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2014

Annual activity report

Équilibres & Populations works towards the improvement of women's social status and living conditions, which are a crucial lever of fair and sustainable development. Our action is threefold, and all three components are complementary: sparking change, mobilizing leaders and empowering people.

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Sparking change

In partnership with local actors, Équilibres & Populations sparks social change dynamics at the very heart of the populations.

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Mobilizing

Équilibres & Populations mobilizes leaders to create a more favorable institutional and legal environment for human development, and more particularly for the improvement of women and girls' status.

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Empowering

Équilibres & Population empowers its development partners by strengthening their intervention capacities.

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Learn more about us

Équilibres & Populations was created by a team of doctors and journalists in 1993, in the context of the then upcoming International Cairo Conference on Population and Development. Équilibres & Populations works towards the improvement of women's social status and living conditions, which are a crucial lever of fair and sustainable development.

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Acknowledgements

To carry out its mission, Équilibres & Populations relies on many people and organizations that share its convictions and support its interventions. Members and volunteers who are the heart and soul of the associative life, financial partners and donors without the support of whom our projects could not be implemented, counterpart NGOs with which we have established strong and sustainable partnerships, experts and civil servants with whom we build policies and programs, journalists and internet users who pass on our information and messages...we truly thank you all for the trust you have placed in us. The purpose of this report is to show you our actions' impact.

In memoriam
**Marie-Claude Tesson-Millet:
a fight to put women at the heart
of development**



2014 was for all of us marked by the sudden passing of Marie-Claude Tesson-Millet, our president. As a doctor and a journalist, she created *Équilibres & Populations* in 1993.

Before many others in France, she had understood the importance of population issues for the world's future. During 20 years, with humility and perseverance, she promoted women and girls' rights to freedom of choice in terms of health and more particularly sexual health.

As a woman of conviction, she mobilized political leaders and members of parliament of every political hue, renowned experts and scientists, journalists and intellectuals, as well as the foundations and donors who have, over

the years, supported *Équilibres & Populations'* development and who still support its actions today. After the press group she had founded with Philippe Tesson, she lived this "second" life intensely, with as many demands for herself as for her team. She was able to fully trust everyone, with solid benevolence.

Few people can conciliate passionate commitment and open-mindedness, charisma and simplicity, and Marie-Claude Tesson-Millet had all these qualities. She used them to the benefit of a beautiful cause that we now carry on in her absence.

2014 at a glance

Equipop has carried out studies on adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in Benin, Togo and Niger. Through various missions, it has analyzed this sector's policies and programs in the three countries in order to highlight the UNFPA's challenges and opportunities.

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Equipop has been leading specific activities in educational facilities since late 2013 with the Amsopt to better include young people in the female genital mutilation abandonment process. These activities have reached nearly 5,000 students. The goal is to turn them into message and change bearers for their peers, their parents and those who do not go to school.

Equipop has had an impact on French policy by encouraging France to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights in the international agenda. It was particularly the case during the CSW, and even more during Cairo+20 which was held in New-York in September.

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Equipop has become a founding member of the European network END FGM. This network's purpose is to create an environment promoting coordinated and global action-taking from European decision-makers in order to end female genital mutilation and all other forms of violence against women and girls.

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In Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Togo, **Equipop** has supported and coordinated the organization of mobilization events in favor of young girls in situation of vulnerability. They brought together political leaders, civil society organizations and field actors. More than 660 people took part in these debates and 288 leading figures have signed a commitment paper.

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Equipop, along with 3 other European NGOs, has committed to enticing decision-makers throughout the world to place girls at the heart of the post-2015 agenda, within the framework of the *European Alliance for Girls project*.

Equipop has helped the Alliance Droits et Santé members inform West African citizens on the challenges related to family planning, sexual education and early marriage in an innovative way. **page 10**

Equipop has convinced 16 mayors from various municipalities of Ouagadougou to take into account family planning in their municipal development plans (PCD): a first in Burkina Faso.



After prolonged advocacy, **Equipop** has signed a collaboration agreement with the Burkinabe minister of health to authorize the experimentation of task-shifting in two regions of Burkina Faso. **page 24**

On December 1st, with associations coming from Cameroon, Burkina Faso and the Netherlands, **Equipop** publicly presented an economic study on the potential of female condoms in the fight against AIDS. The goal was to turn the spotlight on this means of protection over which women have full control and which offers dual protection against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

01

Sparking change

In partnership with local actors, Équilibres & Populations sparks social change dynamics at the very heart of the populations.







Adolescent girls' health and rights: sparking change through speech

Married adolescent girls, young girls who do not go to school, housemaids and street vendors: young girls in situation of vulnerability never express themselves. Their daily life is just a faint and distant echo for politicians and communities. In order for these young girls' situation to change, populations and political leaders need to mobilize themselves. Triggering debate on the matter within society is an essential step towards this mobilization. This is what Équilibres & Populations worked hardly on in 2014, along with its Alliance Droits et Santé partners.

THE RADIOS, POWERFUL PARTNERS

Allowing citizens to express themselves has always been very important for Equipop. Beyond the transmission of information, it is more a matter of triggering debate than of dictating the behaviors to adopt.

Equipop and its partners have hence increased the number of places where decision-makers, communities, young girls and field actors could meet. Within the framework of this program, radios have played a specific role. With the network Alliance Droits et Santé and the NGO RAES, Equipop has decided to create strong partnerships with the most-used medium in West Africa: radio. The goal was to create forums for debate and awareness-raising on themes such as family planning (FP), early marriage and discrimination against girls. The Alliance has created 61 shows broadcasted in 3 countries.

These shows have also been precious educational material for the associations. They were used to raise the awareness of the communities. Sharing these shows has made the facilitators' work easier and enabled them to share the communities' concerns, questions and preconceived ideas.

Local radios have also been precious partners during mass mobilizations. It was the case in Benin, for example, during the annual Savalou celebration, which brought together close to 200,000 people. The Alliance seized this opportunity to organize an awareness-raising event on FP and sexual education. The debates and skits which took place were broadcasted in the entire city through two local radios. Following this event, an increasing number of young people came looking for more information on FP. Proof that debates spark change.



3 COUNTRIES

Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger



10 RADIOS

from partner communities



61 SHOWS

were created



1843 BROADCASTS



4.1 MILLIONS

inhabitants in the broadcast range

Speaking openly

"It is different from other SRH programs" says a radio presenter from Niger, "because we were able to openly speak about the religious and cultural aspects that build our shared opinions on marriage and early pregnancies. We dared to address these issues directly and we clearly see how the communities get involved in these debates. Since they learn things, it creates discussions on subjects nobody wanted to talk about before because we didn't question our cultural customs. We also noticed another more quantitative effect: more women went to get female contraception in integrated health centers. They always had too much stock before, now they don't have enough!"

GIVING YOUNG GIRLS A CHANCE TO SPEAK TO CONVINCING POLITICIANS

In terms of advocacy, Equipop wanted to break with conventions. Official stances are too often formatted and couldn't be further from what happens on the field. It was hence essential to show politicians what adolescent girls went through every day. And who can better speak of their needs and their situations than adolescent girls themselves?

In Niger and 4 other West African countries, Equipop came up with an event format which gives young girls a chance to speak. With the support of the Ministry for Population, Women and Children, the event featured interviews of adolescent girls and an exhibition from the brochure "Young African girls: stories that count". A panel made up of speakers from various sectors (school principal, doctor, ministry representative, director of an association against violence towards women and children) then reacted to the difficulties highlighted by the girls.

Let's listen to our girls!

"In our country, about 75% of the girls are married early in regions such as Maradi, Zinder and Tillabéry. Many girls are too quickly snatched from the joyfulness of childhood, the discovery of numbers and letters and are abandoned to the dark world of early marriage. And these girls, our girls, often go through this wretched situation silently. The purpose of the debate we have organized today is to give them the chance to speak out and tell us what they are going through because of the decisions that we, adults, make for them, without taking them into account. Even if it is true that we most often think of what is best for them: do we really know that we have given them a life sentence?"

Facilitator of the debate *"Together let's make young girls' voices heard"* during the mobilization event organized in Niamey, Niger.

INTERVIEW

Alexandre Rideau, a communicator for development

Alexandre Rideau is the NGO RAES's director, which encourages the use of media, the web and mobile telephony to make discussions promoting health, education and civic rights easier in Africa.



According to you, what is the interest of community radios?

A community radio is an ideal medium to communicate with an entire community in its own language. Its implementation and use are technically easy and inexpensive, hence its presence in nearly all of Africa. It actively contributes to the community's development through information and knowledge-sharing and reinforces community cohesion and solidarity. In Niger, for example, radios play numerous roles as conveyors of information on health and education.

How has the Alliance worked with these community radios to introduce changes in favor of young girls?

Initially, the goal was to train the radio journalists and presenters as well as two people from each Alliance member association. The first benefited from the associations' expertise on sexual and reproductive health, and the latter learnt how to use the radio equipment and were able to truly collaborate with the radio hosts in order for their action on sexual health, procreation, family planning and gender equality in Burkina, Niger and Benin to be more effective. Several activities were carried out, including 9 technical support missions by the NGO RAES; the elaboration of a training manual on radio production techniques and a guide on the Sunuk-kadu strategy to train the associations on how to use the media; the distribution of equipment to the partner radios. Up to December 2014, 61 radio shows

were created (41 within the framework of the training sessions and 20 at the suggestion of the community radios) thanks to which we were able to address the themes from various points of view without losing our message. These shows were broadcasted 1,843 times!

What were the results?

The contents of the radio shows clearly improved. The journalists are now able to reinforce their reports' meaning and impact. They have learnt to think in advance about the points of view, the speakers and their productions' direction according to the goals set and their targets. The shows that were broadcasted have improved the populations' knowledge on themes such as sexual and reproductive health and gender equality, as well as the advocacy activities carried out by the Alliance members in each country. After several months of mobilization, the government of Benin has for example included the issue of vulnerable young girls in the national action plan for the repositioning of family planning, and the Nigerian minister for Population has made a commitment towards young girls' rights and has promised to call for the end of early marriage. These are encouraging results



Fighting against female genital mutilation: in both Mali and Europe, Equipop is on all fronts

For ten years, Equipop has been carrying out the project “Protecting the next generation” in the health district of Kayes in Mali, in partnership with the Malian Association for the following-up and orientation of traditional practices (AMSOPT). The goal of this project is to lead the district’s 250 villages towards the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM) in order to sustainably improve women and girls’ health and rights.

Simultaneously to its activities in Mali, Equipop has been including the Malian diaspora in the FGM abandonment process since 2009. 2014 was marked by the project's maturation in Mali and by Equipop's increased involvement in France and Europe on issues related to FGM.

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HERE AND THERE: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

The practice of FGM knows no borders. The first years the "Protecting the next generation" (Protéger la Prochaine Génération) project was implemented have rapidly shown Equipop how essential it was to include the Malian diaspora living in France in the activities carried out at community level in Kayes. It is a region of high emigration towards the Parisian region. The diaspora members remain strongly attached to their native villages and are stakeholders in the decisions made over there. And the abandonment of FGM is a fundamental step in the life of these villages. That is why the migrants must take part in it: to understand what is at stake and to help spark change, or at least not be against it.

In 2014, during the colloquium "The challenges of abandonment" organized by "Excision, parlons-en!", Equipop and its partners, AMSOPT and Entraide et Espoir, highlighted the necessity to build bridges between the changes occurring in Mali and the diaspora. This strategy was acknowledged as an innovative approach which promoted a sustainable abandonment of FGM well beyond borders.

EQUIPOP GETS INVOLVED IN FRANCE AND EUROPE

Thanks to its expertise on FGM-related issues and to the cross-border activities led between Mali and France, Equipop has become an essential actor in France and Europe. It has joined two association networks working towards the abandonment of FGM throughout the world.

In France, Equipop is a member of the mobilization "Excision, parlons-en !" and works to improve the understanding of FGM by publishing data and news related to its project. On a European level, Equipop has joined the ten associations which make up the "End FGM" network. The NGO is the network's French representative and carries out advocacy activities with its counterparts in order for FGM to be better taken into account at European level.



IT IS NOW TIME FOR EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION: KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW

Since the beginning, the project has been carried out step by step in the health district of Kayes. New villages were progressively added to the activities at each new stage. In 2014, the project reached 100 intervention villages. Equipop and its partners then decided to start an experience capitalization process to formalize the knowledge and know-how acquired over the years. The goal of capitalization is to share experiences and disseminate them. It also meets the project's mission which is to be copied in other regions where FGM is practiced.

With the help of a specialized consultant, Equipop organized a first capitalization workshop which lasted three days in Bamako, in November. This opportunity for discussion allowed the team members to share their experiences and identify the practices developed within the project's framework. Two other workshops will be organized in the year to come to complete this process.

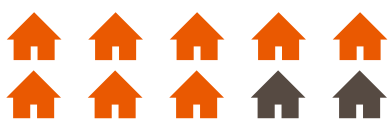


FGM AND CHILD MARRIAGE: SAME DIFFERENCE

Among the project's hundred villages, 45 have decided to go even further in the acknowledgment of women and girls' rights in 2014 by choosing to also abandon child marriage. From now on, girls will not be married before they reach the age of majority or without their consent. It is a revolutionary stage and it shows that the abandonment of FGM is the first step towards the acknowledgement and the end of other harmful practices.

Protecting the next generation in figures

100 intervention villages in the district of Kayes



80 villages have abandoned FGM since the project was implemented

In 2014

16 new communities officially abandon the practice of FGM

45 villages also abandon child marriage

INTERVIEW

Nafissa Touré, a woman committed to the abandonment of FGM

Nafissa Touré has been a facilitator since 2009 for the project “Protecting the next generation” which aims at the abandonment of FGM in the Kayes region in Mali.



Nafissa, you have been involved in the project “Protecting the next generation” for 6 years. Can you explain to us in what your work as a field facilitator consists in?

I have been working on the project since 2009. My work consists in informing, communicating and raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights to fight against FGM and violence based on gender, but also in promoting women and children’s rights through house calls and one-on-one discussions.

In 10 villages, I am the project’s intermediary and counselor for the communities and the religious and customary authorities. I identify and help in case of complications linked to FGM and other forms of violence based on gender in order for them to be medically and socially taken care of.

You help the communities towards the abandonment of female genital mutilation. What are the great changes you can account for in your intervention villages?

Before, talking about FGM was forbidden. With the awareness-raising activities all the social classes can talk about it. The leaders are more flexible. We have children who haven’t undergone FGM. The rate of early marriage has decreased. Women go to health centers more often for pre and postnatal consultations.

Medical care has been a great relief for women. Some women thought they couldn’t have children and eventually gave birth. One of them has even named one of her daughters after me. I am very well integrated in the community. We are sometimes seen as parents. Now, there are many more girls in school, which wasn’t the case before. There even are women in the villages’ decision-making dialogues, while it was reserved to men before.

What are the strong messages that you send to the communities to help them change their behaviors?

The messages were mainly aimed at showing the communities that FGM isn’t a religious practice. I have also insisted a lot on the medical consequences of FGM.

On top of awareness-raising activities, you help women suffering from FGM complications in a medical and psychosocial care system. Can you tell us more about the impact of this activity on the abandonment of FGM?

These women’s medical and psychosocial care by the communities was an essential step. It allowed us, with the help of partner health workers, to make the connection between the illnesses they suffered from and the practice of FGM.

02

Mobilizing

Équilibres & Populations mobilizes leaders to create a more favorable institutional and legal environment for human development, and more particularly for the improvement of women and girls' status.







“Cairo+20”: reinforced advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

During this symbolic year, Equipop helped reinforce France’s position in a very tense international context.

“Sexual and reproductive rights are universal rights that can be questioned under no circumstances. [...] They are the main conditions for equal opportunities between women and men. They must hence be protected everywhere [...]. It is high time the international community guaranteed universal access to family planning, safe abortion and sexual education.”

On March 5th, 2014, in the United Nations, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem proves to be very offensive.

Equipop and its partners had intensely prepared the UN's 58th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). These advocacy actions for sexual rights had reached several target, including the French minister for Women's rights cabinet.

2014, A NOT-TO-BE-MISSED ANNIVERSARY

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) had taken place twenty years early. For the first time, the countries of the world took a step back from the purely demographic approach and addressed human rights issues. *Équilibres & Populations* was created in 1993 within the framework of this event.

The Cairo programme of action came to an end this year. 2014 was hence devoted to this commemoration. The goal was to avoid an end-of-cycle and foster a new and essential dynamic.

The progress observed over the past twenty years isn't significant, populations' unmet needs remain very high. In some countries, the figures even show setbacks in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

GUARANTEEING OUR THEMATICS' VISIBILITY

In 2014, Equipop continued highlighting these issues' importance with the decision-makers. On top of this usual and fundamental work, it was even more necessary than before to be present during the major events. Equipop was part of the French delegation sent to New York in April for the Commission on Population and Development, the body responsible for the Cairo programme follow-up. Equipop then gave its recommendations to promote SRHR and particularly insisted on adolescent girls' situation.

This year's defining moment was meant to be the United Nations special session on September 22nd, 2014. A few days before, Equipop had officially met with Marisol Touraine, the French minister for Social affairs, Health and Women's rights, and Pascale Boistard, the secretary of state for women's rights. The latter spoke up in New York, much like what Najat Vallaud-Belkacem had done six months earlier.

FULL-SCALE REHEARSALS BEFORE THE SDGs

Even if France has played its part, “Cairo+20” didn't have the expected impact: real debates didn't take place because of the padlocked format and the conservative States were prepared to do anything to stop progress in terms of SRHR and gender equality. This bad full-scale rehearsal before the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 shows how essential it is for Equipop and other French stakeholders to remain mobilized.

EQUIPOP PROMOTES THE FEMALE CONDOM

Every December 1st, many events are organized for World AIDS day. Very few deal with gender inequality, even if the figures speak for themselves: in sub-Saharan Africa, the epicenter of the epidemic, women make up 57% of the HIV-positive population and this imbalance keeps getting bigger.

To set things right, Equipop organized a conference with partner associations from Cameroon, Burkina Faso and the Netherlands. The chosen point of view was very specific: turning the spotlight on the potential of female condom.

It is the only means over which women have full control and it offers dual protection against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. It broadens the range of prevention means all the while allowing women to freely have power over their sexuality.

Organizing such an event allowed us to show that local programmes do work and that, on a broader scale, economic efficiency would be guaranteed. However, in 2014, the female condom still receives 80 times less financial aid than male condom.

Taking into account issues linked to social norms and financially investing in such programmes were this conference's messages, which were then relayed by Francophone media.



INTERVIEW

Saskia Husken, an advocate for female condom

Saskia Husken is an advocacy officer at Rutgers, an organization working for the improvement of sexual and reproductive health and rights, just like Equipop.



What led you to collaborate with Équilibres & Populations?

Our advocacy officer, Yvonne Bogaarts, has been working for several years with Equipop's previous executive director, Serge Rabier, on issues regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights. When they talked about the advocacy part of our Joint Programme for Universal Access to Female Condom (condoms4all.org) on which I am working, they noticed that we didn't have a Business Case on female condom to reinforce our advocacy towards donors and agencies. Equipop decided to get involved in the drawing-up of this Business Case and help share our work with the general public, more particularly through the organization of a conference in Paris in November 2014 during which I spoke.

What was the purpose of this conference?

The main goal was to present the Business Case and see how it corresponded to the goals and achievements of our programme for Universal Access to Female Condom, and to present social marketing experiments in our partner country, Cameroon.

How can the female condom contribute to women and girls' empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa?

The female condom is a contraceptive over which women have full power: they can control its use. It is not the case for male condom, the use of which most often must be negotiated with her male partner, which leads to an interruption of the sexual relation.

The use of the female condom must be negotiated only once and the women can simply insert it before each sexual relation. The women and girls who take part in our programme say they feel much safer and ready for the sex act, because they can protect themselves.

Do you think the female condom can be an efficient way to reach the health-related goals the governments are currently negotiating in New York?

Absolutely. The female condom is on the United Nations Commission's list of vital products for reproductive health. It is currently the only developed method offering dual protection against unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. We are convinced that it must be part of the contraceptive means to which populations can easily have access all around the world. Men, women and young adults must be able to freely choose the contraceptive method they want.

More generally, what do you like most about your collaboration with Equipop?

Equipop is one of our sister organizations. It has a very committed and well-organized team with which we share the same values on sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as the same point of view on collaboration with our partners in developing countries.



Task-shifting in Burkina Faso: ensuring women greater access to family planning

In 2014, Equipop has signed a collaboration agreement with the Burkinabe minister of Health authorizing task-shifting tests in two regions of Burkina Faso. This agreement is the result of advocacy that Equipop has carried out over several years to meet flagrant needs in terms of family planning (FP).

TASK-SHIFTING: A PROMISING AND EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

Task-shifting is a process through which a health worker is authorized to carry out procedures usually assigned to his/her superiors. Numerous studies have shown that implementing such a process is very useful to face the lack of adequate human health resources. In 2006, the World Health organization (WHO) published a report “Working together for health” which brought to light the extent of the issue throughout the world. This report underlines this phenomenon’s importance in Africa.



Several factors can explain this situation. There aren’t enough training courses and faculties of medicine. Public spending in health isn’t enough to pay all the required health workers. Ironically, a great number of health workers in Africa are unemployed and are forced to leave, either towards institutions (NGOs and international organizations) or towards other countries. A true imbalance also exists in the distribution of health workers between the rural and urban areas. Facing this situation, task-shifting appears to be one of the main solutions to improve population’s access to health care.

EQUIPOP’S ADVOCACY FOR FAMILY PLANNING TASK-SHIFTING IN BURKINA FASO

Like many countries, Burkina Faso suffers from a lack of human health resources, more particularly in rural areas and in the family planning sector. However, the Burkinabe government has very quickly taken into account this crisis and adopted several measures and made commitments to deal with the situation. Beginning in 2006, the contraceptive products securing action plan highlighted the lack of qualified service providers for the offer of contraceptive methods, more particularly for long-term methods. In 2009, Burkina Faso took part in the Addis Ababa conference on human resources in maternal health. The government openly committed to developing a task-shifting process to compensate the lack of available workers to provide FP services. In February 2011, during the conference on “Population, development and family planning in Francophone West Africa: the need for urgent action” which took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso clearly identified several obstacles to family planning. The lack of quality FP services mainly caused by the lack of available health workers and the low demand at community level were highlighted.

Echoing this favorable context for the promotion of FP in Burkina Faso, Equipop started carrying out an advocacy campaign in 2011 towards decision-makers and fields actors in order to develop task-shifting for long-term contraceptive methods. After field visits, the organization of workshops and numerous meetings with the ministers of Health and the Promotion of women, Equipop succeeded in obtaining strong government commitments in favor of task-shifting.

TOWARDS EASIER AND GREATER ACCESS TO LONG-TERM CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS FOR BURKINABE WOMEN

The task-shifting principle



Once the necessary financial means are collected, the project will be implemented in the Center and the Boucle du Mouhoun regions, supervised by the ministry of Health.

Drawing on its experience and knowledge of family planning issues, Equipop will carry on its advocacy actions for the creation of an environment in favor of task-shifting. Within the framework of the collaboration agreement signed with the Burkinabe ministry of Health, Equipop will also help the ministry of Health and the project’s other partners (the Burkinabe association for family well-being and Marie Stopre International) in the

process implementation and in the appropriation of task-shifting at central and regional levels. Equipop will also start an experience capitalization approach to create a narrative of task-shifting actors and actresses’ experiences and to gather the acquired knowledge. It will be an easier way to disseminate the experience in other areas of Burkina Faso and more generally in West Africa.

Substantial FP needs in Burkina Faso

<p>16.2 % the contraceptive prevalence rate</p>	<p>24 % of women and girls’ needs in terms of FP are unmet</p> <p><i>(According to the 2010 Demographic and health study (DHS))</i></p>	<p>341 maternal deaths for 100,000 live births</p>
<p>6 children per woman on average</p>		<p>129 child deaths for 1,000 live births</p>

INTERVIEW

Ousmane Ouédraogo, a supporter of task-shifting in Burkina Faso

Ousmane Ouédraogo is the technical group on reproductive health's deputy leader and a key contact for Equipop in the implementation of task-shifting.



As the deputy leader of the technical group on reproductive health, what is your analysis of the family planning (FP) situation in Burkina Faso?

The FP situation is critical in Burkina Faso. It is very difficult for us to make things change in terms of contraceptive prevalence. The FP policies don't really succeed in reinforcing access to the services or in increasing the demand to meet the needs of rural populations, peri-urban areas and above all young people and adolescents. According to the recent PMA (Performance Monitoring and Accountability), unmet needs are increasing: 24% of women say it is difficult to have access to FP services because of price, distance and gaps in terms of qualified workers. More generally, the situation needs a stimulus package based on revolutionary strategies, among which task-shifting, in order to boost the indicators.

What are the policies, strategies and actions carried out by the State to improve the contraceptive prevalence rate?

The State has made some effort and has created a budgetary line to support contraceptive products. However, it is still difficult for the service providers to apply it in a harmonious way, mainly because of the edibles that aren't taken into account in the 50% discount on contraceptive cost. The sayana press experimentation, a new range of single-use contraceptive products in its pilot phase in Burkina Faso since July 2014, has had positive effect in high potential regions. However the challenge is to get this method

to communities. Weekly monitoring of the products has been presented as a good practice which contributes to the improvement of contraceptive security. In spite of these initiatives, the strategy's global effects can hardly be seen and the indicators are stagnating.

In November 2014, the ministry of Health signed a collaboration agreement with Equipop to authorize task-shifting tests in Burkina Faso. What will task-shifting consist in? Do you think it can be a successful strategy for FP?

In pilot sites, the health workers (nurses, midwives) will be able to offer long-term methods, prescribe the first pill and the injectable. In our context, I can't think of a more efficient approach than task-shifting. This strategy would help reduce the production costs that the clients have to pay for in order to have access to contraception in remote areas. Community involvement will guarantee the services' continuous availability and will make their access easier, in spite of poverty and sociocultural obstacles. The shy support to task-shifting is a salutary action. But in my opinion, it would be better to develop a real policy in order to scale up this approach via the support of technical and financial partners.



03

Empowering

Équilibres & Populations empowers its development partners by strengthening their intervention capacities.





Alliance Droits et Santé – 2 years of collaboration for women and girls' health and rights in West Africa

The network Alliance Droits et Santé was created in 2013 on 'Équilibres & Populations' (Equipop) initiative with the support of three of its historic partners in Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. The Alliance counts 11 members organizations in 2014. After two years of existence, actions and advocacy in the region, the Alliance has become a new key actor on issues related to family planning, adolescent girls and gender.

A NETWORK TO BECOME MORE PROFESSIONAL

One of this network's goals is to help the member organizations professionalize their internal management and the way they carry out their actions. The approach introduced by Equipop based on the EFQM model convinced them. 36 people from the Alliance were trained by Equipop, which then worked with all the organizations to make sure that they made this change dynamic their own and that it evolved. After the organizational diagnosis, the 9 CSOs prioritized changes which focused on 3 sectors: governance, management and communication. Concrete improvements were achieved: reworking the organizational chart, updating the associative project and the internal regulations, developing a website and canvassing new financial partners.

"Before we used to work on many things at the same time and we were always looking for funds without any clear strategic orientation. Thanks to our commitment in the quality approach we have acknowledged the importance of having a strong institution to be more convincing and to better defend women and children's rights."

Mrs. Pascaline FAGNINO,
Le Bacar's executive director
in Benin

Simultaneously, Equipop worked to help the members improve their two key skills for the organizations themselves the Alliance's benefit. These skills consisted in managing funds and using digital communication tools.



ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE FOR YOUNG GIRLS

The networking strategy, thought up by Equipop with NGOs that complement one another, turned out to be particularly relevant. Bringing together the technical skills and the institutional legitimacy of some members and the national mobilization capacity of others proved to be very positive for the mobilization of citizens and leaders. In Benin, for example, the Alliance members worked together to promote the implementation of the national budgeted plan on the repositioning of family planning. A campaign was carried out through press relations, TV and radio interventions. The goal was to address the politicians and mobilize the population in order for the government to launch this plan. The campaign was incredibly successful: the plan was officially launched in January 2015.

Within the framework of this campaign, and due to the fact that they were members of the Alliance, the NGOs were able to limit the risk of being exposed to retaliation measures during the advocacy actions they carried out towards the authorities.

ACHIEVEMENTS: YOUNG GIRLS ARE BETTER TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE POLICIES

On top of the FP plan launched in Benin in January 2015, thanks to their mobilization and their innovation capacity, the Alliance members succeeded in getting the authorities and the communities to discuss and position themselves in favor of young girls.

Working together as a network is a rewarding strategy which must be carried on. We can hope that Equipop and its partners will succeed in convincing their financial partners to keep supporting this approach.



INTERVIEW

Hamadou Hama Hawa, a stakeholder committed to young girls and women in Niger

Hamadou Hama Hawa,
treasurer for the
CONGAFEN, a member
association of the network
Alliance Droits et Santé
launched by Equipop in
2013.



How has the Alliance helped you over the past two years?

Thanks to the Alliance, the Congafen was able to collaborate with 10 other civil society organization from the 5 countries that make up the network and more particularly with Lafia Matassa and the Scouts du Niger. We benefited from a training session on organizational diagnosis and we strengthened our human and material resources. This training allowed us to rethink our fundamental texts as well as our administrative and financial management manual, all the while improving our communication on our mission and vision. The computer equipment also greatly helped us share information between one another. We also received great support to create shows with the community radios on themes such as early marriage, the importance of education for girls and the fact that they need to stay in school as well as the violence they suffer from. It helped us share our messages with both the rural and the urban population and increase our visibility and credibility with communities and political authorities.

Within the framework of your actions with the other members in Niger, what changes in favor of young girls were you able to observe?

Through our actions, young girls were able to break the taboos. I noticed that the girls are eager to take part in the awareness-raising activities. They are the first to arrive. Since then, they have been talking about their problems and go to the health centers. Early and

forced marriages have been denounced to the customary authorities who have taken action in favor of the girls. Some parents have promised they would keep their daughters in school and not marry them. It has changed a lot compared to what it was before.

What mobilization action do you remember most?

Among all the actions that we carried out, the one that marked me most was the mobilization event in favor of adolescent girls. A lot of political, administrative, customary and religious leaders attended this event, as well as parents, young people, civil society representatives and financial partners. The debate on early marriage, girls' education and violence against women was very lively. Several media covered this event and the minister for Population, the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children gave her official support to this initiative and cause. What we achieved with this event will be used in other regions of the country.

How do you see the future?

The Alliance is a great example of a successful collaboration between organizations which share the same values and it must continue to exist. The Congafen wants to obtain the EFQM label. In order to do so, and with the support of the Alliance members, we must carry on our efforts to reinforce our expertise and skills.



Adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in West Africa: 2014, a year for experience capitalization and expertise-sharing

Equipop has been directing its work towards young girls in situation of vulnerability since 2005, when stakeholders in charge of health and youth issues didn't yet take this theme into account. Today, it is called on to help NGOs and institutions on subjects related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

IT ALL STARTS WITH A PARADOX

Even though adolescent girls largely contribute to the fertility and maternal morbidity/mortality rates and are the first victims of new HIV/AIDS infections (young girls represent 75% of the new HIV infections among young people aged 15 to 24 years old) and of sexual violence, they remain invisible. The statistics and programmes focusing on children aged 0 to 5 years old and on women of childbearing age do not report the situations of adolescent girls aged 10 to 14 years old and analyze in a very incomplete way the situation of girls aged 15 to 19 years old. For all these reasons, and also because their status is not acknowledged, they benefit very little from national programmes and are under-represented in health facilities, including in youth centers. It is more particularly true for the youngest (10-14 year olds), the girls who do not go to school, who are married or who work (housemaids and street vendors).

That is what convinced Equipop and its partners¹ to take action on this particularly sensitive subject, as it deals with social norms that are not in favor of girls' rights, especially sexual rights, in societies where sex remains a taboo. With the support of the European Union and of the French development agency (AFD), Equipop was able to provide an effective response to this paradoxical situation. That is how, between 2010 and 2013:

- **national advocacy actions were carried out** in order for adolescent girls to be better taken into account in policies and programmes,
- **local actions were implemented in 6 pilot sites²** to improve adolescent girls' situation and living conditions

1. CeRADIS in Benin, ASMADE in Burkina Faso, Lafia Matassa in Niger

2. One rural zone and one urban zone in Benin, Burkina and Niger

AN INTERVENTION LEADING TO CHANGE

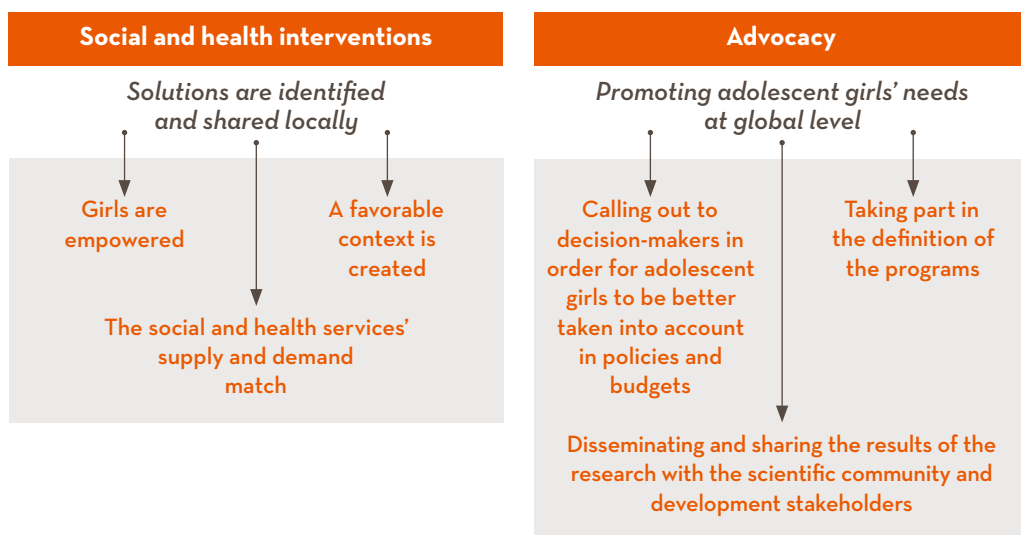
The activities were carried out within the framework of a strategy based on 5 principles:


- **action-research:** creating knowledge and identifying adapted actions,
- **gender consideration:** empowering adolescent girls and involving boys,
- **participation and involvement of local populations:** working with endogenous players (facilitators, intermediaries), mediation and social mobilization
- **skills reinforcement** for the beneficiaries, the targets and the project's teams,
- **linking field actions and advocacy.**


Capitalizing on these experiences allowed us to formalize an intervention model which leads to change (see the diagram on the following page).


It shows that the actions carried out with everyone's participation and involvement (national decision-makers, young girls, community members, local health providers) helped break down the barriers that prevented young girls from going to health facilities. We can also confirm that social changes in favor of girls' rights, including on sexual and reproductive rights, are possible.

An intervention model leading to change



 *Before the programme, I didn't have confidence in my potential, to the point that I had no initiative nor ambition. With the awareness-raising activities, the literacy sessions and thanks to the job I have learnt, I want to fulfil myself. With my husband's support and approval, I want to create my own company.*
A married adolescent girl and a mother, Benin

 *The image I had of them has changed. I learnt that street vendors didn't sell themselves, they sell their merchandise and not their body, they are people who fight to achieve something in life.*
Health worker, Burkina Faso

 *Now the girls themselves bring their parents to the authorities in order not to get married. A girl refused to get married because she saw girls her age who got married and who had problems afterwards.*
Mother, Niger

THE MODEL WAS COPIED AND THE EXPERTISE ACKNOWLEDGED

During the entire intervention, particular attention was given to communication and information sharing through advocacy, the participation in international colloquiums and the publication of material. Thanks to these actions and to the concrete results that were achieved, others copied the model. For example, in Niger, the ministry of Health, with the support of United Nations agencies, decided to launch the Adolescent girls Initiative in 2013, "Knowledge for dignity", by standardizing the Défi Jeunes approach. It now impacts 10,000 adolescent girls in the whole country.

At sub-regional level, the expertise acquired on the subject was put at the service of the UNFPA to carry out studies on the situation of adolescent girls' SRHR and formulate recommendations to operationalize the commitments made on the subject. This collaboration led to the publication of 3 reports on Niger, Benin and Togo in which Equipop has expressed recommendations that are currently being implemented by UNFPA regional offices and its partners.

INTERVIEW

Monique Clesca, a leading figure committed to adolescent Nigerian girls

Monique Clesca is the UNFPA's Resident Representative in Niger. She has known Équilibres & Populations for a long time and is an essential partner to promote adolescent girls' cause in Niger.



For how long have you known Équilibres & Populations and have you had the opportunity to work together in the past?

I have known Équilibres & Populations for more than 10 years. We worked together for the first time within the framework of an advocacy workshop Equipop had organized with 3 or 4 West African countries when I was a regional communications and advocacy advisor for behavior change. The UNFPA's Liaison Office in Dakar had then asked me to work on these issues with journalists, members of parliaments and NGO representatives.

You are now the UNFPA's Resident Representative in Niger. What led you to collaborate with Equipop on the issue of adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights?

We worked on two elements together. The first was a study of the policies, programmes and girls' opportunities regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Niger. We have just completed an in-depth analysis of health intervention in Niger for young girls. It will help us work with our partners to adjust the future developments of the national program to fight against cervical cancer.

More particularly, how was the study "Adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in Niger" used and how was it useful?

We have shared it with partners from various sectors, with both the civil society and the government. As for the recommendations, some are starting to be implemented, some already were. It is a live study that gives us,

and all the partners, avenues. It is a good thing that we have a document with data we can use and which gathers what was just orally said before.

Are you considering pursuing your collaboration with Équilibres & Populations?

Yes. And we have even talked about the possibility of working together on a training module dealing with female leadership.

More generally, what do you think of partnerships between United Nations agencies, national authorities and NGOs?

I think they are essential. It is part of our work strategy, especially at the UNFPA Niger. When you are in a vulnerability logic, as it is the case in Niger because of the difficulties to have access to basic services and of the security problems, we have no other choice than to work with the civil society. It is rather weak and we must reinforce it. The civil society works closely with the communities and it is very important. It is like an expansion of the long arm of the State that does not succeed in dealing with the entire population. It is a win-win, essential and almost unavoidable partnership.

04

Learn more about us

Équilibres & Populations was created by a team of doctors and journalists in 1993, in the context of the then upcoming International Cairo Conference on Population and Development.

Équilibres & Populations works towards the improvement of women's social status and living conditions, which are a crucial lever of fair and sustainable development.

Équilibres & Populations currently has sixteen employees and fifty members and runs on an annual budget of €1.5 million. Our headquarters are located in Paris and we also opened a subregional office in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, five years ago.

Our vision and values

We, at Équilibres & Populations, firmly believe that sustainable development cannot be achieved as long as the female half of humanity is left behind. Improved social status and living conditions for women, and improved sexual and reproductive health and rights in particular, are both a lever and an indicator of development.

Our vision is based on a number of core values:

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Équilibres & Populations calls for the universal recognition of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. This must be achieved for everyone, everywhere, through political and social participation and appropriation.

WELL-BEING, FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Équilibres & Populations considers that the well-being of a people is not measured only by economic indicators but also by the ability of individuals to make enlightened and autonomous choices, while also accepting their own responsibility towards society.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

Équilibres & Populations stands up for a conception of human development that gives everyone the same social, political and economic opportunities. We want a development that cares about fairness and solidarity, especially between genders and generations, for the success of the present days must not be achieved to the detriment of part of the population or of generations to come.

These values are reflected in our guiding principles

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

At Équilibres & Populations, we systematically adopt a collaborative approach in our action. We see such an approach as a guarantee of quality in terms of ownership, accountability, sustainability, rooting, empowerment and legitimacy.

This collaborative approach implies the establishment of a sustained dialog and aims to closely associate the various stakeholders to our action: our partner associations, health and social workers, parliamentarians, decision-makers and of course the populations of our target zones.

PARTNERSHIPS

Instead of expanding internally, Équilibres & Populations has chosen to develop the range and the quality of its actions through a strategy of alliances and multi-actor partnerships (CSOs, parliamentarians, journalists, researchers, civil servants, technical experts...). This structure relies on the complementary nature of our various know-hows and increases adaptability and reactivity.

For more than ten years now, we have maintained a continuous collaboration with West African associations with which we share a common vision. Building upon their subtle and thorough knowledge of the communities and of their dynamics, these partners promote change in their respective countries. Through the years, we have established trusting relationships based on these complementary assets that enable us to build and carry out together programs for the populations and advocacy activities that are adapted to local sociopolitical situations.

NETWORKING

Équilibres & Populations has also successfully created or joined synergies between development actors: international solidarity organizations (ISOs), research and academic institutions, public entities, corporations...

We collaborate with ISO networks in France, in Europe and in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. We are involved at different levels: collaborating to collective work and decisions, coordinating working groups, participating to collective organs (Boards).

Our mission and actions

Our organisation works towards the improvement of women's living conditions and social status, which is a crucial lever of fair and sustainable development.

In French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, part of our action has progressively shifted to focus on girls, and more specifically on these girls and young women whom existing policies and programmes do not manage to reach.

Building on our specific expertise on sexual and reproductive health and rights, we have progressively developed a broader project that involves various action fields (health, education, economy) and systematically includes a gender-based approach.

In order to carry out our mission in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in Europe and North America, we work with a number of actors, including:

- civil society organisations with which we maintain a close partnership bond;
- traditional leaders, women groups, youth clubs;
- NGO coalitions and platforms;
- health professionals;
- technical and administrative experts;
- researchers;
- academics;
- journalists;
- parliamentarians;
- political and administrative decision-makers.

Our action is threefold, and all three components are complementary:

Sparking social change dynamics at the very heart of the communities through creating and implementing pilot projects in collaboration with local partners;

Mobilizing leaders to create a more favourable institutional and legal environment;

Empowering development partners by strengthening their capacities.

Expertise and know-how

Through the years, we have enriched our knowledge and know-how by drawing from diverse fields: political science, public health and medicine, sociology, anthropology, economy, demography. We make sure to systematically intertwine these various perspectives in order to promote as integrated an approach as possible, which is a significant asset in the comprehension of the logics of the various actors we work with: men or women from the communities in which we work, community leaders, partners, health professionals, decision-makers...

Our work is based on three main fields of expertise.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Équilibres & Populations has acquired a thorough experience of advocacy towards political actors in international cooperation. We rely on a solid knowledge of the actors and mechanisms that underline public policies and their implementation.

At the local, national and international levels, this enables us to inform, influence, and raise awareness amongst decision-makers (governments, ministry cabinets, high-level civil servants) so that they support specific programs, defend political reforms and make sure they are efficiently implemented. Our expertise is now acknowledged and sought-after by parliamentarians.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Équilibres & Populations has a renowned expertise in the field of public health. More specifically, our team has acquired transversal knowledge on the way health systems work in West Africa and in-depth expertise on specific issues such as family planning, emergency obstetric care, fistula, or female sexual mutilation.

The association uses knowledge to focus on prevention (health education, harm reduction, shifts in social norms...) but also on the way health services are organized (health personnel training, users' participation, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health integration).

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND GENDER

Équilibres & Populations draws its approach from the field of social science. We seek to meet the needs and interests of all members of the communities we work with, which is why we adopt a gender-based approach. This does not mean targeting women as an isolated group but rather focusing on the way individuals act, react and interact according to their gender and social position under the influence of dominant sexual and family models. Our analysis highlights the fact that being a man or a woman in a given society implies socially built roles that need to be understood and questioned if one is to trigger social change.

The gender approach is a decisive lever to promote new behaviours. It requires both women's empowerment and men's participation. Taking gender into account contributes to reaching a twofold objective. Firstly, a political objective: rebalance relationships between men and women for greater justice. Secondly, a socio-economical objective: build the foundations of a development that is truly sustainable because it involves both halves of the populations.

In order to implement our project, and in close collaboration with our partners, we mobilise three main types of know-how:

PROJECT ENGINEERING

As a leader organisation or within consortiums, Équilibres & Populations has developed planning, piloting and coordination capacities. Together with our partners, we identify needs, plan strategies of action, define collaborative and gender-sensitive methods, mobilise resources, manage technical and financial monitoring activities, carry out evaluation of the process and outcomes and capitalise our experience.

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY

Équilibres & Populations facilitates the access to knowledge and the understanding of the issues related to our mission with a permanent will to make social demand more visible and to bring forward local capacities. We also have an influential role in the shaping and monitoring of public policies and programmes through activities such as: event planning; study tours; awareness campaigns; creation and edition of documentation materials; individual response to solicitations from journalists, parliamentarians or experts; collection and critical analysis of legal documents and public policies or programmes; shaping and diffusion of position papers; creation of or participation to institutional consultation mechanisms; facilitation of or participation to study groups.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Équilibres & Populations helps strengthening the capacities of the various development partners and facilitates experience sharing amongst them. We implement support and consulting activities, co-conduct joint diagnoses, facilitate meetings, supervise or support our partners on the field, participate to the elaboration of didactic tools and design and carry out training sessions.

Partnerships

Célestin Compaoré, a key partner for the Alliance in Benin

Célestin Compaoré is the President of the NGO SOS/Jeunesse et défis in Burkina Faso. This association, a member of Alliance Droits et Santé and a partner of Equipop, empowers the Burkinabe youth through programmes dedicated to health, gender and capacity building.



What motivated you to become a member of Alliance Droits et Santé and therefore a partner of Équilibres & Populations?

Being part of a group of people who share the same values and work on the same issues than us was what motivated us. I have been working on issues linked to women and young girls for more than 10 years, and being able to work with other structures on these themes is very rewarding.

Getting to know Équilibres & Populations was an incredible opportunity. The training sessions we attended thanks to the Alliance were closely related to our actions and perfectly corresponded to our organizational needs.

How have you benefited from this partnership?

Équilibres & Populations has really helped us on an institutional, programmatic and capacity building level. Regarding our organization, it more particularly helped us carry out our actions for young girls. Thanks to the capacity building sessions we were able to identify our strengths and weaknesses in order to develop ourselves and better define our organization, all the while keeping in mind the question of young girls. On top of that, we were able to reinforce our advocacy skills, both individually and with the Alliance Droits et Santé. More generally, thanks to this partnership, we met other civil society organizations focusing on the same issues and with which we had never worked before. We joined forces for young girls and shared our experiences.

This partnership with various organizations was also very profitable internally. We were able to maximize our skills, improve task-sharing and above all the quality of our service. That is what's most important.

Thanks to this partnership and to networking, we were able to obtain real commitments in favor of young girls through social mobilization in some municipalities. For example the town hall of the 12th arrondissement in Ouagadougou has officially promised to take into account young girls in situation of vulnerability in the next municipal development plans. It is a highly useful partnership. I would even go so far as to say that it is an amazing asset for all of us.

What do you think the future holds for this partnership?

We are confident about the future. We want to continue working together, hand in hand, and share our experiences, our shared vision and our skills for young girls.

Continuing this partnership will also help us understand how we can keep on improving our missions and our structure by capitalizing on what we have learnt and by sharing our experience with others.

Networks

Équilibres & Populations has always considered collective work as a powerful lever for change.



EuroNGOs

www.eurongos.org

EuroNGOs is a European network of NGOs, experts in sexual and reproductive health and rights.



F3E

<http://f3e.asso.fr>

The F3E or Fund for the promotion of cross-disciplinary and preliminary studies and assessment is a French network of NGOs and communities dedicated to improving the impact and quality of international solidarity stakeholders' actions.



Coordination Sud

www.coordinationsud.org

Coordination SUD is the national coordination for French international solidarity NGOs. It supports and represents their stances with public and private institutions in France, Europe and throughout the world.

EQ
PO
OR

In 2014, the NGO has remained involved in many networks in France, Europe and Francophone sub-Saharan Africa. Among them:



Genre en action
www.genreenaction.net

Genre en Action is an international network promoting the integration of gender equality in development policies and programs.



EndFGM
www.endfgm.eu

EndFGM is a European network of NGOs promoting European action to end female genital mutilation.



EFQM
www.efqm.org

EFQM (the European Foundation for quality management) is a European organization which aims to give organizations a shared frame of reference to help them move towards excellent practices.

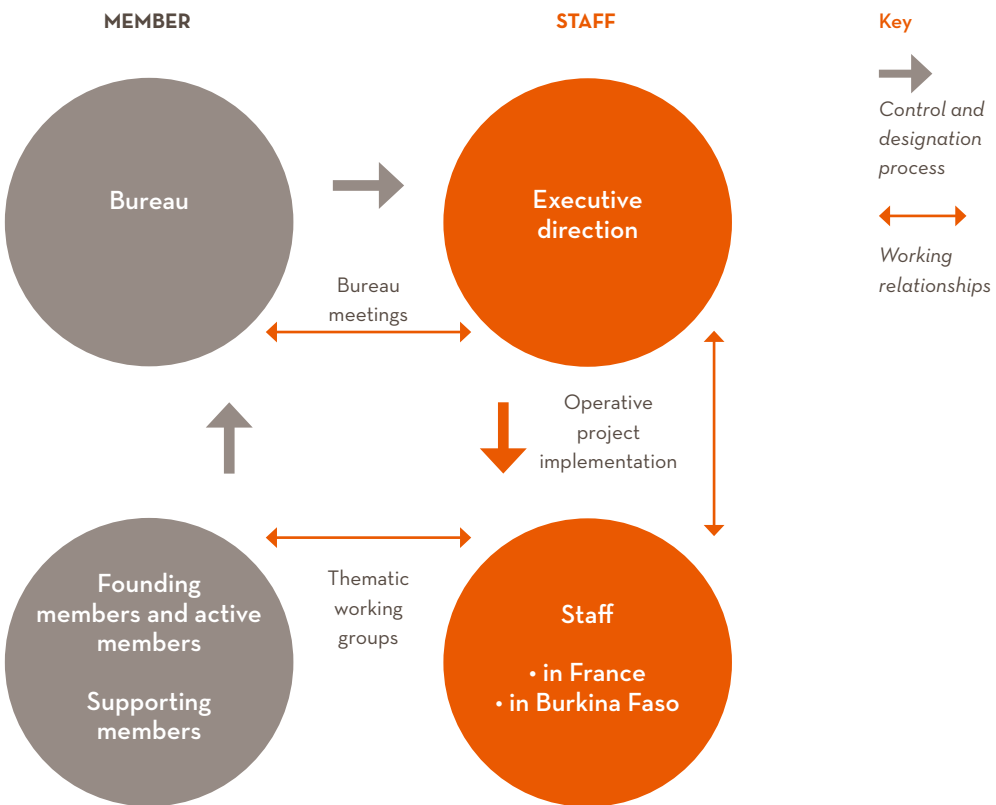


Alliance Droits et Santé
www.alliancedroitsetsante.org

Alliance Droits et Santé is a network made up of French and West-African civil society organizations which aims to improve women and girls' status in West Africa.

Civil activism and professional commitment

Équilibres & Populations can count on 53 members (doctors, journalists, development professionals) who meet at least once a year in a General Assembly. The General Assembly elects a Bureau every three years. Our project is implemented by a multidisciplinary team made up of 17 staff members in 2014.



OUR BUREAU

Dr. Marie-Claude Tesson-Millet
Chairwoman

Dr. Claude Sureau
Member

Pr. Pierre Foldes
Member

Dr. Annick Schwebig
Treasurer

Dr. Claude Dumurgier
Member

Bureau meetings are generally held on a quarterly basis.

Pr. Jacques Milliez
Secretary-general

Dr. Alain Marié
Vice-Chairman and Chairman in September 2014

OUR STAFF

Direction

Serge Rabier
Executive Director

Aurélie Gal-Régniez
Deputy Executive Director

Team*

Marine Casaux-Bussièrè
Project officer

Sibiri Koné
Liaison officer

Nicolas Schlegel
Accountant

Aurélie Desrumaux
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Rémi Minoungou
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Clémence Schricke
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Sylviane Evide
Accounts and payroll Administrator

Rodrigue Ngouana Ngoufo
West Africa Office coordinator

Brigitte Syan
Advocacy officer

Sanije Hoxha
Administrative and financial Project officer

Nathalie Perrotin
Communications officer

Caroline Traoré
Organizational development officer

Adama Kaboré
Resources mobilization officer

Dominique Pobel
Senior programme officer

Claire Veyriras
Advocacy and communications intern

Caroline Kientz
Advocacy and communications intern

Nicolas Rainaud
Advocacy officer

CONTACT US AT: INFO@EQUIPOP.ORG

* Alphabetical order

Alain Marié, Équilibres & Populations' new and committed Chairman

Alain Marié, vice-Chairman of the Groupe Profession Santé and Équilibres & Populations' new Chairman, has been a member of the association's bureau since the beginning.



Why did you join Équilibres & Populations?

I joined Équilibres & Populations at the beginning, because Marie-Claude Tesson-Millet asked me to. The work we had done together at the *Quotidien du Médecin* over the years had maybe showed her my interest, apart from medicine strictly speaking, for public health issues and more particularly women's health.

Why do you hold this cause dear?

I am convinced that fighting for women's right to education, health and freedom to build, by themselves, their lives as women and maybe as mothers, is essential. Because it is fair. Because this evolution leads to economic development.

It is also highly important to act where the needs are most obvious and try to obtain concrete results. That is why we have chosen to focus our actions in West Africa: it is a priority.

This field commitment has obviously drawn the attention of the doctors that we were, Marie-Claude and I. All the more so since these commitments were based on the support to local teams and not on standardized programmes thought up in Europe.

As the NGO's new Chairman, how do you see your commitment?

It is twofold. First of all by contributing to funding and to the development of new field programmes, even if I can count on the teams' professionalism on that matter.

More importantly, I think my role will consist in giving more visibility to the association, in France, by increasing communication, organizing conferences... By trying to reach the general public. Of course it implies looking for new donors, new partnerships.

According to you, what are Équilibres & Populations' future avenues for development?

I think one of the priorities is to act more and also to talk more. Act more because the actions that we and others carry out do not cover all the problems and regions of West Africa. On top of our renowned know-how in the treatment of fistula and the fight against genital mutilation, we would like to develop our actions in favor of young girls' protection and access to education for example.

Talk more, and more particularly with the French people, because we think that the experience we have acquired on the field must involve all our fellow citizens, on a humanitarian level, and also because some of the issues we have encountered in Africa are present in our cities, our societies. Above all, we think that local actions in favor of women's rights must be included in a more global, worldwide, approach. In other words, we cannot fight sexual violence in Africa if we lose interest in sexual violence in France, for example.

Managing the association: achieving change to improve the quality of our actions

After having existed for more than 20 years and being renowned for its know-how and expertise, Équilibres & Populations has reached a development stage which now enables it to develop itself. This organizational maturity concurs with important transformations of its general environment. Among other things: the security situation in West Africa has worsened, European donors' budgets are being restricted, the financial partners' requirements in terms of fund management have increased and the local civil society is changing its dynamic. That is why, over the past two years, Équilibres & Populations' teams have been carrying out various internal changes to adapt to this new context in order to maintain the quality of our actions.

More particularly, in 2014, Equipop has achieved its digital transformation. The organization has developed an intranet and acquired a project management software program. These tools have led to an evolution of our professional practices. They have resulted in improved rigor and collaboration in the organization. Equipop has also increased its presence on social networks thanks to a regularly updated Facebook page and a very active Twitter account.

As the number of audits and controls is increasing, Équilibres & Populations has improved its ability to respond to them in an effective and reactive way. As it often coordinates projects involving several local actors, Equipop acts as a gatherer and a guarantor, which is extremely costly in both energy and time. The main remaining challenge is to succeed in building the necessary resources to help our African partners better understand financial partners' requirements.

In terms of management, the organization has made progress on experience and expertise-sharing. The goal was to decompartmentalize our work all the while promoting organizational learning. We wish to create a "stock" of knowledge and know-how that can be shared and that everybody can use to foster our actions. One significant result is that we are now systematizing experience capitalization and the publication of reports. This dynamic is also useful to mobilize the knowledge we have acquired in order to help other organizations. It was for example the case when we carried out situational studies with the UNFPA on how adolescent girls were taken into account in the policies and programmes.

The need to question the economic model on which the NGO relies on to act has been considerably discussed internally. We will do our best to respond to this concern in the upcoming months by pursuing our efforts to diversify our resources.

Équilibres & Populations' budget

RESOURCES

In 2014, Equipop's resources amount to 1,470,116 euros, which represents a very slight decrease of 0.3% compared to 2013 (1,475,116 euros).

The share of private funding represents 69% of our resource, from a majority of American international foundations. 2014 was marked by the second year of the project "Alliance Droits et Santé", supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This project aims to promote the sustainability of civil society commitment for reproductive health/family planning/gender in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa.

This year, institutional sources represent 27% of our resources, 19% of which are from French bilateral cooperation institutions (French development agency, Research institute for development) and 8% from multilateral cooperation institutions (United Nations agencies).

Equipop succeeded in reinforcing and developing new technical and financial partnerships. Diversifying resources and collaboration is a key element of our projects' dynamic.

EXPENSES

84% of our resources are allocated to the NGO's social missions. The structural costs are managed and remain steady. Equipop's total expenses for 2014 amount to 1,469,931 euros and have increased by 1% compared to 2013 (1,455,915 euros).

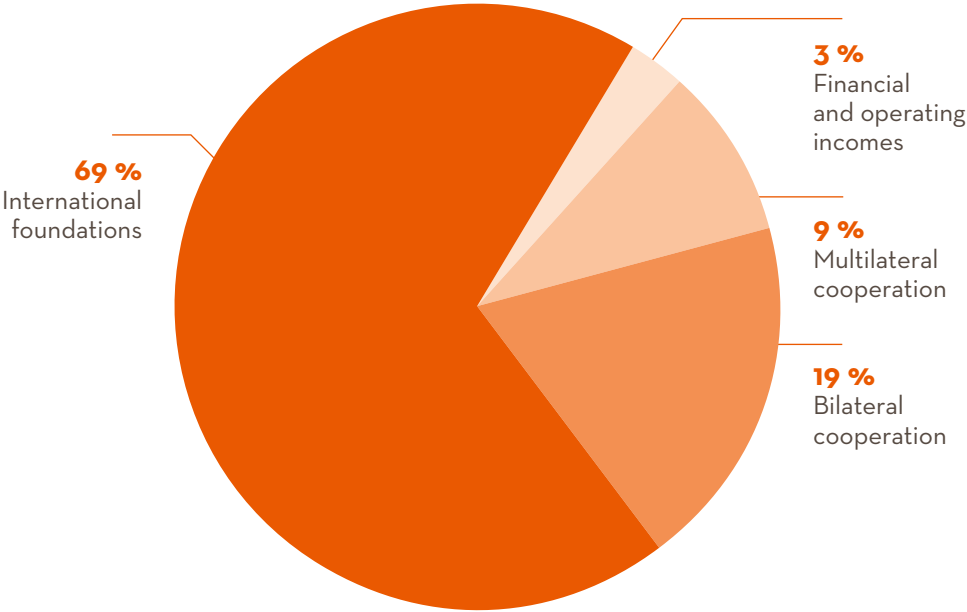
The steady level of expenses is mainly due to the development of the activities carried out in West Africa, mainly through the projects "Alliance Droits et Santé" and "Protecting the Next Generation". It can also be explained by the development of our partnerships in the sub-region (UNFPA, Futures Group, Pathfinder).

The human resources budget has not changed since 2013. A slight increase occurred between 2012 and 2013 due to the implementation of the project Alliance Droits et Santé. The financial years' budget is balanced with a surplus of 185 euros.

However, our goal remains the same: building up more significant stock on the medium term. Increasing capital stock would more particularly allow us to increase our intervention capacity on innovative activities.

Équilibres & Populations draws up annual accounts that are audited by Mazars SPCC, external auditors. The 2014 annual accounts as well as the external auditors' report are available in full on www.equipop.org.

In 2014, 84 % of our resources were allocated to our social missions. In spite of a harsh economic context that affects many organizations, Équilibres & Populations has succeeded in maintaining its budget and financial balance, ending the year with a surplus.



Équilibres & Populations' resources in 2014

Perspectives for 2015

2015 will be a pivotal year for both Équilibres & Populations and development policies in general.

The sudden passing of our founder and Chairwoman in 2014 requires great reorganization, all the while keeping in mind the orientations that were decided upon over the past few years.

We will have to overcome three main challenges: redefining and galvanizing our organization's governance, reinforcing the teams, improving management and mobilizing new resources for our actions. Regarding this last matter, we must secure the necessary means to continue carrying out our actions to support the West African civil society. In order to do so, the Bureau members who, for the most part, have been with Equipop since the beginning, will work hand in hand with our staff which is greatly involved in a continuous development and professionalization dynamic to ensure the quality of our actions. This collaboration will be based on a clear and unifying associative project: improving women and girls' living conditions by promoting change through pilot programmes, mobilizing influential leaders and supporting development partners.

More generally, a new framework for development will be adopted in 2015. The Millennium Development Goals are coming to an end and will be replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals that are to be approved by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. Before that, the 48th session of the Commission on Population and Development as well as the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be great opportunities to remind the entire world that it is essential for the new framework for development to prioritize young girls' and women's universal access to their sexual and reproductive health and rights, based on what the 179 States attending the ICPD in 1994 had acknowledged. Taking into account gender equality and human rights in a cross-disciplinary approach is fundamental. States such as France have no other choice than to promote these goals with great ardor. 2015 will be the final stretch and there is no time for diplomatic moves anymore. That is what Équilibres & Populations will endeavor to defend with know-how, creativity and resolution.

To hear more from about Équilibres & Populations, stay tuned.



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equipop.org
To get informed
and take action.



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Via our newsletter
To receive a summary
of our greatest moments
on a regular basis.

Credits

The activity report
is also available online:
www.equipop.org

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