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2011

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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01

Sparking change

Together with local partners, Équilibres & Populations works at the very heart of the communities to advance the cause of women and girls. One day, soon, being born a girl won't be a handicap anymore, and female sexual mutilation will be eradicated. It is possible. Just follow our lead.

Page 2

02

Mobilizing leaders

Ever since it was created, Équilibres & Population has been informing decision-makers, encouraging them to take action, monitoring the follow-up to their pledges. Such a tremendous work would not be possible without the contribution of other key stakeholders such as parliamentarians, researchers, organizations and journalists. Here is a review of our 2011 achievements, from Paris to Ouagadougou.

Page 12

03

Empowering people

What is the common ground underlying surgical fistula trainings in Mauritania and the support provided to Burkinabe organizations in their fundraising activities? That same will to empower West African stakeholders, which has been our credo for many years.

Page 22

04

Learn more about us

In order to fulfill its mission, Équilibres & Populations relies on a number of core values, develops partnerships, mobilizes resources and engages committed, skilled, complementary men and women.

Page 32



01

Sparking change

Together with local partners, Équilibres & Populations sparks dynamics of social change at the very heart of communities.



What if being a girl was not a handicap anymore?

Chantal is from Zogbodomey. She is married as a third wife and pregnant with her second child at age 15. Fati is from Saaba. She does her best to make ends meet and to support her family by selling fruits on the markets. Mariam was 10 when she left the bush to go work as a maid for her 'lodger' in Ouagadougou, two years ago. Awa is from Loga. She is 13, has been taken out of school and is 'waiting' to be married... Beyond the diversity of their situations, all these girls share common features: they are deprived from education and their marital status or activities should not be those of children or teenagers.

If they were taken out of school before their brothers, either to be married, to become street sellers or to be sent in the cities as little maids, it is because they were born girls in areas where poverty and social insecurity are very high. These girls are poorly educated, they lack resources and life has often separated them from the security of their family or social network. They are therefore highly vulnerable to current social norms and under the strong domination of older people,

men in particular. They are victims of rapes and sexual intercourses they cannot negotiate, for they are denied the ability to advocate for their own rights and integrity and have no access to information, prevention, protection and care services.

(RE)CONSIDER GIRLS

Communities stigmatize girls, presenting them as loose, uncontrollable sex addicts that either deserve to be abused or need to be 'tamed' by marriage. Teenage girls, despite being the most exposed to high-risk early pregnancy, unwanted pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infections, are still overlooked by public policies and international development aid programs. This is what we aim to change.

In order to identify the factors that prevent young girls from expressing their need for sexual and reproductive health services, and to establish a baseline for further community reflection on the issue, a major first step has been to identify and map these socially

Cotonou and Zogbodomey in Benin, Niamey and Loga in Niger, Ouagadougou and Saaba in Burkina Faso... What do those six West African localities, rural or urban, have in common? The fact that, since the beginning of 2011, they provide girls aged 8 to 18 with specific facilities where they can relax, learn, plan out their future and get support for their life project to be accepted by their families and communities.

isolated, prematurely married young girls, give them a voice and help them express what they go through, their struggles and their needs, to better understand and raise awareness on their daily lives, but also to survey their families and friends to better comprehend the image given to these girls by their communities.

ENGAGE COMMUNITIES

The output of this participatory action research work has been shared and commented in many community meetings. Families, stakeholders, healthcare professionals, employers and market managers have progressively realized the extent of their responsibility and acknowledged the role communities have to play to improve these girls' status and ensure the fulfillment of their rights. An inclusive, need-based response is progressively being implemented around three pillars: build their capacities and strengthen their skills to foster empowerment; establish a dialogue with the communities to impulse social

change and improve the acknowledgment of the girls' status; adapt the services provided by health and youth centers to the specific needs of adolescent girls.

EMPOWER PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Currently, in each location, about twenty girls meet at least once a week with skilled female facilitators who provide them with a flexible training which combines information about health, hygiene, available services and rights, and capacity ad life skills building. In addition to these regular meetings, "opportunity days" are organized: they consist in visiting local services or public institutions and meeting their staff. This first 'supervised' contact gives the girls enough confidence to walk in such facilities and also raises awareness among service providers on how to specifically treat adolescent girls.

Additionally, each group works on artistic projects (sketches, songs, poetry, theatre...) designed to publically draw the decision-makers'

attention and encourage them to commit in favor of girls. In a second phase, trainings in functional literacy and financial management will be added to the curriculum to foster the girls' economic and financial independence.

DISMANTLE STEREOTYPES

In order for the groups to be accepted and for the girls to be allowed to join and take part in the activities, mediation with the families has been essential, and remains a daily battle. However, mediation is not enough. For the girls to be able to fully benefit from their newly acquired skills and claim their rights, it is crucial to change the way members of the community look at and behave towards women in general and girls in particular, and to impulse social change towards greater gender equality.

Work with boys and men is under way, through community activities implemented in favor of teenage girls. In Burkina Faso, a network of 'mères-éducatrices' (tutoring mothers) is being organized for the young maids and street sellers. In Benin, efforts to dismantle gender stereotypes are being made with the help of peer educators and community facilitators. In Niger, the authorities engage to promote school attendance for girls and prevent early dropouts. Everywhere, the attitude of

service providers towards young unmarried girls who come to the clinic is changing: girls are less stigmatized and better attended, in a more adapted environment. In Benin, where first-time mothers traditionally give birth at home, all the married girls who benefit from the program have given birth in a maternity clinic, assisted by skilled professionals.

This outreach work is carried out by teams that are specifically recruited within three partner NGOs¹. We can also count on methodological support from the Population Council and its expertise on the girl issue, on *le Monde selon les Femmes* for the inclusion of the gender approach in all activities, and on the Institute of Tropical Medicine of Antwerp for all public health related aspects. Finally, this outreach work documents and illustrates the talking points of the advocacy activities implemented in all three countries in favor of a better inclusion of the girls' specific needs in the national policies, programs and legal framework.

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

Delphine Ilboudo, an unreachable girl who was finally reached

INTERVIEW

Delphine Ilboudo is 16 and she lives in Saaba. She is one of the girls participating in the activities Équilibres & Populations and its partners have implemented in the area. She agreed to give us an interview after a meeting dedicated to forced marriage.

Delphine, when did you join the project?

I joined in March 2011. It was Raki who brought me to the project [Ed: Raki is one of the facilitators from Asmade, our partner NGO].

Do you like taking part in the meetings? Why?

Yes, I like coming here because we get advice on things I didn't know about. I especially like the talks on issues that concern women, like family planning for instance, or how to be careful in our relationships with men.

I have learnt that a girl could go to the healthcare center and have access to family planning. I didn't know that. I didn't know that young people could go to social workers and talk about their problems either. I also found out I was entitled to an official ID.

Did you make any new friends here?

Yes. And we don't only meet here at the center. We carry the supplies and the dishes together; we walk together when we sell. We also give each other advice on how not to get pregnant for instance.

How did your family react to your participation in the project?

My family supports me. They have noticed some changes. And since they cannot talk to me about sex or girl problems, they think it's a good thing for me to come here, it makes it easier for them. Every time there is a meeting, my brothers always remind me of the time, to make sure I'm not late.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

I think it would be great if we could get some help with our activity, some training. I would like to learn how to sew, so I can become a seamstress and go work with other people in a workshop.

I would also appreciate some support for my parents, because they don't have much.



Kayes: towards the end of female sexual mutilation.

In Mali, 85.3% of women have suffered female sexual mutilation. This practice, also called female circumcision, includes all forms of surgical removal of the female external genitalia, total or partial, and all types of other alterations made for cultural reasons or other non-therapeutic motives. The western region of Kayes, located at the border with Senegal, is one of the areas where FSM are the most prevalent.

Since 2006, in the Kayes health district, Équilibres & Populations and its Malian partner Amsopt (Association malienne pour le suivi et l'orientation des pratiques traditionnelles néfastes) are implementing an inclusive pilot project that supports the communities of 250 local villages in their will to eliminate FSM. The aim is to demonstrate that social change can be achieved and that the experiment can be scaled up, through health-based and right-based promotion activities. This project is supported by the French Ministry of Home Affairs, UNICEF, the Australian Cooperation, the AstraZeneca foundation and the Wallace Global Fund.

A PROGRESSIVE, COLLECTIVE PROCESS

The project strategy is based on a step-by-step process which offers a progressive coverage of all the villages in the Kayes district. The process consists in a long-term follow-up of all villages that have already expressed their will to abandon FSM, while also fostering change in other communities.

In 2011, the project has reached 100 villages of the area, all linked by marriages, among which 60 were already part of the previous phases of the project and 40 were newly included.

STRENGTHENING THE PROJECT TEAM

In order to reach out in the very heart of communities and to strengthen the cooperation with healthcare and social authorities, the project's team has been strengthened and expanded. It now includes ten female facilitators, three assistants and a project manager. At the onset of the project, the team received training in interpersonal communication, on

Since 2006, Équilibres & Populations, together with its Malian partner, promotes the abandonment of female sexual mutilation (FSM) in the Kayes health district. We aim to develop a pilot project to show that social change is possible and sustainable on the condition that communities themselves define FSM as a harmful practice.

the implications and consequences of FSM and on gender issues. Following an in-depth assessment of existing tools, Équilibres & Populations decided to provide each facilitator with a FSM-specific advocacy kit developed by PSI Mali (Population Service International).

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Awareness raising activities have reached over 20,000 people. Behavior change is promoted through focus groups, home visits, counseling sessions and community radio programs.

To foster community support to the project, FSM informative talks have been given to community and religious leaders, village chiefs, village relays and women's group representatives.

These talks have favored better reception of the project in the communities, as testifies a village leader: *'Last June, members of Amsopt came to my village to present the project. After they left, I gathered my community and discredited everything they had said. I now admit I was wrong. By my lack of knowledge, I misled my people. From now on, this practice will be abandoned in my village and measures will be taken'.*

TREATING COMPLICATIONS AND STRENGTHENING THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

FSM have numerous harmful consequences on the health of women and children. In order to soothe this daily suffering, the project includes virtually free care for FSM-related pathologies. This is a crucial element: clearly show the obvious link between sexual mutilation and its repercussions on health to strengthen the impact of advocacy activities. It is also an effective way to work closely with

local doctors and health professionals, who are offered, within the project, trainings on the impact of FSM and on how to treat complications. This aims to prevent FSM from generalizing as a medical act.¹

In 2011, 375 women had their FSM complications treated. Diaba Soucko is one of them: *'I had trouble urinating and I benefited from the project. Now the pain is less acute and I can urinate every day. I still struggle sometimes and I would like to be able to urinate like all the other women'*.

The project also takes part in the strengthening of the women referral system between the various levels of the health pyramid, according to the type of care they need. Through a fruitful cooperation with the National Program against Mutilation (PNLE), health and social care authorities and doctors, specific care schemes and adapted tools have been developed.

ENGAGING THE MIGRANTS

Since they are crucial actors in the abandonment process, migrants who come from our target-villages in Mali but live in Ile-de-France (Paris and suburbs) have been engaged by our partner FECODEV (Femmes et Contributions au Développement). Fifteen awareness-raising sessions have been organized to inform the members of the diaspora about the Malian project and spread advocacy against FSM in France.

PERSPECTIVES

Results achieved in Kayes show that it is possible to change representations and social norms by working with communities that are bound by marriages and through communication strategies that encourage behavior change.

However, it is a sensitive process that requires constant engagement with the communities. Pockets of resistance still exist and our work must be continued in order to maintain the hard-fought ground gained since the beginning of the project. A mid-term assessment will be carried out in 2012 to refine both the results and the strategy we develop in Kayes. Social change is under way; it is for us, together with the communities, to make it sustainable.

1. FSM are sometimes performed by medical doctors or other health professionals in health facilities, in exchange for money.

Fatoumata Sangare, a deeply committed employee

INTERVIEW

Fatoumata Sangare is one of the key people of our 'Protect the next generation' project. She was taken on board in 2011 during the project's expansion phase. She works in Kayes as a project team manager and also supervises activities in local villages.

What made you decide to commit and promote the abandonment of sexual mutilation in Kayes?

I chose to join the effort on the FSM issue because it is a harmful practice for both women's and children's health. My commitment goes way back: when I lived in Mopti, I contributed to the creation of an organization dedicated to this issue. Kayes has one of the highest prevalence rates of the country. For me, working here is a way of contributing to the decrease of female sexual mutilation and to the improvement of women's health and rights.

How are attitudes evolving in the communities?

Since I have been in this project, I have noticed considerable change in the communities we work with. At first, many village chiefs refused to have us come and talk about female circumcision in their village. On a number of occasions, our facilitators have been thrown out of villages. Then, with the help of mediation and awareness-raising activities, they changed their mind. Now, some village chiefs attend our talks and support the facilitators' points. Beyond FSM itself, I have also noticed some broader changes, in terms of hygiene and sanitation in particular. For

instance, after the rain season, we had a cholera outburst in Kayes, so we started to give prevention and information talks. Now, women avoid using standing water.

What were the highlights of the project this year?

There were so many! In Segala, the village chief had a baby girl. He stated officially that she would not be circumcised, as an example for the rest of the village to follow. In some communities, new-born girls have been named after our facilitators, as a thank you for their work. Communities are very grateful. This year, a 16 year old girl with an obstetric fistula was cured.

Two traditional cutters have also given their knives to our facilitator in front of the whole community.

What new orientations do you think the project should take in the coming years?

I think the project should eventually include literacy training for women in our target villages. Literacy rates in the area are very low, especially for women and girls. Teaching them to read and write would improve their status even further.





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Mobilizing leaders

Équilibres & Populations mobilizes leaders in order to foster a favorable institutional and legal environment for human development and for women and girls in particular.



600 million girls and one G8/G20 summit: parliamentarians have been heard

'We, children of Mali, would like to take the opportunity of this G8/G20 meeting to share with you our present concerns and uncertainties about the future in three main areas : access to education, health and employment.' This is how Aïssata Bocoum, 14, opened her speech during the first session of the summit, held in the French National Assembly. Her audience was made of sixty parliamentarians from 35 countries around Europe, Asia and America. Aïssata, who is a representative of Mali's Children Parliament, noted that despite her government's efforts, most Malian girls are still highly vulnerable in all aspects of their lives, including education: *'Clearly, girls still face many obstacles when they try to go to school or to stay at school. Girls who are lucky enough to go are still victims of forced marriages and have to drop out anyway. Many girls go no further than primary school because they have too many chores and their parents cannot afford to educate them. In addition, there are not enough female vocational training centers designed for girls who have dropped out of school.'*

FIGURES DON'T LIE

What Aïssata Bocoum was then pointing out is the vicious circle that keeps the girls vulnerable, sometimes extremely so. As a preamble to the summit, Danielle Bousquet, French representative for Côtes d'Armor (French department located in Brittany), had outlined this category of the population: *'Right now, there are, on our planet, around 600 million girls aged 10 to 24. Many of these girls are in a vulnerable situation. Once they have been taken out of school prematurely - at age 8 or 10 - these girls disappear from the radar screen of public policies, precisely at an age when they face the biggest dangers: malnourishment, poor global health, child marriage, early childbearing, unsafe abortions, violence of all types (including prostitution), HIV/AIDS infection, etc.'*

Numbers speak for themselves: 70 % of the 130 million young people who do not attend school are girls. In developing countries, one girl out of seven is married before she turns

On May 16 and 17, 2011, parliamentarians, civil society members and researchers agreed on the importance to include girls in current and future development policies. This event underlines the ability of Équilibres & Populations to set priorities on the development agenda.

15 and 38 % of girls are married before their eighteenth birthday. In Sub Saharan Africa, in the 15-24 age group, prevalence of new HIV/AIDS infections is eight times higher in girls than in boys.

ACKNOWLEDGING IS NOT ENOUGH

Despite all the alarming evidence, girls are still left out of public policies and development programs. Although their unmet needs are the highest and most urgent ones, they are still not taken into consideration, mostly because of the lack of visibility and of deep-rooted social barriers. It is precisely to expose this absurd paradox that Équilibres & Populations came up with the idea of holding this summit, in collaboration with the 'Parlementaires en Action' group lead by Danielle Bousquet, the European Parliamentary Forum for Population and Development and the French Movement for Family Planning. However, highlighting the problem was not enough. It was crucial to establish concrete

action strategies to foster human development through a fair and effective entry point: girls. In order to achieve this objective, the summit was to be an opportunity to gather the expertise of various actors (researchers, parliamentarians, civil society) and create synergies between them.

Girls from developing countries were not to be presented as victims but, on the contrary, as a powerful driving force capable of, according to Danielle Bousquet, *'deploying a huge potential providing they are empowered and take charge of their own destiny'*, and being real *'development levers'*, as stated in the summit's title.

THE EXAMPLE OF AIDS STRATEGIES

To complete the work achieved in plenary sessions, working groups were constituted to discuss specific themes such as 'Overcoming gender discrimination in development policies : a fair share for girls', 'Creating safe spaces for girls', 'Population, gender and

rights' (before the UN Rio+20 Conference) or 'The feminization of AIDS : why did traditional prevention approaches fail ?'.

Regarding the latter, debates have shown that traditional approaches have failed partly because they were based on a 'western' vision of the epidemic. Teenage girls are actually protected neither by their family, nor by education, not even by marriage. In Sub Saharan Africa, which is by far the most affected area, AIDS is increasingly female, and increasingly young. Two factors can explain this evolution. First, gender: women are faced with numerous social, cultural, economic and legal barriers that increase their risk of being infected. Second, age: teenage girls are socially less included than their male counterparts, and their sexuality is a huge taboo.

Building on this conclusion, participants to the workshop have identified two approaches : promote programs that build the girls' capacities and encourage a change in social norms within a broader prevention effort, and address the issue before the girls turn 12, the decisive age at which the start to face all types of risks.

THE CALL HAS BEEN HEARD

At the end of the summit, parliamentarians signed an appeal to the G8/G20 leaders, echoing the words Aïssata Bocoum pronounced to open the summit: *'We, children of Mali, ask the G8/G20 authorities to engage in the elaboration, adoption and implementation of programs that will improve children's school attendance, health and employment, especially for girls, and especially in developing countries'.*

Consciousness actually grew in France over the following months: in late 2011, a working group on girls was created upon a request from Henri de Raincourt, the French Cooperation minister, who had pronounced a speech during the summit, just as Roselyne Bachelot, minister of Solidarity and Social Cohesion. On the international stage, our joint advocacy efforts resulted in the creation, by the United Nations, of an International Day of the Child Girl, on the 11th of October of each year.

Danielle Bousquet, a representative who gave her voice to girls

INTERVIEW

Danielle Bousquet, representative for Côtes d'Armor (part of French Brittany), has put a lot of efforts in the promotion and advancement of gender equality in several areas, on a national (Social Affairs Commission, National assembly delegation for women's rights, study group on population and development) as well as international level (Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, International Parliamentary Union).

Why did you take up the cause of girls?

Girls from developing countries, although they are vital for the future of our planet, draw very little interest. To me, this paradox itself makes them one of the most significant battles to be fought in terms of development and equal rights.

Did the civil society/parliamentarians cooperation work well in this initiative?

Absolutely. And it needs to be further developed. If girls are now an international focus, it is because civil society fought for them.

There is a right-based approach and a result-based one. Are both approaches complementary?

This population has no rights and is not deemed worth having any. I therefore think the right-based approach is crucial. However, many decision-makers do not share this opinion, and it is necessary to move onto the result-based one. I don't see why both approaches should be antagonistic: both are complementary and as necessary as the other. Arguments must be oriented according to the audience.

You are very actively involved in promoting gender equality in France. Is it important for you to link this action with international issues?

Definitely, yes. Civilizations and cultures may have different impacts, but it is a fact deep that gender inequality exists everywhere, here and there. Every time you promote women's rights somewhere, in France for instance, it benefits women and girls from all around the globe. Similarly, you cannot address women's rights in France without including women's rights in general, and everywhere.

What can be done for men to understand and engage in the advocacy in favor of girls?

Anyone who believes that social justice is the key to humankind's future is by definition a stakeholder. People, men and women, who do not share this demand for social fairness, are very hard to reach. The important thing is to talk about the issue, here, and there, tirelessly, continuously.



Ouagadougou Conference: governments and donors commit for family planning

What was at stake? Demographer Jean-Pierre Guengant (from the French Research Institute for Development), the author of the country factsheets and regional summary for the 'How to reap the demographic dividend? Population at the heart of development dynamics' study carried out in the concerned countries', had stated that 'a simultaneous, strong, non-ambiguous commitment from governments, civil society, donors and development partners [was] crucial if we were to achieve satisfying results'. And that is indeed what was achieved in Ouagadougou (8-10 February 2011) following the invitation and call of President Blaise Compaoré. First, acknowledging of the unbearable tensions between population dynamics and development in the subregion. Then, discussing how to achieve a successful rebound for family planning (FP). Finally, initiating the process that will allow each country to establish and implement its action plan. While the UEMOA

(West African Economic and Monetary Union) delegations were making such commitments, donors and other partners² committed to engage the necessary technical, human and financial resources for any country with a real, strong political will.

In an area where family planning were never successful (with an average use of modern birth control methods under 10% and nearly 30 % of unmet needs), the process was finally initiated. The challenge was now to keep it going.

1. Members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) plus Guinea, Ghana, Mauritania and Nigeria.

2. World bank, African Development Bank, European Commission, German Cooperation, as well as the American (USAID, the Hewlett and Gates Foundations) and French (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency) long-time supporters.

Announced in the 2010 activity report as one of the two events that were to mark the action of Équilibres & Populations in 2011, the Ouagadougou Conference entitled ‘Population, Development and Family Planning in French-speaking Western Africa : the urgency to Act’ was up to our many expectations.

GIVE CIVIL SOCIETY THE VOICE IT DESERVES

The impulse was first given with the regional conference ‘Engaging Civil Society in the repositioning of Family Planning in French-speaking West Africa’ held in Mbour (Senegal) at the end of September. The Ouagadougou Conference, while including civil society, had not given it the importance corresponding to its crucial action in sexual and reproductive health and PF, nor to its capacity to influence governments’ follow-up to their Ouagadougou commitments.

The undeniable and indispensable know-how of civil society will have to be included in the elaboration and implementation of the governments’ action plans. In Mbour, civil society actors began to constitute a regional coalition through which they to gain efficiency and further promote issues such as FP&Youth

(girls in particular), the need for male engagement and task delegation, that had not been sufficiently insisted upon in February.

Since the beginning of 2011, Équilibres & Populations, in collaboration with J-Pal economists, has been working on a research-action project on task-delegation in Burkina Faso to ensure effective access to long-term contraceptive methods for all women and couples. This will naturally be achieved in cooperation with the local health authorities and professionals.

MAINTAIN FRENCH COMMITMENTS

The final step of the 2011 process was the workshop ‘How to accelerate the implementation of the Ouagadougou Conference’ held in Dakar in late November, held ahead of the World Conference of Family Planning entitled

'Research and best practices in Family planning'. The workshop was the opportunity to make progress on the creation of a roadmap designed to ensure an effective implementation of the process initiated in Ouagadougou. It was also an ideal forum to highlight the absolute need to engage youth and women – who have been left out for too long – and the necessity to train all staff in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

The role played by Équilibres & Populations in launching and maintaining all aspects of the movement initiated in January 2009 was crucial, in Paris and Ouagadougou. This role goes far beyond practical organization, and is perfectly in keeping with our threefold project: mobilizing leader, and empower people in order to spark social change dynamics. Regarding FP, this was achieved once again in late 2011, when we obtained from the French Ministry of Social Affairs that the General Assembly of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition be hosted in Paris in October

2012. The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition takes worldwide action to ensure an effective access to sexual and reproductive health products and services for all. Hosting the General Assembly of such an influential organization can only strengthen the commitments made by France on this issue over the past few years, commitments that were once more largely impelled by Équilibres & Populations.

Delphine Barry, a key institutional partner of Équilibres & Populations in Burkina-Faso

INTERVIEW

Équilibres & Populations has been working in Burkina Faso for over ten years, through the AQUASOU (French Cooperation) and PASSAGE (European Union) programs. However, our action has taken full speed and has become sustainable with the opening of our local bureau in early 2008, as confirms permanent Secretary of the National population Committee (CONAPO) Delphine Barry.

How would you qualify the part played by Équilibres & Populations in Burkina Faso?

Équilibres & Populations provides decisive support to local civil society and contributes to the engagement of NGOs and other organizations as population and development actors in various national activities, including World Population Days, the amendment and validation of national population reports and advocacy activities for further inclusion of girls.

How would you describe the relationship between CONAPO and Équilibres & Populations?

Équilibres & Populations supported CONAPO in the preparation of the 'Population, Development and Family Planning in French-speaking Western Africa : the urgency to Act' Conference by dealing with both the participation of subregional stakeholders and the donors, as early as 2009, as I remember our first work session to prepare the Conference took place in December 2009 in Kampala. This joint preparation work further strengthened the existing partnership bond between Équilibres & Populations and CONAPO. This



bond grew stronger and both our organizations went on cooperating on a number of activities, including : regular high-level advocacy (joint facilitation of conferences given to the National Assembly under the leadership of the Parliamentary Network for Population and Development), including some of Équilibres & Populations activities in CONAPO's annual working plan (funded by UNFPA), and associating CONAPO in the awareness-raising activities and subregional FP conferences initiated by the Ouagadougou Conference in February 2011.

How do you see our collaboration in the future?

In the future? I naturally see an ongoing, sustained collaboration in the implementation of the national policy action plan in Burkina, but also of the reproductive health/ family planning project (population component) initiated by the French Development Agency in keeping with France's Muskoka pledge.



03

Empowering people

Équilibres & Populations
empowers development
partners by building their
capacities.



Équilibres & Populations supports the fight against fistula

Équilibres & Populations committed to support the 2004 UNFPA Campaign to End Fistula from the very start of it, by raising private funding from American Foundations to launch pilot activities, conveying the key message to scientific societies of urology and gynecology, obtaining resources from the French Cooperation.

From 2006, benefitting from funds donated by the Flora Family Foundation, Équilibres & Populations was able to provide support to the UNFPA-supported Mauritanian national program against obstetric fistula (OF). This support consisted in sending experts (Équilibres & Populations members) to Mauritania to perform surgery on fistula patients and train local health professionals. These missions were kept going for 5 years and a film

was made that raises awareness on OF and shows the exemplary partnership established in Mauritania between NGOs (French and local), the government and the UN.

In 2006, Équilibres & Populations also obtained a small budget from the French Cooperation to carry out an assessment and establish new guidelines for action. It resulted in the 2007 priority solidarity fund 'Improving women's health in Africa' which had a strong focus on OF and made Équilibres & Populations, along with UNFPA, an actual operator, especially in charge of experience-sharing between French and African urologists, of putting forward successful experiences in African countries and of creating a network of French-speaking experts.

In the absence of reliable data, one can only estimate that for each woman who dies in childbirth, fifteen to twenty are left damaged and suffering for life. The most terrible of these conditions is obstetric fistula, which adds social exclusion to physical suffering and causes incontinence, perineal tissues being destroyed after excessive labor during delivery. Équilibres & Populations has long been fighting for the prevention and treatment of fistula and renewed this engagement in 2011, when the organization's core project was redesigned.

2011, A TURNING POINT

By 2011, all these activities were coming to an end. Timing was therefore ideal for an assessment. Naturally not a final one, for it was inconceivable to abandon such a major issue for the status of women in Africa today, but also in America and Europe not so long ago. Indeed, wasn't the first 'fistula hospital' opened in New York at the end of the 19th century? Did we not overcome OF in Europe by improving living standards and women's access to skilled healthcare professionals during pregnancy and childbirth?

In Africa, however, early marriage and pregnancies still prevail and, when combined with extreme poverty, foster the most terrible morbidity that can affect women, and girls in

particular. In Africa as everywhere else in the world, women who can afford giving birth in safe conditions do not suffer from fistula.

A THREEFOLD FRAME

Even though the core project Équilibres & Populations has been redesigned, reducing the prevalence of fistula will remain one of our main objectives, for it is a 'historical' focus and perfectly in keeping with our new project. Future actions implemented by Équilibres & Populations should be threefold:

- a wider approach of maternal health, including a human rights component (with a focus on gender inequality) and a socio-economic component, for fistula is clearly a poverty-related condition.

- no opposition between prevention and surgical treatment
- two crucial aspects are to be included in future activities: the need to africanize surgical skills and management, and the need to engage SCO's in the prevention and rehabilitation components.

Équilibres & Populations will also provide two types of resources to OF operations:

- around thirty 'fistulologists' from partner expert networks
- our political and social influence and connections, and these of our partners in Benin, Niger and Mali.

Based on the aforementioned, considered countries are Burkina-Faso, Senegal and/or Benin. In Benin, France has initiated, pursuant to the Muskoka initiative, a five-year 10 million-euro plan (out of the 100 million total) to help reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. This plan offers very favorable perspectives for a renewed successful partnership between UNFPA and Équilibres & Populations in the coming years. In any case, the final country selection and project outline will result from a forthcoming exploratory mission.

A GEOGRAPHICAL MATRIX

In order to select ideal locations for future projects supported by our organization and determine the best opportunities, a 'mapping matrix' will be used. The matrix will include data such as the geostrategic risk, existing national action plans for sexual and reproductive health or family planning, the presence and quality of technical partners (ministries, UNFPA, African Ob-Gyn Society, etc.) and their advocacy capacity or expertise level.

Diene Keita, a supporter of the ongoing collaboration between UNFPA and Équilibres & Populations

INTERVIEW

Fistula being a major focus of the Cairo Conference, who better than UNFPA representative Diene Keita could give an insight Équilibres & Populations' activities in Mauritania?

What was the nature of the UNFPA/Équilibres & Populations collaboration in Mauritania?

It has been a very successful partnership, and has provided the country with concrete and sustainable outcomes. It was initiated in 2005 but came to full speed from 2008 onwards, providing effective support to the MOH through the National Reproductive Health Program. The partnership fostered the inclusion the fight against fistula in safe-maternity activities, improved coverage in emergency obstetrics and capacity building among the local healthcare professionals.



211 fistula patients treated and healed (including many cases of complex, or 'hopeless' fistula) in 11 missions, has also been a great booster and a very efficient advocacy tool for the end of fistula in Mauritania. However, efforts and advocacy must be maintained. To

avoid a loss of momentum in the fistula campaign, 'Hope surgery', a UNFPA-funded medical film by J. Kowalsky that shows the work of Équilibres & Populations, should prove a very useful tool.

Now that you are the UNFPA representative for Benin, what perspectives do you see for the partnership between our two organizations?

I am truly hoping to use our combined expertise and comparative advantages to help the people of Benin, and particularly the most vulnerable: women, young adults and teenagers. Under the implementation of the Muskoka initiative for mortality and morbidity reduction in priority areas, UNFPA Benin wishes to expand its Reproductive health for Young People activities, to which Équilibres & Populations could no doubt provide adequate expertise.

What is the current situation regarding fistula in Mauritania?

The country can now count on sufficient human resources to manage medical and surgical treatments, prevention and rehabilitation. In each of the 13 regions, one surgeon and one gynecologist have received both theoretical and practical training and taken part in surgical missions along with experts from Équilibres & Populations. In addition, three surgical clinics have included simple and complex fistula repairs in their daily surgical curriculum. Surgical success achieved with the support of Équilibres & Populations experts, with

Taking action in favor of Sexual and Reproductive Health: the European Union must allocate more funds to Burkinabe organizations

The work of Équilibres & Populations in Burkina Faso aims to improve CSOs access to resources so they can intensify their action in favor of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). We work simultaneously on both the demand and supply side. The objective is to increase both the funding provided by the European Union (and members countries) towards SRHR under Public Development Aid and the access of CSOs to EU funds pre-allocated to SRHR projects but that are not spent, or underspent.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Euroleverage was implemented to compensate insufficient resources allocated to SRHR in Burkina Faso.

A 2011 report from the country's Directorate General of Statistics and Health Information (DGISS in its French acronym) shows that in Burkina Faso, health is financed by

public funds (35.18 %), private funds – including households – (39.11 %) and funds coming from other parts of the world (25.71%). Households have therefore been the first financing source for their own health expenditure in Burkina Faso since the creation of the first National Health Account that covers years 2003 to 2009.

The same report indicates that household contributions increased by 12.3 % in absolute terms between 2008 and 2009, despite the government's efforts to reduce it through various measures such as partially subsidizing emergency deliveries, obstetric and neonatal care and free malaria treatment for pregnant women and children under 5 in private facilities.

In addition to the DGISS report, statistics collected by Équilibres & Populations in 2010-2011 under the analysis of the healthcare budget in Burkina Faso revealed that only 3 % of the overall health budget are allocated

In Burkina Faso, Équilibres & Populations is in charge of implementing the Euroleverage project, initiated and managed by German partner DSW (NGO) in four regions – West Africa, East Africa, South Asia and South-East Asia. The project mainly focuses on mobilizing resources in favor of sexual and reproductive health and rights. In 2011, target was reached in Burkina Faso with a 138 686 218 FCFA (over \$280,350) worth leveraged funding that benefitted several local NGOs.

to SRHR. Health and population survey carried out in 2010 therefore show, quite logically, that besides a very low contraceptive prevalence rate (16 %, all methods considered), Burkina Faso also has very high unmet needs in terms of family planning (31 %).

SUPPORTING LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

To compensate for the lack of funds allocated to SRHR and contribute to improving the population's living conditions, Équilibres & Populations (through Euroleverage) builds the capacities of local CSO actors in order for them to be independent and able to mobilize resources for the SRHR projects they support.

In 2011, Équilibres & Populations held a number of meetings and training workshops for CSOs, which were a key step in the capacity building process.

Coordination

In the fall of 2010, the Coordination unit of the PROS – funding agency created by the EU and the Government of Burkina to strengthen the capacities of civil society actors) issued two calls for proposals open to organizations involved in Burkina Faso.

To answer these calls crucial for local CSOs to be able to build and submit quality projects. Équilibres & Populations therefore held, on 20 January 2011, a coordination and information meeting aiming to stimulate CSOs' reflection on projects to be submitted.

Support

Following the meeting (20 participants from 10 CSOs), we started to focus our support more particularly on CSOs who did develop project proposals, such as BURCASO, ASAFF, ROJD and ABBEF. We helped them draft their project, research data related to the situation analysis and match programmed activities with allocated budgets.

Assessment

On 15 April 2011, Équilibres & Populations organized a meeting to assess the support activities we provided CSOs with in the preparation to calls for proposals issued by the PROS. This aim of this meeting was to build on the successes and further strengthen CSO's capacity to build projects within a sophisticated framework for concerted action.

During this meeting, CSO shared their successes but also their difficulties in creating projects, including the complexity of the drafting framework, obscure guidelines, and the lack of qualified staff in CSOs who would be able to analyze problems, define objectives, create a logical framework, and build relevant projects.

Following experience-sharing, CSOs addressed Équilibres & Populations with recommendations regarding future workshops, so they would include training on project planning and setup techniques and enable CSO staff to impulse their own resource-collection dynamics to ensure their autonomy.

Capacity building

In the light of these recommendations, Équilibres & Populations organized three two-day capacity-building sessions (October-December 2011) that aimed to improve CSO knowledge and command of the public aid environment in Burkina Faso, as well as their ability to plan and set up projects.

Following the training, two representatives from each participant CSO drafted a complete project (based on what they had learned) and received individual follow-up in the project-building process.

This whole training process seems to have fostered sustainable capacity-building among Burkinabe CSOs. We can already welcome the fact that three CSOs who benefitted from the training (ASAFF, BURCASO and the RAMA Foundation) have managed to leverage a total of 138 686 218 FCFA for the implementation of SRHR projects, which is a satisfactory and promising outcome.

Ousmane Ouedraogo, CSO worker and training enthusiast

INTERVIEW

Ousmane Ouedraogo works as a coordinator for BURCASO, one of the leading CSOs promoting reproductive health (including HIV/AIDS) in Burkina. Ousmane contributes to building the capacities of over 200 community organizations in 13 regions throughout the country, and he is constantly seeking to improve his own skills in reaching and accessing donors' initiatives.

The work of Burcaso is well known and acknowledged on the field. Does this recognition facilitate your access to public subsidies?

For the past few years, Burcaso has received the support of the Dutch and German Cooperations through which, on two occasions, we were able to access subsidies from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Malaria and Tuberculosis. However, each donor has its own specificities, which, while legitimate, do not make our task any easier. Up until now we had had no opportunity to access other donors.

Why did you take part in Euroleverage?

We have always assiduously attended every training session Équilibres & Populations has organized for NGOs in Ouagadougou. However, due to insufficient knowledge of the EU's procedures and practice, we had never been able to directly access EU funding. This is why we took the opportunity given by the Euroleverage program to increase our chances to successfully the call for proposals issued by the 9th EDF in order to implement the PROS

in Burkina. It has been of valuable help. In addition to providing us with a good command of the EU procedures, the numerous Euroleverage meetings were an opportunity to hear about the experiences of those who had already applied for EU subsidies. Analyzing successes and failures and determining most frequent obstacles and possible improvements really is a key factor for successful proposals

What did you learn from this training, in practical terms?

Well, the fact that BURCASO received 23 out of the 130 million CFA francs that were leveraged by Burkinabe NGOs following the program. With these funds,

we have implemented in the East a regional operational platform of CSOs involved in the 'health and development' field. This has been a crucial step in that it put together various actors who were not used to working together and allowed the extraction and capitalization of the communities' many resources and know-hows.



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 twelve 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, four 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:

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.

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.

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.

In keeping with our ongoing faith in synergy, Équilibres & Populations' strategy is systematically based on alliances and partnerships, with African NGOs in particular.

In addition, our organization is an active member of several international solidarity organizations. In advocacy in particular, the more, the stronger!

Partnerships

FOCUS ON ONE OF OUR AFRICAN PARTNERS: CERADIS (BENIN)

As is often the case with us, the roots of our partnership with CeRADIS (Centre de réflexion et d'actions pour le développement intégré et la solidarité) are to be found in a 'crush'. A crush with Mistoura Salou, who was representing Benin in the youth delegation at the 8th Francophonie Summit held in New Brunswick in September 1999.

Right from the start, Équilibres & Populations and CeRADIS fully agreed on common action principles concerning Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Nourou Adjibade, CeRADIS director, summarizes these ground principles as follows: 'Collaborative approach in implementing projects and programs, political and community engagement, inclusion of the HIV/AIDS and reproductive health issues, right-based approach'. It is on these common grounds that our partnership with CeRADIS has been flourishing for over ten years through various projects, from awareness raising on reproductive health in schools to today's focus on the inclusion of vulnerable girls' specific needs. Both our NGOs have walked side by side, tested new approaches, developed the level of trust needed to implement quality projects, acquired increasing experience to better support political and social change towards improved health and social status for young people, and girls in particular.

The Kpote Kiosque project is a concrete example of our joint actions. This project was implemented from 2006 to 2009 and aimed to support West African youth in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for improved SRHR. It resulted in the creation of a recognized youth center, which gives out condoms, provides information and facilitates STI and HIV screening. The center was designed by and

for young people. It offers services and activities that are adapted to this population, while taking into account the fact that situations are very diverse and that girls and very young adolescent have specific needs. Although the project was closed several years ago, its benefits are still blossoming. Sustainability is a key concern for both our organizations.

Équilibres & Populations adopts a dual approach: be as close to the population as possible, while also influencing public policies at the highest level. In keeping with this approach, our organization has supported CeRADIS in advocacy projects. To name but one of these projects, we can evoke the action undertaken in 2005/2006 towards Beninese public structures involved in the implementation of Global Fund-financed programs. Public debates were held on how these programs were perceived by people living with HIV/AIDS, where loopholes were reported and measures for improvement were suggested. In a world where NGOs tend, more often than not, to 'obey' their donors' will, this action clearly contributed to improving the quality of public programs.

Partnerships are constantly renewed. For the past couple of years, Ceradis has regularly taken part, along with other subregional NGOs, in multi-country programs coordinated by Équilibres & Populations. Through the years, we have therefore created, with our partners, an informal network based on our common vision of development. This inevitably brought us to wonder about the opportunity to move onto a more formal collaboration. We shall see...

Networking

COORDINATION SUD, A FRENCH NETWORK

Équilibres & Populations is an active member of the Coordination SUD platform, which gathers over 130 French development NGOs and represents them before the French authorities. Our organization is particularly involved in three commissions: the Public Development Aid commission, the Gender commission and the Health Commission.

In the first commission, in addition to conducting a critical review of the draft budget bill and preparing advocacy materials for the 2012 French elections, Équilibres & Populations contributed to determining the French positions for the important upcoming international events such as the G8 and G20 (France) and the Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan, Korea).

Regarding the Gender commission, of which Équilibres & Populations is considered a leader, the main highlight was our active contribution in assessing the implementation of the French Cooperation Gender Strategy. Lastly, in the Health commission, Équilibres & Populations and other NGOs have been particularly active in the follow-up of the Muskoka commitments, for they are a significant step towards improved sexual and reproductive health as a way to reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality.

Finally, the efforts undertaken for years by Équilibres & Populations in Coordination Sud were acknowledged through the election of our Deputy Executive Director Aurélie Gal-Régniez to the Coordination's Board in 2010.

GENRE EN ACTION, A FRANCOPHONE NETWORK

The Genre en Action (GeA) network was created in 2003 and works actively for the gender approach to be recognized and included in development policies. The network is acknowledged as a key stakeholder in the reduction of gender inequalities, with 2,800 members in over 50 countries (mostly French-speaking).

At the end of 2009, the Genre en Action organization was created to complete, support and upgrade the network. The organization is meant to be the network's driving force. From the very start, Équilibres & Populations has been an active support to both the network and the organization, including as a Board member.

In 2011, Équilibres & Populations mainly contributed to the work of the group that was designated by the French government to assess the implementation of the 'Gender and development' strategy.

In 2011, Équilibres & Populations also carried out numerous GeA-related activities within Coordination Sud (see above), gender being a key point in our advocacy. These activities included strengthening gender considerations in documents such as the French Cooperation 'Health strategy' as well as in the positions adopted by France in the G8/G20 meetings and Busan Forum on aid effectiveness, or in major processes such as that initiated by the FDA to assess the health projects it finances.

However, the most relevant achievement in terms of gender is the fact that Équilibres & Populations was able to include gender-sensitive budgets for FDA credits as a top priority on the agenda of Coordination Sud's Gender Commission.

EURONGOS, COUNTDOWN 2015 AND THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SUPPLIES COALITION, THREE EUROPEAN NETWORKS

EuroNGOs supports the implementation of the Cairo Action Plan on Population and Development through cooperating and sharing ideas and experiences on SRHR in Europe and around the world. Since EuroNGOs was created, in 1996, Équilibres & Populations has been a very active member of the network.

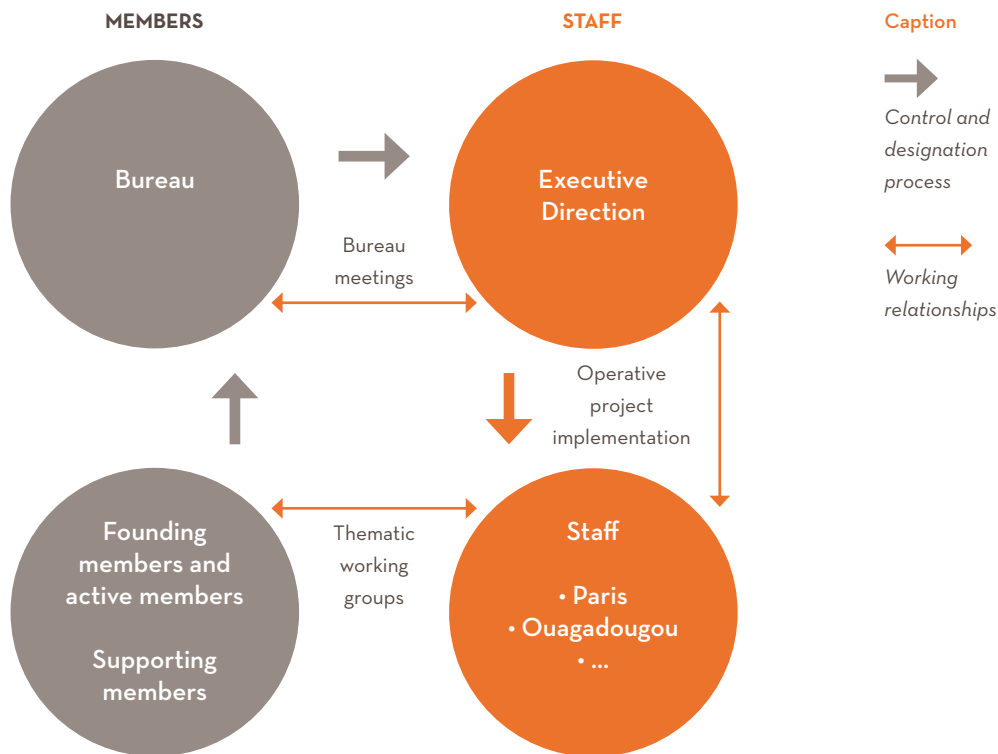
Regarding collective initiatives in Europe, Équilibres & Populations is also part of the Countdown 2015 Europe operational consortium that includes 16 European NGOs (all EuroNGOs members). This consortium carries out awareness-raising activities and promotes the provision of increased political and financial resources from European donors in order to ensure universal access to SRH and family planning.

Finally, we contribute to the work of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, a world-reknown partnership between public, private and non-governmental organizations that aims to ensure access to affordable and quality SRH products in all low-income and middle-income countries. In June 2011, both French partners (Ministry of Cooperation and Équilibres & Populations) successfully supported the creation of the French-speaking SECONAF Forum (Sécurité contraceptive en Afrique francophone) within the Coalition.

Équilibres & Populations
can count on 50 members
(doctors, journalists,
development professionals)
who meet at least once a year
in a General Assembly.
The GA elects a Bureau
every three years.
Our project is implemented
by a multidisciplinary team
currently composed of
12 staff members.

En 2011, our organization initiated
a dual structuration process
by launching an organizational
assessment and renewing its
membership.

Civil activism and professional commitment



OUR BUREAU

Dr. Marie-Claude Tesson-Millet,
Chairwoman

Dr. Annick Schwebig,
Vice-Chairwoman and Treasurer

Pr. Jacques Milliez,
Secretary-general

Pr. Claude Sureau,
Vice-Chairman

Dr. Claude Dumurgier,
Ordinary member

Dr. Alain Marié,
Ordinary member

Bureau meetings are usually held on a quarterly basis.

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1. Alphabetical order

Béatrice Cuzin, a deeply committed new member

INTERVIEW

After being in close contact with Équilibres & Populations for several years, Béatrice Cuzin took the plunge in 2011 and became a member. A urologist at the Edouard Herriot Hospital in Lyon, she has long been involved on the fistula and FSM issues and soon engaged in the organization's strategic repositioning.

So do all roads lead to Équilibres & Populations?

I don't know. But in my case it was a surgical road. I started working with Équilibres & Populations about three years ago on the fistula issue. I was mainly co-opted by three colleagues who were members already: Max Dubernard, Claude Dumurgier and Pierre Foldès. When I took the lead of the French Urology Association focus group on fistula, I realized how decisive the role of Équilibres & Populations had been in coordinating the French actions. In addition, along with my colleague Pierre Foldès, I have been working for three years on the FSM issue, which is another key focus of the organization.



Beside peer collaboration, what made you decide to join in?

I immediately felt welcomed; I liked the freedom of expression and the fact that people are very open and diverse. Furthermore, I fundamentally believe that only cross-cutting organizations such as Équilibres & Populations have the potential human resources needed to conduct health-related activities in a satisfactory manner, i.e. from prevention to overall treatment of conditions such as fistula or FSM. The name of the organization also seemed to reflect my vision of an ethical action that gives priority to the human factor and to the fight against inequality.

And you didn't just join. Your engagement takes multiple forms, right?

Yes, absolutely. On the Board's request, I took part in the strategic reflection process initiated at the end of last year to redefine the organization's core missions. To me, priority must be given to: getting a clear picture of the key people of the organization and of their potential in terms of skills and availability and building on the existing actions (may they be carried out by us or by other organizations) by completing them or including geopolitical aspects. Two or three spots must be strengthened in the field of sexual and reproductive health (fistula and FSM) to allow for a more inclusive approach.

Then, we obviously have to improve our capacity to answer calls for proposals. And one last thing to keep in mind is that we work in a field where diversity (in all areas) must prevail. Once more, we must remember the organization's name and what we are fighting for.

Our budget

Équilibres & Populations' resources mainly come from private foundations, national/international public institutions, donations and various activities (operation services, publications).

In 2011, dedicated funds yielded a gross revenue of 1,997,704 euros, while their net amount was 1,531,403 euros. This difference ('dedicated funds') is the part of resources that had been allocated to projects but remains unspent by the end of the fiscal year. It is then carried over to the following year, pursuant to the agreement made with our donors.

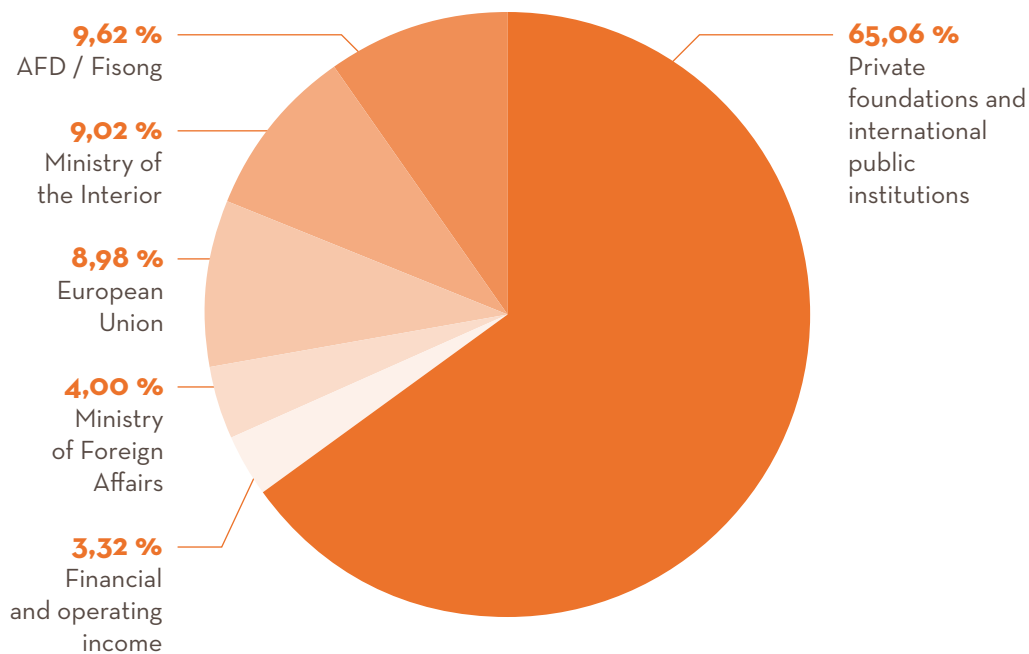
Between 2010 and 2011, net revenues from dedicated funds increased by 5.94 %. While this increase is far inferior to that observed in 2009-2010 (+60 %), it does not reflect a decrease in our activity. In 2010, we passed a milestone in terms of project engineering with the implementation of two large-scale multiannual projects that are being financed by the European Union and the FDA. Both focus on the inclusion and management of vulnerable girls' specific needs.

2011 was therefore the opportunity to build on this shift in funding trends and we took part in many events and projects evoked in the present report, such as the Ouagadougou Conference or the new step taken in our anti-cutting project in Mali.

The increase in our operational, financial and exceptional costs is mostly due to the pace at which advocacy and field programs progress. The increase in structural costs is moderate and a surplus was secured. Total costs for 2011 amount to 1 499 922 euros (plus subsidies for dedicated funds).

In 2011, Équilibres & Populations secured a 31,481 euro surplus.

Over the last four fiscal years, for each euro received from our donors to finance our overall activity, we have managed to mobilize nearly five euros of direct or indirect funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Development Agency, the European Union and international foundations and organizations. With these funds, we were able to finance field programs in Sub-Saharan Africa and advocacy projects. This leverage effect is a significant indicator of our capacity to mobilize resources from major French and international donors.



Source of E&P resources in 2011

2012, time to rethink our expansion

2012 will be marked by presidential and legislative elections which results will significantly affect the future of public policies toward international development for the next five years.

While the pledge made by France in Muskoka should not be questioned, the evolution of the international agenda by 2015 may be seriously affected by the impact of the global financial and economic crisis and by the growing concern for climate change. Both these parameters will call for more innovative frames for international cooperation.

These liabilities could turn out to be the opportunity to redesign the usual patterns of development and of its funding. Équilibres & Populations plans on taking part in this reflection process, in Coordination Sud as well as in EuroNGOs and Countdown 2015 Europe.

In France, 2012 will also see Henriette Martinez and Danielle Bousquet leave the National Assembly. Both of them have played a key role in promoting sexual and reproductive health, gender and population dynamics and in their inclusion in French development policies. We would like to take the opportunity of this report to show our appreciation and gratitude for their strong commitment and tireless efforts.

In order to take our advocacy effort one step further, we will have to identify new parliamentarians to collaborate with, while maintaining our cooperation with our historical parliamentary partners to participate in the elaboration of national and international development frameworks.

In French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, 2012 will witness ongoing action from Équilibres & Populations and our partners in the fight against FSM in Mali, for the inclusion of adolescents' specific needs in RSHR programs in Niger, Burkina and Benin, and for local and national decision-makers to ensure the follow-up of the Ouagadougou pledges.

Lastly, in 2012, Équilibres & Populations will carry out an organizational diagnosis which should result in more formal vision, missions and objectives, and will take the form of a three-year strategic action plan.

Crédits

Le rapport d'activité est également disponible sur le site internet : www.equipop.org

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