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ORG

2019  
2020

# Branch out

## **Definition:**

*Change paths, change direction.  
Revise our ways of thinking and  
acting. Imagine alternatives and  
test ways to change the system.*

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# Editorial

We work to make societies fairer and more sustainable by helping women and young people gain respect for their rights, especially health-related rights. For this, we facilitate access to quality contraceptive services for those who want them, and we fight maternal mortality, promote sexuality education, and lift taboos about menstruation. We also break cycles of gender-based violence and advocate ending female genital mutilation and child marriage. We also support education and literacy for girls and women, and encourage their political and economic participation.

In 2019, we increased our technical and financial assistance for changemakers in West Africa and France. We supported our partners' collective actions and set up strategic civic spaces where activist groups, civil society organizations, journalists, artists, researchers, politicians, and firms can collaborate. We amplified the voices of activists, particularly young West African feminists, so that they can be heard in local, regional, and international decision-making fora. We also continued working with our allies to defend women's rights within our societies, in West Africa and internationally.

As we finish writing this report, the whole world is reeling from a health crisis that appears unending. For many of us, this extraordinary, internationally significant event has strengthened our conviction that we must urgently change direction. We, alongside our partners, must ensure that future civic and political agreements elevate and prioritize gender equality, making it *the* central issue.

We must now make systemic changes. Feminism constitutes a powerful lever for change that ought to be used to understand the challenges we face and to build solutions – each and every time.

Feminist approaches can be transformative for our societies and for our modes of action. Feminism interrogates the power relations that structure our actions and organizations. It asks: What is the basis of an equitable partnership? Who sets the agenda? Does our organization and toolset align with our values? We must also carry out our own transformation. We have started down a demanding path, one we will enthusiastically continue along, hand in hand with our partners.

We thank all the people and organizations who walk with us, who trust us, and who make us proud to be part of this ecosystem.

**Aurélie Gal-Régniez**, *Chief Executive*  
**Alain Marié**, *Chair of the Board of Directors*

# 2019 Highlights



## Sparking change

- **Health is a universal right.** However, younger women often experience major inequalities when trying to access health-related information and services, particularly around sexual and reproductive health and rights. In Burkina Faso and Senegal, Equipop and four partner organizations, Burcaso, SOS/JD, RAES and JED are launching the Jeunes en Vigie (Young Lookouts) Project to bolster the ability of healthcare clinics to **respect the rights of girls and young women and to meet their specific needs.**
- **Every day, millions of women menstruate.** Whether they can do so with peace of mind is a question of equal rights and gender equality. Therefore, Equipop is developing actions in West Africa to **promote menstrual rights and health.**

## Mobilizing

- Equipop works alongside several feminist groups to advocate for a structuring goal – **gender equality** – making it a major subject for international discussions and French foreign policy. Despite a hostile global climate, Equipop and its partners have obtained commitments, particularly from France, that must now be translated into action.

- **Sexuality education positively affects young people's lives.** Across West Africa, girls and boys loudly and clearly say they want to know about sex. Equipop and its partners support these young people so that their voices can be heard by their communities and by those in political and administrative power.

## Empowering

- **Equipop sees strengthening the ecosystem of groups that work for women's rights and health as one of its core missions.** In six West African countries, Equipop provides technical and financial support to small and medium-sized networks of activists, consolidating their operations and means of action. Equipop has also established an Organizational Development Quality Seal for activist groups, the latest addition to its extensive technical support tools. Awarded collectively, this quality certification further reinforces regional partners' knowledge sharing.
- **Equipop and its partners share a challenge: monitoring and reporting as best possible on the societal impact of their actions.** Noting the many limitations of traditional assessment methodologies, Equipop partners have committed to using a promising new way of thinking about and assessing the human aspects of project impacts, the change-oriented approach to project monitoring. This technique is political because it puts people back at the center of development by reintroducing a qualitative – not just quantitative – reading of social changes.

# 01

## Sparking change

Partnering with local stakeholders, Equipop sparks social change dynamics at the grassroots level.

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# 02

## Mobilizing

Equipop mobilizes government officials and other decisionmakers to create institutions, policies, and laws that build human capital and empower women and girls

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# 03

## Empowering

Equipop helps its development partners by strengthening their capacities.

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# 04

## Learn more about us

Equipop combines social and political mobilization with project conception and management, technical assistance, and partnership building, all to empower women and girls and promote their health and rights around the world.

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# Standing up to the pandemic: Bearing witness, calling for action, supporting women's health and rights

All over the world, women's rights organizations and activists have played important roles during the Covid-19 pandemic. In French-speaking Africa, groups have actively recorded the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and government restrictions on women, denouncing rights violations and social distress. The groups have also helped prevent the spread of the virus and have lessened the health and social problems it caused. Standing beside them, Equipop collected their testimonies and called on governments for assistance. It also helped its partners access funding to meet the needs of women affected by the pandemic.

From April to May 2020, Equipop conducted interviews to collect testimonies and recommendations from its partners in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. These experiences and stories formed the basis of a report, "Protecting Women's Health and Rights during Covid-19" published in July 2020. When describing the pandemic's effects in their countries, those interviewed denounced a disproportionate exposure for women to Covid-19, citing heavier workloads, economic losses, an explosion of gender-based violence, and a lessening of autonomy and agency overall. Interviewees linked these consequences to women's social roles and the structural inequalities that undermine societies. Equipop's partner organizations also bore witness to the pandemic's effect on women's health, particularly the decrease in supply and demand for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Adolescents and young women were especially affected. Observers expect that the virus will have severe medium-term effects.

The report also demonstrated just how little was done to ensure that political and policy responses to the pandemic took these issues – or a gender perspective – into account. Activists and organizations urged governments and donors to stop and listen, and to integrate and support civil society as an essential partner during crisis situations. They hope that decision-makers and policymakers will use the report to gain a better understanding of the reality on the ground and thus strengthen public services and civil society in order to support more equal, just, and resilient societies. The report highlighted eleven key action points that allow us to look at crises differently and to find a different – and better – way of working together to overcome them, now and in the future.

## Protecting women's health and rights during Covid-19

Experiences and feminist  
perspectives from West  
African civil society



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# 11 key action points

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## For civil society and policy- and decision-makers

- **Support** vulnerable people, particularly women, with the economic, health and social consequences of the crisis.
- **Step up** the fight against sexist and sexual violence, including domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and child and early marriage.
- **Better inform** women and young people on their rights regarding sexual and reproductive health and sexual violence.
- **Increase** visits to health centres by removing barriers and reassuring healthcare workers and communities.

## For policy- and decision-makers

- **Systematically integrate** women's rights organisations, feminist activists and experts in crisis response planning and implementation, and public policy more broadly.
- **Provide** urgent and sustainable funding to women's rights organisations, who play an essential role in tackling inequality and in building social well-being, including in crisis situations.
- **Facilitate** the production of research and data on sexual and sexist violence and gender equality.
- **Increase** investment in public policy which underpins a transition to a more equal and just society, and maintain public attention and commitment to priority issues for those in vulnerable situations.
- **Strengthen** public services, in particular health and education systems.

## For donors

- **Maintain** existing funding during crisis situations, accept or propose adaptation of activities in line with the situation, and anticipate future crises by establishing contingency plans, in a spirit of partnership and trust between donors and organisations.
- **Support** organisations in the development of their organisational and institutional development through flexible, sustainable and non-earmarked funding.

A photograph of three people in a meeting. In the foreground, a woman with dark hair, wearing a bright orange shirt and large hoop earrings, is leaning forward with her hand on her chin, looking at a document. Behind her, a man with glasses and a patterned shirt is also looking at the document. To the right, another man in a blue patterned shirt is looking towards the camera. They are sitting at a table with papers, a laptop, and markers. A chalkboard with some writing is in the background.

01

## Sparking change

Partnering with local stakeholders,  
Equipop sparks social change  
dynamics at the grassroots level.







## **Young Lookouts: Transform healthcare systems so girls are no longer left behind**

In 2019, Equipop continued to support youth and women's civic participation through the Jeunes en Vigie (Young Lookouts) Project, with funding from the 5% Initiative.<sup>1</sup> The project aims to carefully mainstream sexual and reproductive rights into healthcare provision in order to better meet girls' specific needs, particularly when treating three pandemics: HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, and malaria.

## THE HEALTH OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN: A PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE AND A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

Because of their age and gender, girls and young women grapple with highly unequal power relations that impact their health by, for example, limiting their access to food or exposing them to danger. At the same time, healthcare systems, programs, and policies often fail to meet young women's and girls' specific needs. A lack of investment for this "left behind" population, discriminatory attitudes among care providers and the community, disbelief and disregard – such barriers greatly reduce opportunities for girls and young women to access essential information, sound advice, and appropriate medical or psychosocial care.

In Burkina Faso and Senegal, for example, there is reason to be concerned about girls, especially with regard to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Indicators show that among young people, girls account for 75% of new HIV infections, which increase their risk of contracting tuberculosis. They are also at greater risk of contracting malaria, a risk that increases during pregnancy. Unfortunately, many young Burkinabe and Senegalese women have early pregnancies and consequently see high levels of mother-to-child HIV transmission and maternal, neonatal, and infant morbidity and mortality. By the age of 19, 57% of Burkinabe and 34% of Senegalese young women are pregnant or have already had a child.

Everyone agrees that girls and young women need to be more fully taken into account in order to tackle three ongoing pandemics: HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, and malaria. All agree that doing so would leverage the resilience of healthcare systems. However, this consensus struggles to translate into practice. For this reason, Equipop's Jeunes en Vigie (Young Lookouts) Project, conducted in partnership with Burcaso and SOS/JD in Burkina Faso, and JED and RAES in Senegal, takes an approach that places girls and young women at the heart of its action and strengthens their access to integrated, quality health services

that are tailored to their specific needs and that respect their rights. The project, based on existing guidelines, capitalizes on proven experience; it also draws on Equipop's partners' complementary expertise in adolescent rights and health to strengthen healthcare systems in Burkina Faso and Senegal.

### Young Lookouts involves:

- Five activist groups convinced that more must be done to increase civic engagement in healthcare systems and to empower girls and young women individually and collectively.
- Using and adapting proven social accountability tools.
- Adolescents and young women taking center stage to stimulate dialogue with friends, family, their community, healthcare personnel, institutions, and decision-making bodies in order to accelerate necessary transformations at all levels so that healthcare providers, programs, and policies take girls' and young women's specific needs, constraints, and rights into account.

## THE SOCIAL HEALTH AUDIT AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG FEMINIST NETWORKS: TWO PATHS TOWARDS SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATIONS

Development projects and healthcare systems usually perceive patients – especially women and youth – as beneficiaries, and only more rarely as individuals endowed with rights, and even more rarely as engaged citizens. Certain levers can improve service quality and help change perceptions by strengthening respect for individual rights and promoting collective action. Achieving such a shift in perspective rests on three prerequisites: providing information and training to girls who use healthcare services, raising awareness among healthcare providers and decision-makers, and creating spaces for dialogue. The Young Lookouts Project seeks to



respond to these challenges. It creates safe spaces where girls and young women can confidentially talk with trustworthy health-care personnel and social workers, relating their experiences, practical needs, strategic interests, and especially the challenges they face because of their age and gender. The use of these safe spaces, hosted by people trained to listen and to support the girls' and young women's claims, is central to improving the services and care offered by healthcare systems. In addition, female patients will conduct social audits of healthcare services through field surveys and peer interviews. This will help to highlight the good practices of certain healthcare centers or point out other establishments' rights infringements or deficiencies. Furthermore, young feminist activists closely associated with the project will help inform patients about their rights. They will also teach healthcare providers and workers about non-sexist approaches. In addition, the activists will integrate the social-audit findings into their advocacy and political demands to make girls' and women's voices heard at the highest decision-making levels.

#### • **How does Equipop take action?**

Equipop mobilizes resources, provides methodological, financial, and technical support and coordination, implements audit and evaluation methodologies, and conducts a change-oriented approach to project planning and monitoring.

#### • **Who are the beneficiaries?**

Partner groups, adolescents and young women, healthcare providers, and adolescents and youth in regions involved in the project.

#### • **What is the rationale?**

Improving the quality of health services for girls, and promoting girls' and young women's rights, will strengthen the ability of healthcare personnel to care for girls with HIV/ Aids, tuberculosis and malaria; it will also help change social norms and promote policies that fight gender inequalities and social injustice.



1. The 5% Initiative was created by France to strengthen the impact of Global Fund grants by supporting recipient countries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs. It is financed and run by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

## INTERVIEW

# Ousmane Ouedraogo

National Coordinator, Burcaso  
(Conseil Burkinabé des  
Organisations de Développement  
Communautaire, or Burkinabe  
Council of Community  
Development Organizations)

“Strengthening young people’s leadership and active involvement in responding to major pandemics through innovative approaches should help the Young Lookouts Project succeed in its efforts to improve the health of young people in Burkina Faso.”



### ***What role does Burcaso play in the Young Lookouts Project?***

Burcaso played an important role during the project design phase, beginning with the needs assessment all the way through to drafting project specifications. Above all, Burcaso mobilized to implement the project in the health districts of Koudougou and Réo, in the Center-West Region, and in Koupéla and Tenkodogo, in the Center-East Region. The Burcaso network’s mandate calls for coordinating operations, finding synergies with other actors, and helping build local partners’ capacities by providing them with communication tools and advocacy materials. Burcaso has a mission to strengthen pro-sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) partnerships between health professionals, communities, community leaders, and local activists.

### ***How does the project effectively improve young women’s and girls’ access to healthcare?***

Unlike many other programs that target young people in Burkina Faso, this project emphasizes leadership and genuine youth involvement. Adolescent girls and young people remain central to social accountability actions aimed at ensuring their rights are respected. The project is developing the capacities of local stakeholders to speak out about SRHR issues. It also aims to empower local stakeholders while bolstering the ability to effect change in healthcare and information

accessibility. Young Lookouts aims to improve healthcare professionals’ ability to provide information and quality services in order to prevent the three pandemics, and ensure suitable care for young girls. Therefore, the project clearly aligns with the Global Fund’s 2017–2022 gender strategy objectives.

### ***What concrete challenges must you overcome to make this project happen?***

This project has two main challenges. First, improving access to healthcare services for adolescent girls and young people. Second, achieving genuine social change through dialogue between stakeholders and suitable public awareness messaging.

I see two ways to achieve these goals: First, we need to work on improving healthcare providers’ ability to care for young girls, and second, we need to improve dialogue and collaboration between national health authorities and community stakeholders.





## Make menstruation a health, education, and equality issue

Every day, 300 million women around the world get their period. Yet within families, menstruation is shrouded in silence and shame; in public, it receives little funding even though it is an education, health, and rights issue. For these reasons, Equipop is taking action!

Menstruation is a simple biological fact that too often constitutes an obstacle to young women's health, dignity, and rights.

- **250 million girls and women worldwide** cannot afford to buy sanitary protection products during their period.
- **500 million women** lack a suitable place to change their sanitary protections.
- **In sub-Saharan Africa, one in ten girls does not attend school during her period**, losing 20% of her schooling time annually. Furthermore, 66% of sub-Saharan African girls say that they did not know enough before they started to menstruate or that they had no idea was happening to them when their first period started.<sup>1</sup>

Taboos about menstruation still cause embarrassment, shame, and stigma nearly everywhere. In most societies, menstrual blood appears to be a stain that must be concealed. Since periods begin at a crucial time in the development of girls' identities, this negative image strongly affects the way girls view their bodies and status; it also affects the way boys think about the female body. This negative image partly explains why women and girls have difficulty accessing basic infrastructure, such as toilets, essential menstrual-hygiene products, and appropriate care for associated pathologies, such as endometriosis. Researchers, activists, and journalists are now bringing this long invisible issue to public attention, as illustrated by the establishment in 2014 of the International Day of Menstrual Hygiene, May 28, now celebrated across the world.<sup>2</sup>

**In 2019, Equipop worked alongside the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to:**

- Produce a study of menstrual health knowledge, perceptions, practices, and current approaches in West and Central Africa. The study recommends operational guidelines for UNFPA and its partners on how to mainstream menstrual health and hygiene into their actions at all levels.
- Support the Ivorian National Menstrual Health and Hygiene Task Force. Created in 2018 under the leadership of UNFPA Côte d'Ivoire, the task force promotes and coordinates menstrual health and hygiene into national programs and civil society actions. This support made it possible to: (1) train task force members about the relationship between human rights, gender, and menstrual health; (2) question perceptions and beliefs about menstruation; and (3) analyze communications materials and tools through a human rights and gender lens in order to enrich them.

The study that Equipop conducted for UNFPA confirms that in West and Central Africa, many girls do not know what is happening to them when their period starts for the first time. Even those who received information beforehand feel worried and fearful. The first explanations a young girl hears, generally from her mother, cover menstrual hygiene or the risk of pregnancy. However, since the links between periods, the menstrual cycle, and procreation are rarely clearly explained, these conversations principally end up as injunctions to avoid boys and men. At the same time, a girl's first period can be seen as a sign of maturity and adulthood. Girls are then thought to be women who can drop out of school, work, marry, and have children. Because of poverty and the difficulty in accessing toilets, water, and menstrual hygiene products, a very large majority of women face menstrual insecurity and are affected by its health and mobility impacts. In addition, false beliefs, myths, unsafe social practices, and the silence surrounding periods can turn them into a time of restriction, depri-

vation, or exclusion. All this limits girls' and women's personal, domestic, educational, and professional activities while weakening their self-esteem and self-confidence.

In the region, so-called "WASH"<sup>3</sup> projects are increasing access to appropriate menstrual-health infrastructure and hygiene products. While some WASH projects include information campaigns, they are often scattershot or simply pilot projects. Such projects rarely integrate a rights-based approach. Few countries have adopted menstrual health strategies and standards, but there is a willingness to facilitate, for example, the mainstreaming of menstrual health and hygiene into all relevant sectoral policies.



Even though menstruation remains a taboo subject, the Equipop study findings and task force member feedback show that an open dialogue that repositions menstruation as a normal and natural phenomenon for girls at the time of puberty reduces negative perceptions about periods and increases interest in them, including from men and boys.

## **MENSTRUAL HEALTH SERVES AS A GATEWAY TO EDUCATION AND RIGHTS FOR THE YOUNGEST ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

The subjects of menstrual health and hygiene, and puberty more broadly, serve as gateways to in-school and out-of-school sexuality education. Social welfare and health centers would better serve girls and young women if they included menstrual health in their adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights service packages, like they do with family planning, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV/Aids.

Based on these findings, Equipop systematically incorporates menstrual health into its actions to promote and improve SRHR through advocacy, support, and comprehensive sexuality education. Equipop supports a variety of actions that complement WASH programs, such as de-stigmatizing menstruation, setting positive norms for periods, and creating and disseminating information, communication tools, and materials to promote human rights and gender equality. Equipop also supports young feminist movements and activists who raise their voices to break the silence and taboos around periods and who call for an end of menstruation-related discrimination and injustice.



*“Marième got her period for the first time. She didn’t dare tell her parents, so she kept it a secret...”*

As part of the #JeVeuxSavoir (Tell Me More) campaign, the First Period comic strip tackles issues related to puberty. This time of life can be worrying for young people if they are not prepared for it!

#### • How does Equipop take action?

Equipop promotes mainstream rights-based approaches to menstrual health to deliver a comprehensive response to the needs of girls and women.

#### • Who are the beneficiaries?

All girls and women, particularly in French-speaking Africa.

#### • What is the rationale?

The mere fact of a woman having her period must not constitute an obstacle to her health, dignity, rights, and education or her social, economic, and professional activities; neither should it be an obstacle to gender equality for economic, social, or cultural reasons.

“ I’m going to talk to girls and women of my religion and region about menstrual health and hygiene because it shouldn’t be a taboo subject anymore. ”

**Member of the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Task Force**

Côte d’Ivoire

1. UNICEF

2. 28 is a reference to the average number of days in a menstrual cycle, and May is the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the year, a reference to the average number of days a period lasts.

3. WASH stands for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## Nathalie Aka Brou

Head of the Health Promotion and Social Mobilization Department, National School and University Health Program (Programme National de la Santé Scolaire et Universitaire, PNSSU), Côte d'Ivoire Health Ministry

## Yao Jules Konan

Program Officer for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, United Nations Population Fund Côte d'Ivoire

### *When did UNFPA Côte d'Ivoire and Equipop begin working together?*

For several years, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) office for West and Central Africa and some country offices have been collaborating with Equipop to highlight adolescent girls in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programs and to promote comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). The UNFPA Côte d'Ivoire office was involved in a 2016 project to identify six Ivorian civil society organizations that joined the Alliance Droits et Santé (Rights and Health Alliance) that Equipop catalyzed. The formal partnership between Equipop and UNFPA Côte d'Ivoire and its partners – the ministries of education and health and other UN agencies involved in the Muskoka Initiative – really began in 2018 with the Equipop Lab system of support.

### *Why was menstrual health prioritized?*

Menstrual health emerged as a relevant topic from consultations that preceded an Equipop incubation lab carried out with civil society organizations, UN agencies, and government partners in education, health, family, and youth services. A December 2018 incubation lab then allowed us to work together on high-impact activities to invest in menstrual health and make it a gateway for adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights in Côte d'Ivoire.

### *Why did UNFPA spur the creation of the Ivorian National Menstrual Health and Hygiene Task Force?*

Often, menstrual health was only partially addressed by various actors. We needed a task force to collect documents and everyone's experiences in order to have a clear situational analysis and to facilitate discussion and coordination on a topic that involves several sectors.

We aligned the task force's composition with the technical working group of the “Zero Pregnancy at School” campaign. The main task force members head up technical directorates at the ministries of education and health, partner UN agencies, and civil society groups and youth movements.

The task force set the following framework for action:

- Carry out a solid situational analysis based on current experiences and existing documentation.
- Work on the development of materials and tools.
- Propose a methodology to mainstream and disseminate the materials and tools at various levels, including school curricula, school club events, healthcare clinics and units, mass media, etc., and monitor and evaluate these outreach and information efforts.



“The theme of menstrual health was often only partially addressed by various participants. We needed a task force to collect documents and everyone’s experiences.”



### *How did Equipop help the Task Force in 2019?*

Equipop's help in validating our national document on menstrual health and hygiene during the November 2019 workshop enabled us to enrich those guidelines. The six days of work allowed the thirty task force members and partner representatives to better understand and mainstream both a rights-based rights approach and a gender-equality lens into our document content. Concretely, the participants were able to:

- Become aware of the importance of gender mainstreaming and using a rights-based approach when developing documents for public use.
- Develop the reflex to write in ways that are non-sexist, inclusive, and respectful of human rights.
- Apply these principles to documents about menstrual health by identifying changes that need to be made in order to mainstream gender and rights and thereby deconstruct false beliefs about menstruation.

Through this work, we were able to develop and adopt a comprehensive national guide. It is a multisectoral resource for various actors to disseminate accurate, reliable, and quality information on menstrual health. The content can be adapted according to the target audience: girls, boys, healthcare personnel, and others.

### *What are the next steps?*

In the short term, as part of this project and based on the guide, we will complete user guides, such as how to make sanitary pads. We will develop information sheets for healthcare personnel, influencers, community activists and stakeholders in order to raise awareness about the subject.

# O2

## Mobilizing

**Equipop mobilizes government officials and other decision-makers to create institutions, policies, and laws that build human capital and empower women and girls.**









## **Advocacy for feminist policies: From the G7 Summit to the Generation Equality Forum**

In early 2019, Equipop became involved in advocacy, aiming to put women's equality on the international political agenda during the Group of 7 (G7) Summit in Biarritz, France. A year and a half on, Equipop is building on this initial groundwork to advocate for feminist foreign policies.

In 2019, Equipop co-produced an advocacy and public relations campaign called “Women 7” that aimed to influence the Group of Seven (G7). Above all, Equipop wanted to seize an opportunity and lay the foundation for broader action to put gender equality on the international policy agenda and push France to include gender equality as a central priority of its foreign policy. On May 9, 2019, Equipop and its Women 7 partners gathered nearly 400 feminists from 20 countries in Paris to deliver their recommendations to the seven ministers attending the G7 Summit.

### INITIAL PROGRESS AT THE G7 SUMMIT IN BIARRITZ

At the Biarritz G7 Summit at the end of August 2019, all G7 member-states and four invited nations adopted the Biarritz Partnership on Gender Equality and the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa. They also awarded funding to the International Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, an initiative created by Nobel Peace Prize laureates Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege. These measures, despite difficult negotiations with the Americans, constitute a first step forward towards promoting gender-equality as an end in itself rather than just another means to serve the economy. This understanding of gender equality remains uncommon, however, and will require strong advocacy efforts over a long time to achieve wide acceptance.

On the other hand, significant progress was made in the effort to encourage France to make gender equality a central foreign policy priority. After the 2019 G7 Summit, France volunteered to jointly co-host, with Mexico and UN Women, the Generation Equality Forum (GEF). This event, originally slated for summer 2020 and postponed to 2021 because of Covid-19, will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the international blueprint for women’s rights, as France takes center stage to promote gender equality.

“ The G7 must grant more funding to feminist organizations and feminists must have a seat at the table to really say what they need. ”

### Ephrasie Coulibaly

President of the Association Réseau des Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour la Planification Familiale (Network of Young Ambassadors for Family Planning Association) in Côte d'Ivoire

### TOWARDS A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

In 2019, France committed to promoting “feminist diplomacy”. This political ambition is a step in the right direction, although France must now define feminist diplomacy more precisely and translate it into action. To accelerate this movement, Equipop is contributing to the work of France’s High Council for Gender Equality during 2019-2021, including by participating in numerous hearings with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, AFD (the French development agency), and other institutions. These discussions have generated a consensus to use the term “feminist foreign policy” rather than “feminist diplomacy”; all agree that implementing a genuinely transformative feminist foreign policy will take a significant amount of time.

Equipop has also worked among French policymakers to highlight the SRHR approach, essential for real progress towards gender equality. Women 7 pushed France to promote gender equality at the G7 Summit, expecting strong opposition from the United States. This push for leadership resulted in greater ownership of the subject by the French government once the G7 Summit ended.



Equipop gave form to this trend by encouraging France to participate in the November 2019 Nairobi Summit, which celebrated the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. Equipop also brought together about 100 French, West African, and international organizations to ask French President Emmanuel Macron to ensure that SRHR would be on agenda at the Generation Equality Forum. As a result, in early 2020, SRHR was included as one of six Forum action coalitions with France as its leader.

## PREPARING FOR THE 2021 GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM

The Generation Equality Forum will take place at the end of spring 2021. In the run-up to the event, Equipop will focus on two major efforts. The first will be to facilitate West African civil society participation in international fora and negotiations. Equipop began this effort with the G7 Summit in 2019; the Generation Equality Forum should allow Equipop to scale up its efforts. Therefore, Equipop will mobilize its partnerships with women's and youth movements, specialized SRHR groups and young feminist activists. In France, the coalition of groups and organizations brought together in 2019 under the Women 7 label will continue working, with a GEF focus. Equipop will bring its expertise in institutional advocacy to the coalition so that feminist groups, whether focused on national or international aims, are recognized, heard, and supported, including financially. Equipop's advocacy expertise will also contribute to effective political mobilization during the Generation Equality Forum, aiming to achieve gender equality and real societal change.

### • How does Equipop take action?

Equipop contributes to several activist groups and catalyzes institutional dynamics so that national and international policies mainstream a feminist approach.

### • Who are the beneficiaries?

Women and girls in all their diversity, who, for the most part, remain excluded from decision-making processes.

### • What is the rationale?

There is a need to strengthen civic spaces for coordination between feminist activists around the world, particularly in French-speaking spheres.

“ A feminist G7 meeting is intersectional, keeping in mind that all women are different and diverse. And public policies must take this diversity into account. ”

**Paola Mera**

Secretary of the National Council for Gender Equality of the Government of Ecuador

## INTERVIEW

# Sharlen Sezestre

Head of International Advocacy,  
Le Planning Familial  
(Family Planning)

"A truly feminist and political Generation Equality Forum cannot be achieved without the full and complete participation of those women most affected nor without concrete government commitments to SRHR and gender equality!"



***Planning Familial and Equipop have been collaborating for several years on sexual and reproductive health and rights. What are the issues?***

A woman's right to control her own body and to make her own choices about sexuality and reproduction remain controversial and debated subjects. In France, feminist movements have fought to enshrine these rights in law, but the law is not sufficient. You have to guarantee that the law is enforced by setting up required services and genuinely universal accessibility to them across the whole country. Too many women and young girls still struggle to obtain contraception or an abortion.

These issues are even more prominent in West Africa. The region has a high rate of unwanted pregnancies and maternal and infant morbidity and mortality because women and girls face major obstacles in exercising their sexual and reproductive rights. We need to strengthen and support women's organizations and feminist groups that use a rights-based approach and advocate for these rights and services.

***How do the advocacy actions of Planning Familial and Equipop complement each other?***

Planning Familial, a feminist and working-class education movement, has campaigned for gender equality, sexuality education, contraception, and abortion for more than 60 years. It has also fought violence and discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Our

sexual health expertise and advocacy rest on our real-world, grassroots experience, especially with young people. Equipop, too, promotes women's and girls' SRHR throughout the world, working to strengthen women's and feminists' groups and actions in West Africa. This allows us to pool our experience and expertise, and makes us key interlocutors in helping to define national and international public policies.

***Planning Familial and Equipop are working together for the Generation Equality Forum. What have you planned?***

Equipop and Planning Familial share a conviction that this forum must be feminist and it must be political. It must advance women's rights and gender equality. It must be an opportunity for France to make feminist foreign policy a reality. This cannot be done without diverse feminist organizations and movements working together through an intersectional and intergenerational approach. We aim to make their voices heard and to influence the summit and the action coalitions by jointly building policy with governments through a coalition of Feminist Generation groups that we have helped organize.



## Working towards quality comprehensive sexuality education in West Africa

A large body of research shows that high quality sexuality education has highly positive long-term effects on the lives of young girls and boys.

Equipop and its West African partners have worked for several years to promote comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and its systematic mainstreaming into school curricula. In 2019, Equipop supported the policy and civic actions of 21 groups that make up the Alliance Droits et Santé (Rights and Health Alliance) network.

### CSE HAS MANY BENEFITS BUT FEW CHAMPIONS

Too many young people lack reliable information about romantic relationships and sexuality. Many, aware of this lack of knowledge, are calling on policymakers and education leaders to commit to providing information in the classroom on sexuality and interpersonal relationships in a structured, positive, clear, and interest-centered way. Their requests find support in research

that proves that CSE has many positive effects on the health and well-being of young people by promoting the delay of first-time sexual intercourse, lowering the number of partners, reducing risky behavior, and promoting the use of condoms and contraceptives. Other studies also show that sexuality education helps reduce gender-based violence, domestic violence, and discrimination as it strengthens gender equality, self-confidence, and interpersonal relationships.

Despite these findings, few West African countries have operationalized the International Guiding Principles on Sexuality Education,<sup>1</sup> first published in 2009. Some countries have initiated efforts, such as Benin, which began mainstreaming CSE in 2019 at all school levels, from kindergarten to university, including new teacher training curricula. This rapid mainstreaming was facilitated by a strong political will and the government's

quick institutional ownership of the process through the National Institute of Training Engineering and Capacity Building for Trainers (Institut National de l'Ingénierie de Formation and de Renforcement de Capacités des Formateurs, INIFRCF). Burkina Faso, too, gradually mainstreamed CSE between 2015-2020, after a pilot phase in 2013. CSE is now included in all preschool, primary, and post-primary curricula, and new teacher training curricula. However, for significant changes to take place, activist coalitions must continue to push this issue with governments and ensure that policymakers fully integrate the voices of young people and research results in order to enable quality policies and programs that achieve their objectives.

### **ALLIANCE DROITS ET SANTÉ AIMS TO MOBILIZE YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AND OBTAIN LASTING POLITICAL COMMITMENTS**

In 2019, with the technical support of Equipop, the 21 Alliance Droits et Santé member associations joined forces to challenge governments and mobilize young people and communities in the network's six countries: Benin, Burkina-Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. As part of a regional campaign initiated by UNESCO and UNFPA, the Alliance called for strong commitments from health and education authorities in Ouagadougou Partnership member countries. In particular, the Alliance focuses its dialogue with decision-makers on three requests:

- **Ensuring quality** through a seamless continuum between the demand created by comprehensive sexuality education and the sexual and reproductive health and rights services deployed by the government.
- **Taking into account the needs of all young people and adolescents**, particularly young girls, for CSE and sexual and reproductive health services, whatever their age, sex, location, and whether or not they attend school.
- **Ensuring sustainable state financing** for CSE programs and sexual and reproductive rights and health services, and maintaining them, even during crises.

At the same time, Alliance members have developed a multi-channel communication campaign called #JeVeuxSavoir (Tell Me More) in order to support the network's advocacy efforts. The campaign aims to create the conditions for civic and political dialogue about the need for young people to know their rights and to have access to quality education and sexual and reproductive health services. The campaign strives to broadcast the voices of young people and to deconstruct stereotypes through social media, mass media, and during meetings and events in each Alliance country. Content created with Alliance partners aims to remind people just how positively CSE programs affect young people and adolescents. After the Covid-19 pandemic, it will be even more important to strengthen the content, educational approach, and accessibility of these programs in each country.

"The Covid-19 health crisis has increased the risks of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and sexual violence against girls due to school closures and reduced access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. Today, we need to innovate to provide young people with adequate sexuality education, and as soon as schools reopen, we will have to redouble our efforts so that schools can take up this issue with quality programs."

#### **Brigitte Syan**

West Africa Advocacy Manager  
for Equipop in Burkina Faso

## #JEVEUXSAVOIR (TELL ME MORE): USING ART TO BREAK TABOOS

Art is a channel for communicating, for floating ideas, and for making people think. When decorum or decency stop girls and boys from receiving crucial information about their sexual rights and health, art makes it possible to tackle these forbidden subjects. As part of the #JeVeuxSavoir campaign, around twenty volunteer artists were trained to deconstruct stereotypes and remove taboos about comprehensive sexuality education. Interested and often already active in promoting human rights, the artists took up the challenge of creating works aimed at informing, denouncing, debating, sharing, and making young people, their parents, and each member of the community think. The artists addressed many topics - from contraception to early pregnancy, sexual consent, menstruation, and puberty - through music, graphic arts, humor, and poetry. In this way, #JeVeuxSavoir reaches across all levels of society with a clear message from every young person: "Tell me more!"

“ I say I want to know  
because it's our right,  
because it's my right, and  
today, it is what I'm  
standing up for. ”

**Chaneline Mewowanou**  
Activist and slam poet

### • How does Equipop take action?

Equipop supports the civic and political demands of activist movements, especially those of young activists and members of the Alliance Droits et Santé network, to democratize quality comprehensive sexuality education in West Africa.

### • Who are the beneficiaries?

West African young people, particularly girls, because quality comprehensive sexuality education advances their rights.

### • What is the rationale?

It is necessary to ensure the quality of comprehensive sexuality education and make sure it meets the needs of all young people; it is also necessary to direct sustainable domestic financing towards sexuality education in order to ensure its implementation.

1. International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach, UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO, 2018, p.138



## INTERVIEW

# Agathe Blanc

Program Officer, Association of Women Lawyers of Côte d'Ivoire (Association Femmes Juristes de Côte d'Ivoire)

“Through comprehensive sexuality education, we prepare adolescents and youth for a more secure future by giving them tools to better manage their romantic, family, and social relationships.”



### *What role does Alliance Droits et Santé play in advocating for sexuality education in Côte d'Ivoire?*

We are very involved in this work through several different projects. As part of Educasso, a project coordinated by the NGO RAES and implemented in Côte d'Ivoire by the NGO MESSI and the Association of Women Lawyers, we have been working since 2018 to mainstream sexuality education in school programs. A regional public relations campaign produced by the Alliance, #JeVeuxSavoir, also supports this dynamic by mobilizing others to support our policy demands.

### *What has this advocacy achieved?*

Much prejudice surrounds comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), especially in religious spheres. Religious and customary authorities may be reluctant to integrate CSE into school programs. Often their reluctance stems from a lack of information about what sexuality education really covers. As part of our information and awareness activities, we have succeeded in meeting with leaders of Christian and Muslim religious organizations. We were able to discuss their prejudices and share our research findings. With support from UNESCO, we also talked about Côte d'Ivoire's content guidelines and priorities for comprehensive sexuality education.

Through these meetings, participants recognized the need for sexuality education in schools and within families. They even became stakeholders in expanding sexuality education, working with our partners to develop a guide for parent-child communication about sexuality in religious settings.

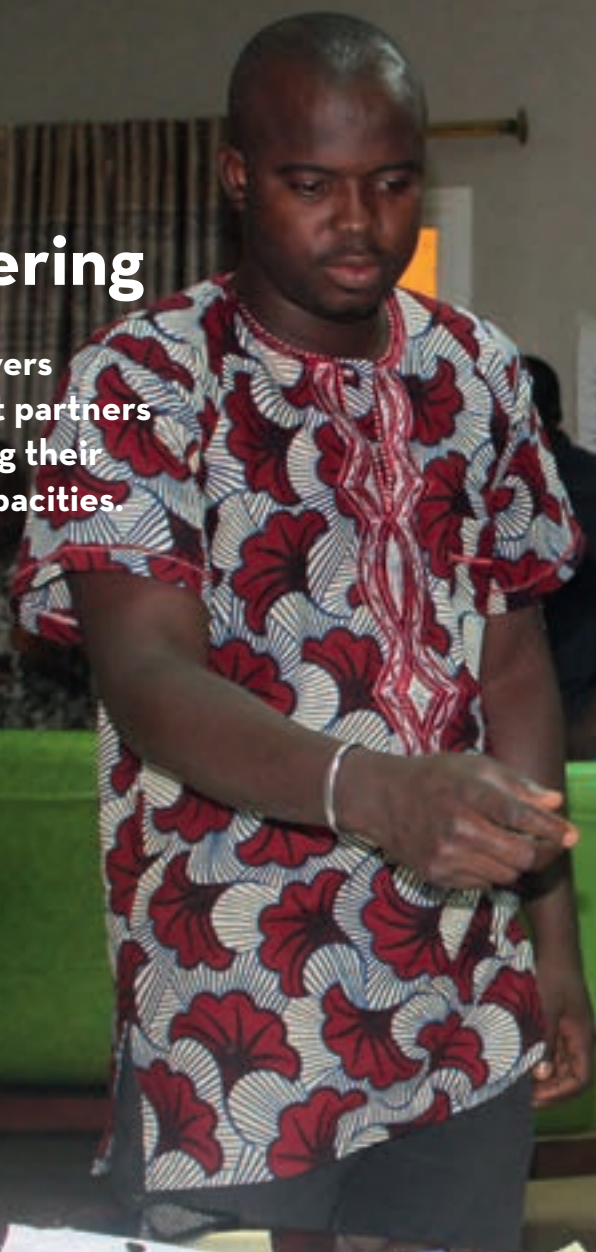
### *How does your organization collaborate with Equipop?*

Equipop's support has had a positive effect on our advocacy strategy. Alliance Droits et Santé members and others involved in this work have taken part in advocacy training with Equipop. This group work allowed us to define a shared advocacy plan for mainstreaming CSE into school programs. Equipop then helped us to define our priority advocacy objective: mainstream CSE into new teacher training curricula. We also benefited from Equipop's support when formulating messages for our priority targets – the ministers of health, national education, and women – messages that we also disseminated via social media.

# 03

## Empowering

**Equipop empowers  
its development partners  
by strengthening their  
intervention capacities.**









## **Strengthening the women's health and rights activist ecosystem in West Africa**

Twenty years ago, Equipop began working alongside small and medium-sized West African activist organizations dedicated to women's rights and health. Early on, these partners expressed a need for support in structuring their organizations and adapting to complex operating environments.

Equipop helped provide this organizational and operational support by working with its partners to develop suitable methodologies and tools. Equipop also established a dedicated organizational-development funding stream. Most recently, Equipop collaborated with its partners to create organizational-quality standards, a certification process, and an Organizational Development Quality Seal.

### **BETTER ORGANIZATION FOR BETTER RESULTS: A METHODOLOGY AND FUNDING**

How can we hope to participate in societal changes collectively, in a relevant and effective way, without thinking about the needs of groups that work for these changes alongside us? This question has dogged Equipop over the years as it forged trusting relationships with a large network of activist organizations in West Africa. One partner needed office equipment, another wanted to review its accounting system, yet another required urgent help to retain staff or to rework its activities to better align them with its values. Since funding for civil-society and nongovernmental groups remains almost exclusively destined for projects, not operations, there is little room to solve these kinds of challenges. Few donors or institutions provide support for these kinds of organizational and operational needs in West Africa.

So five years ago, Equipop decided to tackle this difficulty head on. First, in 2014, it developed a methodological approach, tools, and training in close collaboration with Alliance Droits et Santé network members. They and other partners involved with the network committed to making continuous quality improvements and three Burkinabe specialists from Equipop provided them personalized technical and financial support. However, some organizations still stumbled when implementing recommendations or actions because of a lack of sufficient resources.

Therefore, Equipop created an Organizational Development Fund in 2019 to finance these needs. In the few months since it was created, the Fund has financed more than thirty organizational strengthening activities.

*“ The Organizational Development Quality Seal allows everyone to see the changes to an organization’s effectiveness, and by certifying that capacity, it provides greater credibility and reassures potential partners. ”*

**Ousmane Maiga**

Program Officer for AJCAD, Mali





## THE NEXT STEP: PEER RECOGNITION AND EXPERIENCE SHARING

Equipop has drawn on its experience with the Organizational Development Fund and participatory governance to create an organizational-quality certification process, thus completing its support system. The resulting Organizational Development Quality Seal will use peer recognition to support the efforts and motivation of groups that have committed to continuous quality improvements. The Quality Seal, a reputation-building tool, allows stakeholders, employees, partners, and funders to recognize the value of a group and its efforts. The seal also serves to broaden the activist network because it expands communities of practice, promotes exchanges between peers, and offers many partnership opportunities. In these ways, the Quality Seal creates a common organizational development culture among women's health and rights groups.

Equipop and its partners have set up a coherent and solid support system to strengthen the women's health and rights ecosystem in West Africa. They must now keep the ecosystem alive, mobilizing sufficient funding to ensure its medium-term continuity.

### • How does Equipop take action?

Equipop provides comprehensive support to West African activist groups through organizational assistance and institutional development and fundraising, and by creating experience-sharing spaces and communities of practice.

### • Who are the beneficiaries?

Alliance Droits et Santé members and any other Equipop partner that shares its values and mission.

### • What is the rationale?

Groups working for gender equality need to be strengthened and developed.

“ A Quality Seal is a way of recognizing the efforts an organization has made to improve itself. Such a certification often serves as a crowning achievement and instills pride in those who made the effort. It rewards the organization's efforts to improve, recognizes the journey undertaken, and allows the organization and its people to set an objective and see the steps taken to achieve that objective. ”

**Rolland Agbessi**

Executive Director of Scoutisme Béninois (Beninese Scouts), Benin

## INTERVIEW

# Caroline Tapsoba

Head of the Projects and Programs  
Department for ASMADE

“We must keep up our efforts and commitment to develop a role for the Alliance Droits et Santé network in supporting its member organizations’ work towards continuous quality improvement.”



### ***You are a member of the Organizational Development Fund grant committee: how does it work?***

The grant committee is composed of a chairperson and six members. It was created during an Alliance Droits et Santé workshop held in Cotonou in March 2019. The workshop took place under the aegis of strengthening partnerships between Alliance members by defining a shared advocacy strategy and strategizing about governance within the network. This spirit of shared governance prompted setting up the grant committee. It determines which applicants will receive a grant for organizational strengthening activities. More broadly, the committee supports members in identifying and formulating their needs. The committee convenes at different stages of Organizational Development Fund calls for proposals. The committee first receives grant applications, and then splits into subgroups to consider them, being careful to avoid conflicts of interest. The committee then sets out its decisions in a report signed by all members.

### ***What do you think about the early days of the grant committee's work?***

I like the way the committee has worked since the beginning. Members have made great efforts and have shown much motivation in the quality of work they have done. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, committee members have learned how to use new communication tools to hold regular meetings remotely. I find that the committee members have strengthened their capacity to adapt and have bolstered their personal and collective resilience.

### ***What do you think about your role on the committee?***

As a committee member, I work on reviewing proposals and help Alliance Droits et Santé achieve its objectives, which include, among other things, strengthening the organizational capacities of its members through continuous quality improvements. I participate in every stage of the process, from analyzing proposals to awarding grants. For me, this is a professional learning experience. It has strengthened my sense of critical analysis and mediation, both personally and professionally.



## **Making changes visible: A critical methodological issue for development practitioners**

How can we demonstrate the social changes that our work achieves? All development practitioners share this methodological challenge. Quantitative approaches that are helpful for activity programming and resource management have many biases, such as a limited ability to understand how stakeholders evolve during a project.

Equipop and its partners aim to change the relationships, practices, and images that both drive and reflect civic and political mobilization. In recent months, Equipop and its partners have worked on defining desirable changes, observing them in detail, debating them, and working out how to account for them.

In 2019, Equipop began an important project to mainstream a change-oriented approach to project monitoring into its strategies. Inspired by proven methodologies, such as impact mapping, and supported by F3E,<sup>1</sup> a French practice-and-impact evaluation network, Equipop has developed an approach to monitoring projects that is suitable for its partners and fits well with priority project focus areas, such as youth engagement, institutional commitment, multi-actor dialogues, and innovation.

## THE CHANGE-ORIENTED APPROACH TO PROJECT MONITORING FROM A TO Z

The change-oriented approach to project monitoring that Equipop integrated into its Change Lab and Fondemsan projects allows participating organizations to unite around a common vision of change and target their key project partners, such as local politicians, influencers, or other activist groups, whose involvement would be strategic. The participating organizations set out pathways towards change for each strategic partner, using the pathway as a tool to guide and adjust project activities. In this way, the organizations can ensure each action contributes to creating the expected – or hoped-for – changes.

Once the organization's project management team has put a pathway in place, the team begins to observe and record the small, everyday changes that constitute significant impacts over time; for example, the forging of relationships within a group of young women and their ability to help each other. This kind of analysis is key to understanding how change becomes possible.

The team observes small changes that must be compared in turn with what project stakeholders see, because their feedback is crucial. This openness to feedback from the public

and from project allies allows the project team to adapt its work and strategies as the project progresses.

Mid-way through a project and when it ends, the project team compares actual changes with the change pathway initially imagined. By aggregating observed impacts, practitioners can observe project impacts on different, inter-connected levels, such as the individual, group, or an area. Change-oriented project monitoring also illuminates how changes occur and the strengths of related actions or strategies. In this way, such monitoring also serves as an excellent source of knowledge capitalization.

## BEGINNING CHANGE-ORIENTED PROJECT MONITORING

After experimenting with this change-oriented approach to monitoring projects, the following initial results emerged:

- 1. Increased stakeholder ownership of the desired societal transformations.** Sometimes the meaning of a project is overlooked, or imposed by an external logic, particularly that of donors. Beginning with project-launch workshops, the change-oriented approach to project monitoring encourages group discussions about the meaning and relevance of project objectives.
- 2. Better consideration of the project ecosystem.** Social and political mobilization projects do not take place in isolation; instead they involve many political, traditional, religious, media, group, and citizen actors. Change-oriented project monitoring helps practitioners take all these actors and inter-relationships into account; it also strengthens partnerships.
- 3. Improved project management.** Teams managed to go beyond simply monitoring activities to assessing and analyzing project impacts. Such analyses are very useful for understanding how different project actors react or interact, how they take ownership of the project, and how practitioners can adjust their activities to adapt to an evolving situation.
- 4. Reinforced dialogue between project stakeholders.** Change-oriented project monitoring

toring requires periodically analyzing and sharing observed changes, providing project leaders with insights that enable them to adjust their actions. Change-oriented project monitoring is experienced collectively; it requires time for open dialogue between stakeholders in order to bolster support for the vision of change and to encourage everyone's involvement, especially that of young people.

Equipop is preparing the next stage of using this change-oriented approach to project monitoring by developing a methodological guide based on feedback from participating organizations. The guide will highlight the main challenges of monitoring citizen-mobilization projects for sexual and reproductive rights and health. Equipop will also continue working with donors, presenting the benefits and deployment of this new project monitoring method.

• **How does Equipop take action?**

Equipop is developing a change-oriented project monitoring methodology tailored to the contexts in which it operates and to its partner stakeholders. Equipop also supports its partners in deploying tailor-made change-oriented systems.

• **Who are the beneficiaries?**

Equipop's partners and project stakeholders.

• **What is the rationale?**

The changes achieved through projects and actions need to be demonstrated better, and all stakeholders need an ongoing and open conversation during a project.





## INTERVIEW

# Mariette Montcho

President, ROAJELF and  
the Change Lab consortium  
#Ondoitagir in Benin

“We should use a change-oriented approach in all development projects, because it is people-centered.”



***In your view, what distinguishes the change-oriented approach from other approaches to project monitoring?***

Often while implementing a project, we realize that planned activities either won't or will no longer help achieve the project objectives, but we can't adjust those activities. We then feel stuck in the implementation with no room to maneuver. Also, when a project ends, it is often difficult to measure its impact on the target or the area of intervention. A change-oriented project monitoring approach provides a solution to these problems. What is interesting is how change-oriented project monitoring focuses on people rather than on quantitative values that ultimately leave a project feeling unfinished. Unlike many monitoring approaches, the change-oriented approach leads to meaningful participation by those involved, making them drive desired changes. The change-oriented approach also stands out from other techniques by its dynamic nature, accompanying and guiding a project over time.

***How does change-oriented project monitoring help you?***

Change-oriented project monitoring gives us an opportunity to execute projects in a more human and concrete way. It brings us closer to the target beneficiaries of the communities we are working for. It is also motivational. Indeed, by allowing us to measure small steps and changes, it captures the full dimension of changes that take place over time. Change-oriented project monitoring allows us to adjust our activities in order to achieve the

desired end results. It draws us closer to the community and promotes permanent dialogue.

***What challenges do you need to overcome as you experiment with change-oriented project monitoring?***

I have several questions which express remaining challenges: How can I get enough information to illustrate the changes observed? How often should I collect the information? How can I adapt the approach to the realities of each community and area?

***What advice do you have for others who want to take up change-oriented monitoring?***

First, find out more about the change-oriented approach to project monitoring. Good documentation is important even if nothing beats practice. Then, share knowledge about the approach with project stakeholders very early on, to make it easier to collect data on the changes. It is a good idea to use everyday stories to make it easier to understand the approach.

Accept that change takes time. Indeed, when observing changes on a project, we sometimes feel like things are stagnating, that the anticipated changes are not occurring. This is normal! Finally, learn from the experiences of others who have already used change-oriented monitoring, remembering, though, that the approach is unique to each project and person.

## Learn more about Equipop

Equipop combines social and political mobilization with project conception and management, technical assistance, and partnership building, all to empower women and girls and promote their health and rights around the world.

Equipop builds solid partnerships with local activists on the ground and with decision-makers at the highest international levels.

Equipop promotes feminist values and places gender equality at the heart of its work.

Equipop, a fast-growing nonprofit organization, has about thirty employees, seventy-two members, and an annual budget of €2.68 million. Equipop has a European office located in Paris and a West African office in Ouagadougou.

## Our vision and values

A world where all human beings, regardless of their sex or gender, have their rights respected, including their sexual and reproductive rights, and everyone participates fully in a just, equal, and sustainable society.



### **RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

Equipop advocates for universal recognition and enforcement of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for all, everywhere, achieved through political participation and societal acceptance.



### **WELL-BEING, LIBERTY, AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Equipop believes that the level of well-being in a society should not be measured by economic indicators alone, but also by the extent to which its people can make informed and autonomous choices while accepting their responsibility for others in their community.



### **SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY**

Equipop works for human development that gives everyone the same opportunities to achieve social, political, and economic fulfillment. We advocate development that is mindful of equality and solidarity, especially between men and women, the young and old, because success must not be acquired at the expense of others or future generations. We see strengthening bonds between people as our major challenge.

# Our guiding principles reflect our values



## ENABLING STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Equipop systematically promotes and enables stakeholder participation, the better to ensure high-quality accountability, ownership, sustainability, integration, empowerment, and legitimacy. We do this through sustained dialogue that brings our actions close to our stakeholders: civil society partners, health and social workers, lawmakers, government officials, other decision-makers and, of course, everyone we aim to help.



## WORKING WITHIN NETWORKS

Equipop has also created or joined synergies among social change actors: international solidarity organizations (ISOs), feminist activists, research institutes, universities, public institutions, companies. We collaborate with networks in France, Europe, French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa and around the world. We are involved at various levels – collaborating on projects, making joint decisions, coordinating working groups, or sitting on civil society organizations' boards of directors.



## BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Rather than expanding internally, Equipop has moved to increase its adaptability and responsiveness, and the range and quality of its actions, through alliances and partnerships with civil society organizations, lawmakers, journalists, researchers, civil servants, technical experts, and many others. For over ten years, we have worked alongside Francophone West African civil-society organizations that share our vision. These partners use their finely-grained and thorough knowledge of their communities and cultural dynamics to promote change in their respective countries. Over the years, we have established trusting relationships with them; our complementary skills and assets allow us to jointly create programs for various publics, in particular women and young people, and to conduct social and political advocacy campaigns tailored to local situations.

# Our mission and actions

Our organization aims to empower women and improve their living conditions in the world.

In Francophone West Africa, we have gradually shifted some of our actions from women to benefit girls, particularly those that most policies and programs fail to reach. Building on our specific expertise in sexual and reproductive health and rights, we have progressively developed a broader project that spans health, education, and economics, always using a gender-based approach.

Equipop carries out its mission in Francophone West Africa, Europe and in the world by working with:

- civil society organizations with whom we have close partnerships
- traditional leaders, women's groups, and youth groups
- CSO coalitions and platforms
- healthcare workers
- technical and administrative experts
- researchers
- academics
- journalists
- lawmakers and other decision-makers
- administrators and government officials

*Three complementary activities underpin all our actions*



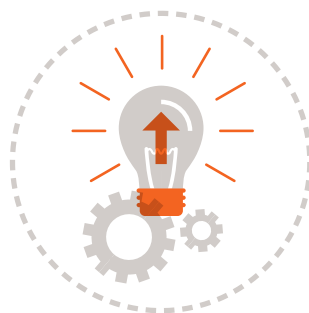
## Sparking change

change by creating and implementing pilot projects in close collaboration with local partners



## Mobilizing

political leaders and citizens in France, West Africa and internationally, to create more favorable institutional and legal environments for human rights, particularly women's rights



## Empowering

development partners by strengthening their operational capacities



# Our knowledge base and expertise

Through the years, we have enriched our knowledge base and expertise by drawing from fields as diverse as political science, public health, medicine, sociology, anthropology, economics, demography and management sciences. We systematically try to blend knowledge from these domains, crafting as comprehensive an approach as possible. Our knowledge base serves as a significant asset in helping us understand the communities in which we work, along with their leaders, healthcare professionals, government officials, and our partner organizations.

**We base our work on these three primary domains:**

## **POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY**

Equipop has gained expertise in advocacy, targeting government officials responsible for international cooperation policy and implementation. We draw on a solid knowledge of the actors and mechanisms that underpin public policies; we also understand policy implementation. This means that we can inform, influence, and raise awareness among decision-making officials working at all levels of government – local, national and international; including mayors, high-level civil servants, ministers and presidents – pushing them to support specific programs. We also encourage policy reform and its effective implementation. In addition, we have developed expertise that lawmakers recognize and seek out.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICINE**

Equipop draws on its knowledge of public health issues. Our employees and partners have a cross-disciplinary understanding of the ways that healthcare systems operate, particularly in Francophone West Africa, and in-depth expertise in subjects such as family planning, emergency obstetric care, fistula injuries, and female genital mutilation. We use this expertise to focus on prevention: providing health education, reducing risks, and changing social norms, among other efforts. We also improve healthcare services delivery: training medical workers, soliciting patient opinion, integrating HIV/AIDS care, and mainstreaming reproductive health.

## **SOCIAL SCIENCES AND GENDER**

Equipop also draws upon the social sciences through a gender-based approach, the better to meet the diverse needs and interests of each public. This approach does not target women as a separate group; rather, it looks at how social position and dominant gender and family models influence the ways that individuals act, react, and interact. Our analysis emphasizes how gender status in any given society results in socially-constructed roles – roles that call for understanding and interrogation, if we hope to drive social change.

A critical tool for promoting new behaviors, the gender-based approach requires both the empowerment of women and the participation of men.

Positioning gender at the core of our actions achieves two objectives – one political, the other social and economic. It brings balance and fairness to male-female power relationships, while building a genuinely sustainable foundation for development, one engaging both halves of the communities we serve.

We collaborate closely with our partners to implement our projects, mobilizing three main types of expertise:

### **PROJECT PLANNING AND COORDINATION**

Equipop has developed project-planning, steering, and coordination capacities and can act either as the lead organization or within a consortium. We can jointly identify needs, plan intervention strategies, define gender-based participative methodologies, mobilize resources, manage technical and financial oversight, conduct project evaluations, assess outcomes, and capitalize on our experience.

### **INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY**

Equipop facilitates knowledge and understanding of the issues that motivate our mission. We take care to increase the visibility of social needs and to use the expertise and knowledge of local activists and other stakeholders. We influence and monitor public policies and programs by producing events, study tours, awareness-raising campaigns, and documentaries, while responding to enquiries from journalists, experts, lawmakers, and other decision-makers. In addition, we collect and critically analyze laws, programs, and policies, write and disseminate position papers, initiate and/or participate in institutional consultations, and lead or attend study groups.

### **CAPACITY-BUILDING**

Equipop strengthens capacities among our development partners and encourages them to share their experiences. We help to design, implement, and evaluate collective projects, using Design Thinking. We also support our partners' organizational development, strengthen their administrative and financial capacities, facilitate fund-raising, and conduct consulting and support activities. When our partners need to enhance their expertise, we jointly conduct assessment exercises, help create teaching tools, and design and provides training courses.

## Our partner networks

Equipop has always believed that working with others leverages its power to achieve change. In 2019, it strengthened relationships with many activist networks in France, Europe, and French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, including:



### **Alliance Droits et Santé** **alliancedroitsetsante.org**

Alliance Droits et Santé (Rights and Health Alliance), a network of French and West African civil society organizations, works to improve the status and health of women and girls in West Africa.



### **Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)** **awid.org**

AWID, created in 1982, is a global, feminist, membership - and movement - supported organization working to achieve gender justice and women's human rights worldwide.

### **Collectif Inter-associatif VIH/sida**

(Inter-associated HIV/Aids Collective) mobilized in 2018 through 2019 for the Global Fund's Sixth Replenishment Conference in Lyon, France. The network continues to work within the framework of The Global Fund's 2017-2022 strategy, "Investing to End Epidemics".



### **Collectif Prévenir & Protéger** **@PPProtéger**

Collectif Prévenir & Protéger (Prevent and Protect Collective) is composed of 14 French membership organizations dedicated to protecting the rights of children and promoting the rights of women and adolescents.



### **Collectif Santé Mondiale** **collectif-sante-mondiale.fr**

Collectif Santé Mondiale (Worldwide Health Collective) brings together nine French non-governmental organizations that protect and promote health-related aid: Action Against Hunger, Equipop, Global Health Advocates France, Médecins du Monde, One, Oxfam France, Family Planning France, Sidaction, and Solthis.



### **Coordination Sud** **coordinationsud.org**

Coordination SUD serves as the national coordinator for French solidarity, emergency, and development nongovernmental organizations, supporting and representing their interests among public and private institutions in France, Europe, and worldwide.



### **Countdown 2030 Europe** **countdown2030europe.org**

Countdown 2030 Europe is a consortium of 15 European nongovernmental organizations working to prioritize sexual and reproductive health and rights in European Union policies.



### **EndFGM** **endfgm.eu**

EndFGM is a European umbrella network of 30 organizations working to ensure sustainable European action to end female genital mutilation.



### Excision, parlons-en !

**excisionparlonsen.org**

Excision, parlons-en ! (Let's talk about excision!) promotes unity among stakeholder organizations and individuals to end female genital mutilation in France and worldwide.



### F3E

**f3e.asso.fr**

F3E (Fonds pour la Promotion des Etudes Transversales, des Etudes Préalables et de l'Evaluation, or Fund to Promote Cross-sectoral Research, Preliminary Studies, and Evaluations) is a French network of local government and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to improving the impact and quality of international solidarity actions.

### Génération Féministes

Génération Féministes (Feminist Generations) unites activist groups in the run-up to the Generation Equality Forum as they campaign for France to adopt a feminist approach in its domestic and foreign policies.



### Genre en Action

**greenaction.net**

Genre en Action (Gender in Action) is an international umbrella network that works to mainstream gender equality into development policies and programs.



### Girls Not Brides

**girlsnotbrides.org**

Girls Not Brides is a global partnership of more than 1500 civil society organizations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to fulfil their potential.



### Implementing Best Practices Initiative

**ibpinitiative.org**

The Implementing Best Practices Initiative is a global partnership that aims to scale-up successful family-planning and reproductive-health practices. Created in 1999 by WHO, USAID, and nine development-cooperation agencies, it has more than 45 members, including donors, international technical assistance organizations, and national and regional partners.



### Inspire

**inspire-partnership.org**

Inspire was a group of European nongovernmental organizations specializing in sexual and reproductive health and rights that ceased operations in 2019.



### Ouagadougou Partnership

**partenariatouaga.org/en**

The Ouagadougou Partnership was launched in 2011 at the Regional Conference on Population, Development and Family Planning held in Burkina Faso by the nine governments of Francophone West African countries and their technical and financial partners to accelerate progress in the use of family planning services in their countries.



### Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

**rhsupplies.org**

The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition is a global partnership of public, private, and non-governmental organizations dedicated to ensuring that all people in low- and middle-income countries can access and use affordable, high-quality supplies to ensure their better reproductive health.

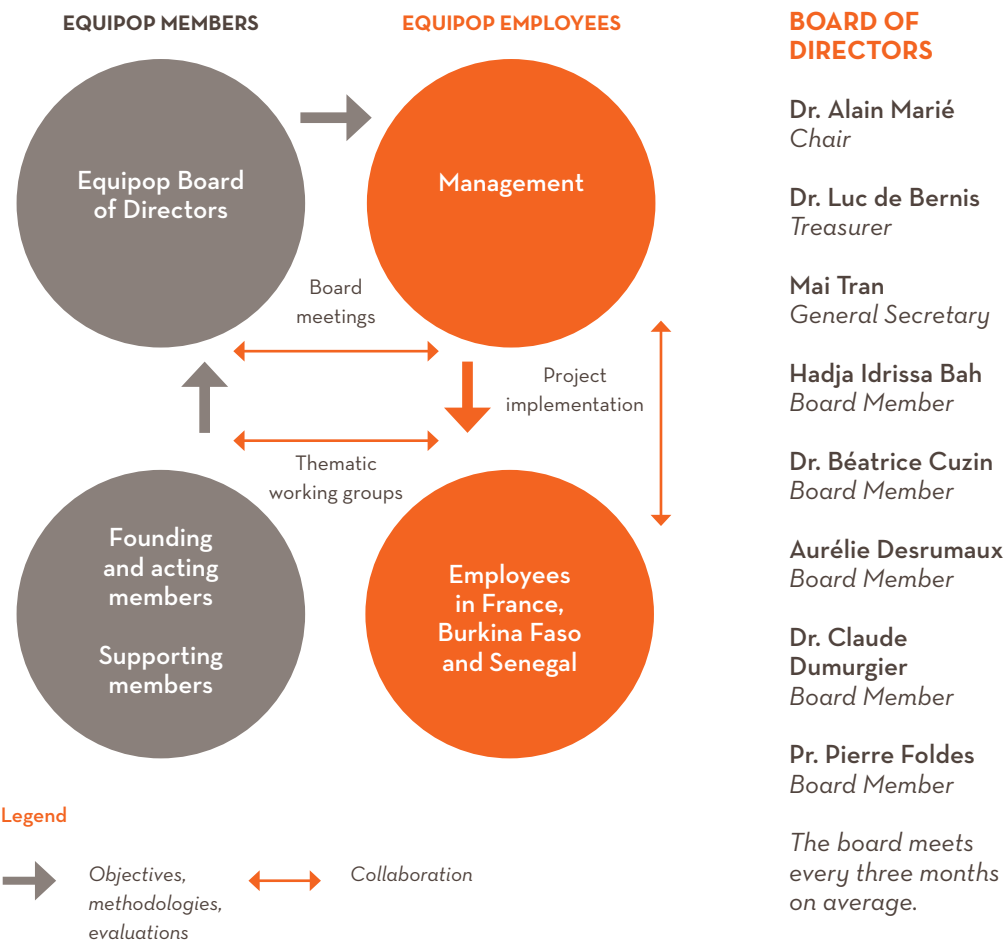


### West African Young Feminists Network

Le Réseau des Jeunes Feministes d'Afrique de l'Ouest (West African Young Feminists Network) is composed of women activists who work in West Africa and who want their voices heard when national, regional, and international decisions are made, particularly about the rights of women and girls.

# Citizen engagement and professional involvement

Equipop draws on a seven-person board and a multidisciplinary team of about 30 employees to define and execute its mission. About 60 Equipop Members who provide financial and other support meet once a year at a general assembly.





## 2019 STAFF

### MANAGEMENT

---

**Aurélié Gal-Régnez**

*Executive Director*

### COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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**Nathalie Perrotin-Milla**

*Communications Manager*

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*Interim Communications  
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*Communications Assistant*

**Marion Lambert**

*Communications Assistant*

**Aline Samaké**

*Communications Assistant*

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**Nicolas Rainaud**

*Advocacy Manager France  
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**Brigitte Syan**

*Advocacy Manager West Africa*

**Marguerite Bannwarth**

*Advocacy Officer*

**Abdoulaye Banse**

*Advocacy Officer*

**Lucie Daniel**

*Advocacy Expert*

**Louise Deniau**

*Advocacy Trainee*

**Maude Henry**

*Advocacy Trainee*

**Marie Véron**

*Advocacy Trainee*

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**Dominique Pobel**

*Programs & Development  
Manager*

**Hélène Ménard**

*Programs & Development  
Co-Manager*

**Laura Delcamp**

*Programs & Development  
Assistant*

**Sokhna Fall Ba**

*Project Officer*

**Jeanne Fournier**

*Innovation and Support Officer*

**Geneviève Némouthé**

*Project and Evaluation  
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**Marion Luc**

*Programs & Development  
Trainee*

### INNOVATION & SUPPORT UNIT

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*Innovation & Support Manager*

**Elise Fouillet**

*Innovation & Support Officer*

**Elise Petitpas**

*Innovation and Advocacy Expert*

**Fatim Nikiéma Traore**

*Project Officer*

**Maïfoux Nassirou**

*Innovation and Social*

*Mobilization Officer*

**Fatim Tambadou Diallo**

*Innovation and Support Officer*

### ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNIT

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*Administration, Finance  
& Organizational  
Development Manager*

**Siré Hermann Barro**

*Administration, Finance &  
Organizational Development  
Support Officer*

**Macoumba Fall**

*Project Administration &  
Finance Oversight Officer*

**Pascal Ilboudo**

*Organizational Development  
Support Officer*

**Sibiri Koné**

*Administrative &  
Logistics Assistant*

**Aurore Moynet**

*Partner Administrative &  
Financial Support Officer*

**Kadidia Rabo**

*Support Manager,  
West Africa Office*

**W. Fidèle Sawadogo**

*Administration, Finance &  
Organizational Development  
Support Officer*

**Nicolas Schlegel**

*Accountant*

Equipop wishes to pay tribute to Fidèle Sawadogo, colleague and friend who passed away on July 27, 2020. After many years serving children's causes, particularly through SOS Children's Village, Fidèle joined Equipop in November 2019. Our almost ten months of working together allowed us to appreciate our committed and caring colleague. We have lost a member of our team. May the earth lie lightly upon him.

# Equipop 2019 accounts

In 2019, Equipop spent 90% of its funding on mission-fulfilling expenses. Its revenue increased 19% over the previous year and the year ended with a surplus.

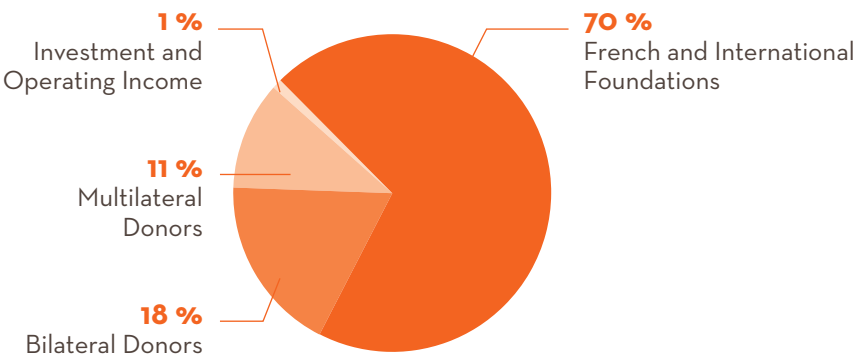
## REVENUES

Equipop revenue reached €2.68 million in 2019, a 19% increase over 2018 (€2.24 million).

Equipop received 70% of its funding from international foundations, principally the Hewlett Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Public institutions provided 29% of all funding, of which 18% was drawn from bilateral French development-cooperation agencies, principally AFD (Agence Française de Développement), and 11% drawn from multilateral cooperation agencies, including the West African Health Organization and United Nations agencies.

Equipop continues to strengthen and develop new technical and financial partnerships, encouraging the collaborations crucial to project success

At the same time, Equipop maintained its support for African civil society organizations by mobilizing resources for them and raising funds from new donors.



## EXPENDITURES

In 2019, expenses increased sharply to reach €2.66 million. Equipop spent 90% of its funding on mission-fulfilling expenses. Administrative and overhead expenses remained within sector guidelines. Projects begun in 2018 continued in 2019 at similar expense levels. The year 2019 was mainly marked by:

- Faster implementation of the Change Lab Project, first launched in 2018.
- Continued activities for Protéger la Prochaine Génération (Protect the Next Generation), Let's Change, DEMSAN (or Sexual and Reproductive Health Demography), and partnerships with RAES (or African Health Education Network) for three projects: C'est la vie +, Educasso, and Bruits de Tambour (Drumbeats).
- Renewal of annual partnerships with UNFPA and the Paris Mayor's Office.
- Implementation of "W7 - Bringing together French civil society from G7 and developing countries invested in gender equality during the G7 summit in Biarritz, August 2019", a project co-financed by foundations and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

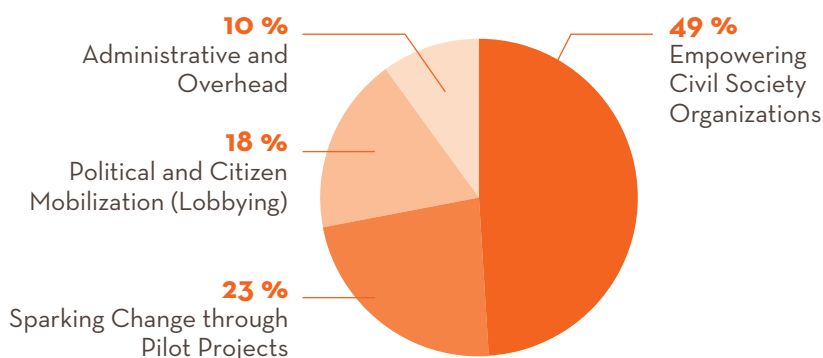
Equipop granted a high level of funding - €672 thousand - to its partners in 2019; the financing primarily came from the Organizational Development Fund and the Innovation Fund through the Change Lab Project.

Personnel expenses increased 14% over 2018, due to increased staffing for project implementations. At fiscal year-end, Equipop had a €25,126 surplus.

This result mainly derives from keeping overhead costs controlled and in line with the volume of project activity.

The surplus will augment the organization's capital reserves. Equipop has a medium-term objective to increase its intervention capacity for groundbreaking activities; it also seeks to augment investment capacity in order to professionalize administrative functions and to cover possible financing gaps while preserving internal expertise.

Equipop's annual accounts are audited by Mazars SPCC, certified public accountants. The complete 2019 annual report and accountants' statement are available for consultation (in French) on [equipop.org](http://equipop.org)



## INTERVIEW

# Hadja Idrissa Bah

Member of the Equipop  
Board of Directors

“We, the new generation of West Africa feminists, just want to feel like we have our place in society, to be respected and to have equal rights.”



### *How do you work to help girls and women in Guinea?*

When I was 13 years old, I started campaigning to prevent child marriage and the excision of young girls around Conakry. When I was 15, I became National President of the Guinea Children's Parliament. Then I founded the Club des Jeunes Filles Leaders de Guinée (Guinea Young Girl Leaders Club) and served as its president from 2016 to 2020. I am also involved at the regional level, in the Réseau des Jeunes Féministes d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Young Feminists of West Africa Network). I have also travelled to France, especially for the Women 7 and G7 Summit in Biarritz in 2019. Since September 2019, I have been studying law in Paris. I focus on raising awareness to promote the empowerment of women and girls. I work on lifting taboos and liberating Guinean and African girls and women. We live in a patriarchal society; its ideologies are rooted in traditions and religious values. The goal is for women to be able to make decisions about things that affect them, in institutions, at school, and in informal settings, such as sewing workshops.

### *What do you find most valuable in Equipop's approach?*

I got to know Equipop in 2018, in Guinea, when I attended a training session for young feminists. In a few days, I learned a lot about feminisms and communication and advocacy strategies ... Above all, I noticed that Equipop put young people first, trying to promote talented youth and support everyone who wanted to get involved. Equipop also brought together young West Africans from several countries to create a network. Since

then, network members have shared many initiatives. If we had remained alone in our little corners, we would never have achieved as much visibility at the international level. Something else unique to Equipop is its way of forging partnerships by bringing together institutional actors, journalists, local groups, and everyone who wants to take action.

### *What challenges do you particularly want to bring to the attention of Equipop's board of directors?*

Equipop's primary mission is to promote women's rights and health worldwide. I am already committed to these subjects and intend to continue these struggles, in particular against excision and child marriage. I am also extremely interested in comprehensive sexuality education. I am quite comfortable talking about these topics because they directly concern me: I have experienced some of this violence, and as a woman, I still bear the burden of tradition and social pressure. I feel that it is important for a young feminist from a West African country to participate with Equipop in discussions, deliberations, and decisions on these subjects. In addition, I am accustomed to speaking to the media and at conferences. I would like to continue speaking out about these causes within Equipop. Speaking out in public is crucial because it raises awareness. I am convinced that even very conservative people who follow me on social media can change their way of thinking when they listen to what I have to say; everything must be done to maintain dialogue.

# Acknowledgements

Equipop draws on the support of many people and organizations who share its convictions and support its actions in order to achieve its mission. We offer our warmest thanks to all of them for the trust they have placed in us: volunteers and Equipop Members who work for the association; donors and financial partners, whose support makes

projects into reality; our CSO partners, with whom we enjoy close-knit, solid and lasting relationships; experts and civil servants who help us co-design policies and programs; journalists and Internet users who relay our messages and news – thank you! This report aims to update you about the impact of our work.

*We especially wish to thank:*





# Follow Equipop daily news



## **On the Internet**

[equipop.org](http://equipop.org)

To learn more and  
take action.



## **On Twitter**

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For real-time news  
about us and SRHR.



## **Through our newsletter**

For a periodic summary  
of our news highlights.



## **On Facebook**

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Populations](https://facebook.com/Equilibres.Populations)

For exclusive content and for  
sharing with our community.



## **On Instagram**

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For behind-the-scenes  
photos of Equipop.



## **On Youtube**

[Equilibres & Populations](https://www.youtube.com/Equilibres%20Populations)  
For videos about  
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[linkedin.com/company/  
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For Equipop news and  
innovations related to SRHR.

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This report is also  
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[www.equipop.org](http://www.equipop.org)

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# Annual report

Equipop works to advance girls' and women's health and rights around the world. Our mission has three parts: Sparking social change by working closely with local partners to achieve gender equality; mobilizing political leaders and citizens in France, West Africa and internationally; and empowering development partners and changemakers by strengthening their operational capacities.

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