

Adolescents and young girls

CROSS-CUTTING PROJECT EVALUATIONS

L'INITIATIVE

L'Initiative is a project implemented by Expertise France that complements the work of the Global Fund. It provides technical assistance and support for innovation to Global Fund recipient countries to improve grant effectiveness and strengthen the health impact of funded programs. L'Initiative's recent work has demonstrated its catalytic effect through building the capacity of health and civil society actors, improving institutional, political and social frameworks, and supporting innovative approaches to respond to pandemics.

6
projects evaluated

10
countries reached
by the projects

30
implementing
partners

Contents

Introduction	6
Context and challenges facing adolescents and young girls	8
Area 1 / Suitability of activities to meet the needs of beneficiaries	10
Area 2 / Impact of activities on adolescents and their environment	12
Area 3 / Strategies and good practice for working with adolescents	14
Conclusion and reflections	16
Acronyms	18



Cross-cutting evaluation of long-term projects

L'Initiative has three calls for proposals a year as part of its Projects Channel mechanism, from which around twenty projects are selected. All funded projects are required to have an external final evaluation. In order to make the most of this comprehensive exercise, L'Initiative has put in place a thematic cross-cutting evaluation mechanism for projects that enables both reporting on the use of MEAE funds to highlight L'Initiative's interventions and the drawing out of learning to improve interventions contributing to the response to the three pandemics and to guide future activities.

KEY DATA

from the "Adolescents and Young Girls" evaluation

Total project budget

5,196,883 €

6

projects evaluated

10

countries reached by the projects

30

implementing partners

Contents

Introduction	6
Context and challenges facing adolescents and young girls	8
Area 1 / Suitability of activities to meet the needs of beneficiaries	10
Area 2 / Impact of activities on adolescents and their environment	12
Area 3 / Strategies and good practice for working with adolescents	14
Conclusion and reflections	16
Acronyms	18

The evaluated projects

Breakdown of projects by country and by project lead

Since L'Initiative was established in 2012, it has funded 102 projects with a budgetary expenditure of nearly 55 million Euros. In 2019, 15 new projects were selected through a call for projects, for a committed amount of 14.6 million Euros.

2 NIGER

2 3 MALI

1 3 SENEGAL

6 COTE D'IVOIRE

1 SENEGAL BETWEEN 2016 AND 2018

CLICK INFO ADO

Using innovative technologies & youth engagement to improve sexual and reproductive health

PROJECT LEADS
OXFAM

PARTNERS
ONE WORLD, GEEP, RAID, RAES, INTERMONDES, FENAPES, ENDA GRAF SAHEL, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S DIVISION OF SCHOOL HEALTH

2 MALI, NIGER BETWEEN 2016 AND 2019

JADES

Pilot intervention to promote adolescent sexual health to reduce new HIV infections and HIV/AIDS-related mortality

PROJECT LEADS
SOLTHIS

PARTNERS
EQUILIBRE ET POPULATIONS. NIGER: MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LASDEL RESEARCH ORGANIZATION, LAFIA MATASSA. MALI: MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC HYGIENE, MISÉLI RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

3 6 REPUBLIC OF CONGO

3 MALI, REPUBLIC OF CONGO, SENEGAL BETWEEN 2017 AND 2019

Adapting HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria health programs and services for children and young people living on the streets

PROJECT LEADS
SAMUSOCIAL INTERNATIONAL

PARTNERS
SAMUSOCIAL MALI, SAMUSOCIAL SENEGAL, SAMUSOCIAL POINTE-NOIRE

6 BURKINA FASO

6 TOGO

MULTICOUNTRY INTERVENTION

6 BURKINA FASO, BURUNDI, COTE D'IVOIRE, MALI, REPUBLIC OF CONGO, TOGO, BETWEEN 2017 AND 2019

Training and empowerment to provide greater support for adolescents and young girls living with or affected by HIV

PROJECT LEADS
SIDACTION

PARTNERS
REVS+, SWAA-BURUNDI, ANSS, ASSOCIATION SERMENT UNIVERSEL, CENTRE SAS, ARCAD/SIDA, ASSOCIATION KÉNÉDOUGOU SOLIDARITÉ, ESPOIR VIE-TOGO, AIDES MÉDICALES ET CHARITÉ, CRIPS

4 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

6 BURUNDI

4 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO BETWEEN 2016 AND 2018

YOUNG PEOPLE AND HIV

Strengthening of prevention, testing and treatment strategies for HIV/AIDS for young people

PROJECT LEADS
MÉDECINS DU MONDE

PARTNERS
RACOJ/SIDA

5 VIETNAM

5 VIETNAM BETWEEN 2016 AND 2019

SAVING THE FUTURE

Innovative Strategies to Control HIV Infection among Young people who Use Drugs

PROJECT LEADS
CENTRE FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES (SCDI)

PARTNERS
VIETNAM UNION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ORGANIZATIONS COMPONENT; COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

This overview presents the results of a cross-cutting evaluation of six projects funded by the L'Initiative on the theme "Adolescents and Young Girls" implemented in ten countries in Africa and Asia.

Considering the importance of adolescents and young girls in achieving the goal of ending HIV/AIDS by 2030, in 2015 L'Initiative launched a dedicated call for projects on this theme to select projects fitting with one or more of the following areas:

- Understanding the determinants of infection and access to care among young people
- Preventing new infections through innovative strategies
- Adapting the provision of care to better meet the specific needs of young people
- Combating discrimination, especially against key populations and people living with HIV (PLHIV)
- Strengthening youth involvement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs responding to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis

Glossary

Adolescents: WHO considers adolescence to be the phase of growth and human development between childhood and adulthood, between the ages of 10 and 19 years.

Young girls: This term refers to girls aged 15 to 24.



METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was carried out by Gaïa Développement and STEPS between July 2018 and February 2020. The team comprised three principal evaluators, supported by four consultants.

The evaluation involved:

- Evaluating each project on the ground individually to meet L'Initiative's accountability objectives.
- A cross-cutting analysis of the results, making it possible to draw lessons from the combined experience and to identify best practices with regard to adolescents and young girls, with a view to learning from experiences and improving the quality of projects funded by L'Initiative.

Context and challenges facing adolescents and young girls

According to World Health Organization estimates, one in five people globally is an adolescent and 85% of adolescents live in developing countries.¹ Due to the high numbers of young people, they are a priority target group in the response to pandemics.

For the millions of adolescents around the world, early adolescence is synonymous with changes to the body, but also with new forms of vulnerability, especially in terms of sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Millions of girls are forced into non-consensual sex, which puts them at increased risk of unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and unsafe births, as well as sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Teenage boys are also at increased risk. In many countries, young people, girls and boys, are more affected by HIV than other age groups. Girls aged 15 to 24, however, are twice as likely to be living with HIV as young men of the same age. While HIV-related mortality has declined among adults over the past decade, it has increased among adolescents, underlining the urgency of recognizing the specific SRH needs of adolescents.

However, for a majority of young people, access to quality SRH information and services adapted to their needs remains a challenge: lack of contraception, no access to condoms or free health care, lack of prevention programs, restrictive legislation for minors... Health care providers also appear to lack training in the provision of care for young people. For adolescents from key populations² or populations in vulnerable situations, the challenges faced accessing health care are even greater.

At international level, the urgency of this issue is recognized and «adolescent health and development» is now an integral part of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (WHO, 2016–2030). At country level, however, the various commitments made by governments are often not reflected in national policies, and are even less apparent at operational level. Although progress has been made in improving access to services for young people, progress remains insufficient and unevenly distributed. In addition, in many countries there is a significant gap between the laws in place and them being put into practice on the ground. The lack of effective public policies and measures that target adolescents and meet their specific SRH needs risks undermining the UNAIDS goal³ to end the HIV epidemic by 2030.

1. World Health Organization. Helping parents in developing countries improve adolescents' health, 2007

2. Men who have sex with men, sex workers, and people who inject drugs

3. UNAIDS targets: by 2020, 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy; 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.



AREA 1

Suitability of activities to meet the needs of beneficiaries

“We must prioritize the involvement of adolescents, young girls and local partners when designing projects, especially in terms of identifying needs.”

Those directly targeted by the project activities evaluated were young peer educators and service providers (caregivers, teachers, stakeholders from organizations, health and social care services). Adolescents, community leaders, parents and communities as a whole were also targeted both directly and indirectly.

The evaluation highlighted areas that promoted greater ownership of the project by the various beneficiaries, as well activities that were better adapted to their needs:

Beneficiary and partner participation

Involvement of beneficiaries and partners in project implementation and monitoring was deemed satisfactory, however there was need for improved participation in the project design phase. Overall, participation in implementation was closely linked to the person's profile, the role they were given in managing the project and also their ability to fulfil the role assigned to them. These factors also influenced project ownership. Capacity building of beneficiaries therefore emerged as a determining factor in encouraging participation and ownership.

Capacity building

The peer educators received capacity building support and generally had good ownership of the projects, demonstrated in particular through their ability to lead educational talks and awareness-raising activities via digital platforms. Young people demonstrated strengthened skills and a sense of autonomy, and they took initiative above and beyond project interventions. Service providers who received capacity building support also demonstrated positive ownership through practices more suited to the specific needs of adolescents.

GOOD PRACTICE

TEAM BUILDING FOR IMPROVING OWNERSHIP AMONG PEER EDUCATORS

In Vietnam, team-building activities were organized as part of the Saving the Future (SCDI) project. This helped to strengthen the sense of belonging within the project, increased participation of young peer educators and helped to create a link between beneficiaries and peer educators. There was a greater sense of ownership because the young people had previously been beneficiaries of the organization's interventions.

Suitability of activities to meet the needs of beneficiaries

Impact of activities on adolescents and their environment

Strategies and good practice for working with adolescents

Good knowledge and understanding of the socio-cultural context

Most projects had conducted studies to better understand the socio-cultural determinants of sexuality or of HIV transmission among adolescents, as well to understand their knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to SRH. This enabled greater prior knowledge of the context and the needs of the target audience and has ensured that activities fit well with the need. As a result, capacity building tools and activities were well suited to young peer educators and service providers, and messages and services were better suited to the needs and expectations of adolescents. The evaluation also highlighted that project leads and their partners had a good grasp of the problems faced by young people in their areas of intervention, such as drug use, daily realities on the street, exclusion and marginalization.

The need to align with national policy

According to the evaluation, the projects were in line with national and sectoral policies and programs in the implementing countries. The involvement of institutional partners, from the design phase of each project, facilitated compliance with national strategies and policies. Through the production of tools and intervention strategies, the projects have made it possible to support the operationalization of these policies or to complement them, particularly where populations such as street youth or young drug users are mentioned in policies but are not sufficiently taken into account.

Recommendations

- Take into account the different age categories for young girls and boys when designing interventions in order to adopt a gender-specific approach and integrate gender and ethical issues. Adolescents are not a homogeneous group and have different needs according to their age and gender.
- Establish a steering committee in the project conceptualization phase, including partners and beneficiary representatives, including young people. This encourages participation and ownership, as well as enabling combined project monitoring and decision-making.



AREA 2

Impact of activities on adolescents and their environment

“Knowledge production around youth SRH and mobilizing various key actors contributed to creating a more favorable environment for respecting the rights and needs of young people.”

Impact linked to knowledge production and capacity building

The **production of knowledge** within the context of the projects, in particular on socio-cultural determinants of sexuality and HIV transmission among adolescents, as well as knowledge, attitudes and practices on SRH, made it possible to establish a more favorable environment for young people to express and fulfil their SRH needs. It has also contributed to **strengthening the capacity and skills** of young peer educators, service providers and community-based organizations (CBOs) in their roles as providers of care and support. For example, the JADES project (Solthis) has brought about changes in behavior among hospital-based service providers involved, who are now better equipped to provide care and respond to the needs of adolescents living with HIV in Niger.

FIND OUT MORE

Médecins du Monde study entitled «Young people and HIV» on the social-cultural determinants of HIV transmission among young people.

<https://bit.ly/3ef7Tg4>



Suitability of activities to meet the needs of beneficiaries

Impact of activities on adolescents and their environment

Strategies and good practice for working with adolescents

Impact linked to mobilizing institutional actors

The evaluation found that the projects have successfully mobilized various key institutional and civil society actors around the issues of rights and SRH of adolescents, young people living on the streets and young drug users. In several of countries, this has made it possible to initiate discussions that can help to create a more favorable environment for recognizing and respecting the rights and needs of this population.

In several countries, advocacy activities, whether or not they were linked with relevant partnerships with institutional actors, have resulted in better consideration of young people in national health policies, as well as in funding requests to the Global Fund. In Senegal, progress has been made in integrating sex education modules into school curricula. In Vietnam, the SCDI project facilitated discussions around the links between drug use and infections of HIV and other diseases. As a result, some donors have increased their support for key interventions and the project has contributed directly to the development of national guidelines on certain types of stimulant drugs.

GOOD PRACTICE

IMPACT ON PUBLIC POLICY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The project led by Médecins du Monde, in partnership with the Réseau des Associations Congolaises des Jeunes (RACOJ) in DRC, has enabled a specific focus on adolescents aged 10 to 19 years to be included in the 2018–2021 National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS. In addition, RACOJ made it possible for youth representatives to be involved in the development of the National Strategic Plan focusing on the health and well-being of adolescents and young people, which has enabled a section on HIV/AIDS for adolescents to be included.

Recommandations

- Identify structural changes and social transformations that are sought by the project at conception stage and set up a system to monitor and evaluate these changes throughout implementation. There is also a need to build the capacity of project leads to measure these changes.
- Ensure that skills building strategies are integrated into the practices of local partners to ensure continuity beyond the project. The effect of acquiring new knowledge and skills can only be sustainable if it happens on regular basis.

AREA 3

Strategies and good practice for working with adolescents

“The skills and knowledge I have acquired here have helped me manage my life and drug use better, and also allowed me to help my clients.”

Young drug user who is a beneficiary of the “Saving the Future” project in Vietnam

The cross-cutting evaluation highlighted the following practices and learning around responding to the specific challenges faced by young people:

Sexual and reproductive health education in schools

The evaluation found that the JADES (Solthis) and C4L (Oxfam) projects have fostered the integration of SRH into secondary education programs in Niger and Senegal through training teachers and providing adapted tools, which were previously non-existent. Peer education in schools was established as a complementary approach to school programs, with teachers supervising young peer educators. Involving teachers and school management was essential to ensure their support in advance. These approaches have enabled constructive dialogues to be established and the evaluation concludes that schools are a suitable environment for this type of learning.

Peer education

Peer education is a proven, relevant and effective approach for working with young people. The projects have used this approach in schools and with young drug users. Most of the peer educators were unpaid volunteers and were also patients. It has therefore been essential to guide and support them to manage their own personal challenges as well as those of their peers. However, none of the projects anticipated the issue of peers getting older or moving on. As they get older, peer educators gradually lose their legitimacy among other young people and it is necessary to provide a mechanism to replace them and to provide ongoing training for incoming peer educators. In some cases, questions were raised about the status of peer educators and how their roles were positioned in relation to staff from organizations, as well as around the voluntary nature of their work.



FIND OUT MORE

Video produced by the JADES project

<https://vimeo.com/289041723>

GOOD PRACTICE

The OXFAM project’s “Click Info Ado” website (<http://senegal.clickinfoado.org/>), uses virtual peer educators to communicate directly with young people on issues relating to SRH. In 18 lessons combining interactive games and exercises, young people can strengthen their life skills in both French and the national language.

Suitability of activities to meet the needs of beneficiaries

Impact of activities on adolescents and their environment

Strategies and good practice for working with adolescents

Using information and communication technology to raise awareness among young people

Some projects focused on digital tools and social networks to reach young people and have successfully used various different communication channels: websites, Facebook pages, telephone, SMS, online quick question and answer mechanisms, toll-free numbers, etc. The evaluation notes that these methods of communication are used and appreciated by the target groups of young people, and that they are effective channels to provide adolescents with quality information on SRH.

Mobilizing religious leaders

Two projects mobilized religious leaders and worked with Qur’anic schools to tackle the subject of SRH, with a view to overcoming religious taboos linked to sexuality. In Senegal, an educational guide for Daaras⁴ has been developed and successfully used in several schools. In Niger, where there are many more students in Qur’anic schools than in public schools, religious leaders are seen by the projects as having great potential to bring about change.

Lessons learned: A dozen religious leaders were mobilized as part of the JADES project (Solthis) in Niger. It only took one of them to have the passion and activism to have a multiplier effect across 40 Qur’anic schools in Maradi who have now adapted their teaching program.

Mobilizing and strengthening the skills of service providers

All the projects evaluated included a focus on building the capacity of service providers around SRH. In light of high levels of staff movement, certain projects adopted a “cascade” approach through training of trainers. The approach included a training supervision mechanism and tools to guide medical and psychological diagnosis and monitor care and support, and was deemed particularly



relevant and effective. It has improved professional knowledge and practices and the quality of the services provided to young people. However, there remains a high level of need which is largely unmet. Significant efforts are still needed, particularly in terms of continuing education for care providers.

Involvement of parents

Involving parents in the projects has helped to foster inter-generational dialogue and provide a support framework for young people on SRH issues. This has contributed to creating a favorable environment, particularly in terms of reducing taboos around sexuality. There has been a positive impact on treatment adherence and on parent-child and parents-care provider relations. The parents who participated in the awareness sessions said they were better prepared to approach the subject of sexuality with their adolescents in a more compassionate way.

Care and support for young people living with HIV

There are high levels of new infections among the adolescent age group and the communication strategies developed by certain projects (Sidaction, Solthis) have enabled young people living with HIV to know their status – often earlier – and to be looked after using adapted approaches. This has enabled them to remain on the continuum of care, resulting in a reduction in the number of patients lost to follow-up and lower mortality rates.

4. The word “Daara” in Senegal refers to a place where the Qur’an is taught.

Conclusion

This cross-cutting evaluation of the “Adolescents and Young Girls” projects implemented between 2016 and 2019 reveals that overall, they have achieved the objectives of L’Initiative’s call for projects. They also appear to complement programs financed by the Global Fund in each of the intervention countries, where it is rare for grants to take account of the specific needs of adolescents. Indeed, this population group is often included within key population groups, such as men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and sex workers. Vulnerability factors that are specific to young people, linked to their age, their position in society and the prevailing norms for these groups, are therefore not taken into account. The funded projects have therefore made it possible to make adolescents and young girls visible in the countries concerned, and to raise awareness among stakeholders of their vulnerability to HIV.

Despite a lack of ownership of project results by national programs and GF Country Coordinating Mechanisms, the evaluation concludes that by targeting the vulnerability factors and the needs of adolescents, the projects have enhanced the effectiveness, efficiency, and/or quality of certain interventions funded by the GF. They have also therefore contributed to achieving the UNAIDS targets by enabling young people to have better access to information, testing, care and treatment, and to be maintained within the HIV care continuum.

Although it is too early to really assess their impact, the projects have made it possible to lay the foundations for social transformation, both among the young people themselves (some of whom have been involved as peer educators and trained to be leaders), and among certain community players (parents, educators, teachers, etc.).

REFLECTIONS

Adolescents and SRH are ongoing priority focus areas for L’Initiative.

In addition to the dedicated “Adolescents and Young Girls” call for projects in 2015, this population group are a priority target for other activities funded by L’Initiative. Between 2016 and 2020 they were systematically included in calls for projects targeting vulnerable populations. In 2019, four new projects targeting young people, including those living with HIV, were selected. Some of the projects evaluated have received new funding for the 2020–2022 period to enable them to go a step further with their interventions.

In order to support project leads and their partners, between 2016 and 2017 L’Initiative organized training and support sessions on SRH topics. In 2018, a knowledge sharing workshop was held in Dakar to highlight the wealth and unique features of the projects and to collectively reflect on SRH challenges. The workshop led to a publication being developed, which was comprised of practical knowledge sharing sheets based on the lived experiences of the projects. This collective knowledge sharing exercise made it possible to outline new collaborative pathways for actors on the ground working on SRH issues.



Collective knowledge sharing on SRH

This document comprises 6 knowledge sharing sheets relating to the experiences of projects selected in 2015 under the “adolescents and young girls” theme. The sheets reflect discussions that took place at the group workshop. They set out pathways for reflection and tried and tested operational solutions as well as practical guidance and quotes from the stakeholders themselves. A film has been produced to capture the knowledge sharing methodology and process.



FIND OUT MORE:

Practical knowledge sharing sheets on sexual health produced as part of the knowledge sharing workshop.

Video produced in the context of the sexual and reproductive health workshop:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pffBeenz5K0>

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GF	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
MEAE	Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PE	Peer Educators
CB	Skills / capacity building
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus

This publication forms part of a collection that presents results from cross-cutting evaluations produced by L'Initiative. Full and overview versions of the publications below are available on our web site, in documentary resources section, in both French and English:



This cross-cutting evaluation was carried out by Anne Boutin, Marie-Eve Richardier and Diane Mpinganzima between July 2018 and February 2020.

It was coordinated at Expertise France by Anabel Rodriguez, Audrey Ducros and Elsa Goujon, Monitoring and Evaluation Officers in the Health department.

The analysis and conclusions presented in this document are the responsibility of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official point of view of Expertise France or of the organizations and projects evaluated.

The full cross-cutting evaluation report is on L'Initiative website.



L'Initiative
Expertise France
73, rue de Vaugirard
75006 Paris
01 70 82 70 82
www.initiative5pour100.fr

