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Title of the project

Youth in Bamako and exercise of their sexual and reproductive rights – an approach from economic, social and cultural rights. DECIDES Mali IV

Please describe your action/project

Interarts and Family Care International/Mali, in collaboration with the Association of Child and Youth Workers (AEJT) of Bamako develop the project "Young people the in the informal sector of Bamako and sexual and reproductive rights from a perspective of economic, social and cultural rights. Mali, 4th Phase"¹. This is the continuation of the project developed in 2011 by the same organizations which aimed at developing the capacity of this group of young people, characterized by low education levels and an early labour market entry, to defend their rights in the field of sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Indeed, although enrolled in Vocational and Technical Training Centres (CFPT) and owning some information on SRH, these young people are not immune to risky behaviours (unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection). This project reflects the lessons learned and seeks to consolidate the results obtained in the previous project through two key factors: the participation of some young people who act as peer educators to make aware the rest of the target group through media such as radio and theatre and the involvement of Bamako Vocational and Technical Training Centres (CFPT), which are responsible for disseminating knowledge on SRH among their students. The

¹ For more information, see the project description and related links to relevant material at <http://www.interarts.net/en/encurso.php?p=427>



project also comprises an active participation of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, so that it includes SRH issues in the CFPT's training curricula and systematizes the collaboration between state actors and civil society to advance in the field of SRH rights. Interarts and Family Care International share years of collaboration in health and culture projects, clustered under the name of DECIDES Programme (Cultural Rights to Promote Development and Health)². As in previous phases, Mali IV with is funded by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID)³.

The DECIDES Program, since 2007, has been implemented by Interarts in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Spain, in collaboration with international NGOs such as FCI or PROMSEX⁴, among others, and with the support of organizations such as AECID, ACCD and Barcelona Solidaria of the City Council. In the framework of the DECIDES Programme, Interarts and FCI/Mali have carried out two other projects in Mopti between 2008⁵ and 2013⁶.

Tell us something more about your project/activity

Content: awareness-raising and cultural activities addressed to young people of the informal sector to promote safe behaviours in the field of sexual and reproductive health.

Duration: from 1/12/2103 – to 1/03/2016

Location: Bamako, Mali

Field/discipline: Culture and Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Tell us something about who did it

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Interarts Foundation for international cultural cooperation

The Interarts Foundation for International Cultural Cooperation (Interarts) is an international centre, based in Barcelona (Spain), which promotes knowledge about

² For further information, see <http://www.decides.pro/home-3/>

³ For more information, see <http://www.aecid.es/EN>

⁴ The website of the peruvian NGO PROMSEX is available at <http://www.promsex.org/>

⁵ For more information, see DECIDES Mali I at <http://www.interarts.net/en/encurso.php?pag=1&p=297>

⁶ For more information, see DECIDES Mali II at <http://www.interarts.net/en/encurso.php?pag=2&p=362>

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For further information, see: www.interarts.net



the cultural sector, its policies and its contribution to human development at local, regional and international levels. Interarts is particularly committed to combining its research activities with the management of international cooperation projects, in order to stimulate cultural knowledge, dialogue, professional development and networking. Applied research on cultural policies and European and international cultural cooperation have been at the core of Interarts' work since the organisation was set up in 1995. Interarts provides services to public, private and third sector organisations in the three following areas:

- **Design:** a laboratory of ideas and applied research centre, Interarts focuses on emerging, politically-relevant cultural issues and contributes to designing proposals and recommendations for the implementation of cultural policies.
- **Consultancy:** culture is a key element in development processes. Based on this premise, Interarts manages projects in the field of international cooperation towards development, including the cultural and creative sector.
- **Training and information:** training is one of the core activities of Interarts, which involves short-term thematic seminars and events such as the international Campuses for cultural cooperation as well as other initiatives to foster cooperation among different world regions. Through its Cyberkaris e-newsletter and its websites, Interarts permanently disseminates information and knowledge relevant to international cultural cooperation.

Family Care International – Mali⁸

Family Care International is a non-profit organization. Its headquarters in New York City are linked with five field offices in Africa and South America. In addition to its extensive work advocating at the global level for women's and new-born health and rights, FCI has had active programs since 2012 in nearly 30 countries around the world. FCI's African presence spans English and French-speaking countries, with programs implemented currently through field offices in Burkina Faso and Mali. In Latin America and the Caribbean, FCI has a field office presence in Bolivia and Ecuador.

FCI-Mali is recognized nationally and across Francophone West Africa, for its expertise in adolescent sexual and reproductive health. FCI works, in close partnership with youth-led and youth-serving civil society groups, to empower and educate young people to avoid unintended pregnancy and HIV infection, prevent gender-based violence, and embark on healthy, productive adult lives. FCI focuses on reaching the poorest and most vulnerable populations, particularly young women and men who have left school and entered the informal economy.

FCI-Mali collaborates closely with government, UN agency, and civil society partners at the national, regional, and local levels, engaging in constructive

⁸ For more information, see <http://www.familycareintl.org/en/places/26>



activism to strengthen reproductive and maternal health policies and programs, and providing technical support that strengthens local partners' capacity to design and implement effective projects. Its work focuses on:

- Conducting constructive, evidence-based advocacy to support greater financial investment in adolescents' and women's reproductive health, to build political commitment, and to promote proven interventions
- Convening national and local leaders, political and administrative authorities, civil society organizations, and religious and customary leaders to build consensus around policies and actions and encourage positive health behaviors
- Strengthening the capacity of community-based and youth-serving organizations to strengthen policies; plan, develop, and implement programs; and create innovative tools
- Mobilizing communities, civil society partners, and grassroots organizations to advocate for improved access to and quality of health services, and to educate women, men, and young people on issues of sexual and reproductive health
- Building young people's life skills, and their understanding of sexual and reproductive health, through a range of approaches including peer education and theater forums
- Developing culturally appropriate training, education and advocacy tools and technical publications relating to sexual and reproductive health.

The Interarts Foundation holds the general coordination of the project, while locally, in Bamako, the team of FCI/Mali is in charge of coordinating the activities and the actions of young peer educators that belong to the Association of Child and Youth Workers (AEJT), which actively collaborates with the project. These young people transfer knowledge to and raise awareness among their peers, both in their working environments and in their “hangouts”, through different kinds of actions. For instance, ten of them received training in “forum theatre” and could represent a stage play on SRH and sexually transmitted infections (STI) in several occasions, such as the Launch of the National Campaign on Family Planning in May 2015. Moreover, other ten youth received training and are carrying out an “action plan for the promotion of SRH” among their peers and some of them developed five radio programs about SRH issues. Likewise, the teachers of twelve Vocational and Technical Training Centres offer classes about unwanted pregnancy, the use of condoms and the prevention of HIV and other STI.

Tell us something about the people who in your view received the most significant impact

The people that received the most significant impact are young people of the informal sector working as tailors, hairdressers, carpenters, dyers, welders or



street sellers. Their age varies between 12 and 34 years and they live in one of the 6 districts of Bamako but most of them come from another region of Mali and other neighbouring countries. In this regard, while Bambara predominates, Mali has other several ethnic groups that are characterized by their languages, customs, beliefs and rites regarding union, reproduction, conception of youth, etc. We must also distinguish between youth of the informal sector who are self-taught and those who have been trained in the Vocational and Technical Training Centres. On average, the level of education does not exceed primary education, although some may have completed secondary school and other have never attended school. Some of them are illiterate.

To date, 12,434 young people (6,034 girls and 6,400 boys) have participated in some awareness raising activity of the project. In CFPTs, 8,957 apprentices have received information by their teachers about SRH, through discussions, lessons, video screening, among other activities. Moreover, all the people involved in the project's activities, also teachers and peer educators have a better knowledge of SRH issues and has developed the ability and communication skills to share the information with their family, friends and acquaintances.

Was the impact planned from the start?

The impact was planned from the start, but the initial goals were: 12,000 young people from the informal sector and 2,400 professional centres' apprentices. This means that it has been reached the 104% in the first case and the 189% in the second, and, since the project is still in process, it is fair to foresee that these figures will be higher at the end of the implementation period.

Tell us something about the context

Mali is a poor, land-locked West African nation of 16 million people. Much of the northern part of the country lies in the Sahara Desert; the capital, Bamako, is situated along the Niger River. It ranks 179th out of 188 countries listed on the United Nations' Human Development Index, as of 2014, with a gross per capita income of \$1,583. Political instability, and armed conflict between the government and Islamist rebels in the northern part of the country, exacerbated Mali's health and development challenges from 2012. In 2015, events related to Islamic extremism and the spread of the Ebola virus in the first trimester of the year have contributed to create a more precarious and insecure context.

Young people in the informal sector often live in precarious conditions with a very low level of education (most of them do not complete the secondary school) and are, therefore, easily exposed to misconceptions about sex and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in general. According to the Demographic and National



Health Survey (2006) almost the totality of the population knows the methods of family planning, but contraceptive prevalence rates do not reach the 10% of women. The survey indicates that Bamako has the highest HIV prevalence in the country with 2.3%. In previous interventions, it has been found out that culture and religion strongly influence the behaviour on SSR: traditions such as excision are still seen as something natural and that have to be maintained. Polygamy is another habit that does not provide women's status improvement and endangers their health.

In order to exercise their rights to SRH, youth in the informal sector face fundamental difficulties: the general ignorance about the SRH (Information about the menstrual cycle and family planning, the complete domination of the modes of transmission and prevention of HIV, etc.), the difficult access to modern contraceptive methods, and the possibility to access scientifically reliable information. These limitations are rooted in various causes such as educational level, lack of sexual education and family communication, lack of health services where to go, a limited awareness of their rights (right to enjoy and express their own sexuality, to choose whether to have children or not, to have access to information, education and quality SRH services, etc.), a low perception of health risks, etc.

In this context, it is essential to take into account the social and cultural determinants and continue to raise the awareness of both young people of the informal sector and the public, from a fundamental rights perspective. Radio programs launched by different initiatives have been effective for more people to go to health centres but the SRH is a complex and broad scope and, without continued support over time, people can hardly transmit reliable information on such matters. On the other hand, it has been noted the need to promote better coordinated policies on SRH and a more strategic multi-actors consensus to overcome the scarcity of resources and of trained personnel that limit the ability of public bodies to intervene.

Tell us what were your expected results and the actual ones

The project aims to provide the youth of the informal sector with basic information to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and to make responsible decisions about their bodies and their sex. This means not only disseminating truthful information on SRH issues but also building negotiation and communication skills and advocating for more equitable relations between men and women. Moreover, in order to facilitate access to SRH services and quality care, the project has developed partnerships with major health centres in Bamako. On the other hand, the project seeks to create an institutional and community environment that supports the exercise of SRH rights through



awareness-raising and advocacy aimed at promoting dialogue and intersectoral collaboration.

The expected results were:

1. Strengthen the capacity of the youth of the informal sector of Bamako to facilitate their access to health services and promote their SRH rights:
 - a. 10 young people trained as peer educators specialised in raising awareness and providing reliable information.
 - b. 10 young people trained in writing scripts on SRH for the forum theatre.
2. Facilitate the access to information and to SRH services for the youth of the informal sector:
 - a. 12,000 young people have participated in activities for the promotion of the SRH developed by peer educators in working or meeting places.
 - b. Access to health services has increased of at list 20% during the project's implementation.
 - c. 15 Vocational and Technical Training Centres of Bamako offer classes about SRH rights.
 - d. 2,400 apprentices have been sensitized during the information sessions offered in the partner Vocational and Technical Training Centres.
3. The institutional environment (public, private, civil society) actively intervenes in the promotion of the youth's SRH:
 - a. Vocational and technical training centres' programmes and classes include basic notions about SRH.
 - b. 30 public and civil society organizations collaborate to foster development on rights related to young people's SRH.
4. The Malian society and the international community are sensitized about the situation of the youth of the informal sector relatively to SRH rights:
 - a. 75,000 people approximately listen to radio programmes held by young people of the informal sector about SRH rights.
 - b. A short film on young people's opinions about their SRH rights has been produced and disseminated internationally.
 - c. The project and its outputs have been disseminated at an international level.

To date, the actual results are:

1. The capacity of the youth of the informal sector of Bamako to facilitate their access to health services and promote their SRH rights has been strengthened:
 - a. 10 young people have been trained, prepared and implemented an action plan that has included: meetings and group discussions, counselling, home visits, video screening, and condoms' demonstrations and sale.



Youtube channel¹³, the projects' webpage, the DECIDES Programme website, and the FCI website.

Tell us something about the most relevant resource inputs of your project/action

The most relevant resources are the people that have been working for the project at different levels: Interarts's team dedicated to the general coordination, administrative follow up and communication for this project is made of five people, but local human resources have been fundamental for the development of the different activities. The local team includes FCI/Mali's staff of 8 people, including three animators that teach young people communication techniques and provide them with relevant information about SRH. The FCI/Mali team has often carried out follow-up visits during the peer educators' activities development, as well as supervision visits at the partner vocational centres to support the teachers' work and at the health centres to collect data. Moreover, the AEJT in Bamako also provided a five people staff that directly supported the activities and the young people's action plan. The youth's actions have resulted essential to reach the goals: 10 young people trained in forum theatre that have staged in different occasions plays on SRH and 10 boys and girls that have acted as peer educators in their working and meeting places, and 10 youth that have hosted the 5 radio programs. Finally, 17 managers and 30 teachers of 12 Vocational Centre allow and develop lessons and activities for their apprentices.

As regards the financial input, the global budget of the project has been 144,530.85 €. The project has been co-financed by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) through its public call for development NGO's projects of 2013.

The total duration of the project will be 27 months: from 01/12/2013 to 01/03/2016.

¹³ Interarts YouTube channel, available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCz68syoceX4mkMZLGvEfr2A>



Tell us how you have attained the main change

The main challenge was represented by the fact that the main target is composed by the youth of the informal sector, often illiterate or with a low education level and with different and strong cultural and traditional beliefs affecting their sexual and reproductive health. Consequently, because of the difficulties to deliver to this group content about SRH and their rights it was important to do it with culturally adequate messages and through the appropriate channels. The active participation of the AEJT and of young people acting as peer educators has represented the most valued resource and effective way of getting to the target group and generating the main change in attitudes and behaviours.

Tell us the main area of impact of your project

It is fair to say that the main area of impact of the project is a long lasting change in attitudes and behaviours of the youth but also the other people involved in the project (such as teachers, managers, politicians of the Ministries and the Regional Directorates, etc.) towards Sexual and Reproductive Health issues and habits. Also, they have understood their rights and how to strive for their respect. DECIDES Mali IV has helped raise their awareness on risk behaviours, prevention and consequences related to Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV, but also unwanted pregnancy, excision, etc. Involving Vocational centres' managers and political decision makers and their understanding of the importance of the introduction of these matters in school curricula contributes to a change at a regional and national level that will benefit future generations.

The collected testimonials of the different beneficiaries¹⁴ (including teachers, peer educators and young people) have shown that the transmission of truthful information from reliable sources makes them feel more comfortable and strong when spreading the same content and messages in their environment (at home, at work and with friends). Besides, many young people trained as peer educators affirm that they feel more confident in talking in public and in front of other many people about SRH thanks to the training that they have received within the project.

¹⁴ For more information, see <http://www.interarts.net/en/noticies.php?pag=1&p=2439>



Which is the Big Idea behind your project/action?

The holistic, cross-sectoral and participatory approach to human rights and gender that takes into account social and cultural conditions is particularly relevant in Malian society where many different traditions, ethnic groups and several beliefs that directly or indirectly affect SRH coexist. Culture activities as well as taking into account cultural aspects have shown to be fundamental when mobilizing professionals and civil society to achieve equitable access to and exercise of sexual and reproductive rights, with special attention to vulnerable groups, such as the youth of the informal sector.

- ✓ "Young people the in the informal sector of Bamako and sexual and reproductive rights from a perspective of economic, social and cultural rights - DECIDES Mali IV" webpage with photos and links to related outputs: <http://www.interarts.net/en/encurso.php?pag=2&p=427>
- ✓ DECIDES Programme website: <http://www.decides.pro/home-3/>
- ✓ DECIDES Flyer (in Spanish): <http://www.interarts.net/descargas/interarts2067.pdf>
- ✓ DECIDES Flyer (in French): <http://www.interarts.net/descargas/interarts2068.pdf>
- ✓ DECIDES English description as in the Flyer: <http://www.decides.pro/about-decides/>
- ✓ JEKAFO Radio Programmes in Bamanakan: http://www.ivoox.com/Bamanankan_sb.html?sb=Bamanankan
- ✓ Beneficiaries' testimonials (English summary): <http://www.decides.pro/noticias-cpost/impact-on-bamako-of-decides-mali-iv-testimonials/>
- ✓ Beneficiaries' testimonials (in French):
 - <http://www.interarts.net/descargas/interarts2315.pdf>
 - <http://www.interarts.net/descargas/interarts2314.pdf>
- ✓ Video Culture and Sexual and Reproductive Health (in Spanish with French subtitles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgnLP9hP-ds>
- ✓ Video forum theatre, DECIDES Mali III (in Bamanakan): <https://plus.google.com/photos/105255063624155927485/albums/5608882693528485041?banner=pwa&authkey=Ci-8yrSnz8LsEw>