due to unanticipated bureaucracy. This has resulted in the low uptake of the free to user mobile service, shown to be extremely popular in other countries where the project currently runs.

# LESSONS LEARNED

- It appeared that teachers who should be trained on the platform, supposedly to master the SRHR have lots of gap in this area.
- The advent of the coup has had negative effects on the project. The involvement of the ministries at the beginning of the implementation process will facilitate ownership and the necessary support in the implementation of the advocacy plan.
- In the component "InfoAdo Mali" of MRMV, e-learning attracted much interest from users: teachers and students. They more quickly appropriate the e-learning platform, and this is because of their ease with ICT tools which may explain the attraction and use.
- It was clear that young people had taken very innovative approaches to engaging with the e-learning tools. Notably, it was found that young people share the e-learning videos with friends using Bluetooth on their mobile phones, that they have created discussion groups on Facebook to talk about the SRHR topics they learn about through the project, and they put on skits inspired by the videos that they perform at informal meetings as well as consultations. This evidence indicates that young people have a need for training on SRHR as well as a need for encouragement to demonstrate their creativity.
- The peer educators facilitate the work in and outside the school.
- It is important to ensure the implication of youth to refine strategies for actions towards them.
- It may be necessary to agree to pay to obtain the short number without trying to negotiate a free with mobile operators.

## Successes & failures

Tools developed were quickly adopted by young people. They use it more than teachers and sometimes adapted them (case of the use of the episodes of the platform in mobile phones and sharing with peers).

## Tips and more

In the e-learning component, it is important to conduct an institutional assessment of the schools to be involved in the program to ensure that they have computers and that they are used by teachers.

Provide an introductory training of teachers in information technology to facilitate the teaching of the lessons of the e-learning platform.

# HUMAN INTEREST

## Portrait Youssouf Diakité

Mr Diakité pendant la formation des enseignants sur le elearning

Aux premières heures de l'avènement des TIC au Mali, officialisées par le festival Bamako 2000, nul parieur n'aurait misé sur cette date du 15 juillet 2007 où l'informatique adaptée aux non voyants faisait son incursion au Mali. En effet, ce jour sonnait la fin de la session initiale de la formation de Youssouf Diakité.

Handicapé visuel, dès l'âge de 4 ans, il est titulaire d'une maîtrise en droit privé obtenu au terme d'un cursus scolaire entamé à l'institut de jeunes aveugles sanctionné par le diplôme d'étude fondamentale (DF) et le lycée de Badala où il décrochait le baccalauréat, avant l'école nationale d'administration (ENA).

L'objectif global visé par sa première session de formation, à l'instar des deux autres sessions de perfectionnement de 2009 et 2011, était de permettre aux handicapés visuels d'avoir accès à cet immense savoir que sont les Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication. En droite ligne, les résultats enregistrés depuis, sont on ne peut plus exaltants. De nos jours, on dénombre deux

cents personnes handicapées visuelles encadrées en session initiale et continue au Mali, en Guinée, en Côte d'Ivoire, plus précisément à Bouaké, en Mauritanie et au Burkina-Faso. Parmi ces bénéficiaires, on note des élèves, étudiants, fonctionnaires de tous corps, médecins kiné, pour ne citer que ceux. Mr Diakité après avoir suivi cette formation est devenu lui-même formateur.

Il est le vis président de l'union malienne des aveugles dont il porte le chapeau en plus du chef du centre de formation informatique de la même union, en sa qualité d'expert aux aides techniques adaptées à l'informatique pour non voyant. D'après lui, sa plus grande satisfaction vient de son statut de point focal du projet ELEARNING obtenu au terme de la formation de formateur initiée par l'ONG ASDAP MALI tenue en février dernier. Pour corroborer cette assertion, il faut noter que ce projet revêt plus d'une importance, pour

Le régime résidentiel auquel sont soumis les élèves de l'institut où il donne des cours à savoir une cohabitation d'adolescentes et adolescents met les jeunes à risque. Ce groupe ne bénéficie pas d'informations sur la santé sexuelle et reproductive.

Cela impose des campagnes de sensibilisation en santé de la reproduction, visé par le projet cité plus haut. Les quatre premiers élèves (dont deux filles et deux garçons), formés, par les bons soins du formateur Youssouf Diakité, ont su être à hauteur de mission en divulguant leur savoir à plus d'élèves de la fondamentale et du secondaire. Cela est un réel motif de satisfaction, quant on sait que le pari n'était pas gagné d'avance, eu égard à la complexité de l'utilisation du matériel informatique adapté qui en est l'instrument essentiel de la formation.

Il a été utile à plus d'un titre à ces élèves, qui ont montré un engouement particulier en raison de l'aspect intéressant de la question.

Le second aspect protecteur, révélateur des techniques d'utilisation des préservatifs féminins et masculins a également permis aux adolescents d'en cerner tous les contours et d'en tirer les leçons. Les jeunes adolescentes sont de loin les mieux servies en ce que la plus part d'entre elles, par souci du gain quotidien, s'exposaient à de gros dangers de grossesses non désirées, IST et autres VIH.

Il paraît plus qu'opportun de signaler qu'au rythme auquel la transmission de ce savoir est lancée, les autorités de l'union malienne des aveugles peuvent affirmer sans l'ombre d'aucun doute que le taux de prévalence des risques cités plus haut sera diminué à une moindre proportion dans les très prochaines années. En perspective, l'union projette l'extension du projet au niveau des deux instituts régionaux des aveugles de Gao, et plus tard de Ségou, voir de ses sections régionales.

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