A program for, with and by young people

December 2020
Colophon

Jeune S3 - December 2020

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Dear readers,

We are Marietta, Aminatou, Jean-Aimé and Sabi. Five years ago, when Jeune S3 started, we didn’t know each other. And we weren’t sure what to expect from the programme. Although thousands of kilometers separated us, our daily lives were much the same: living and surviving in a fragile country prone to epidemics, inequalities, political instability and poverty. The ups and downs of this daily life have unfortunately not changed, but we, as young people, have. And so have the people around us. We are going to tell you why.

Jeune S3 was implemented in 2016 for advancing and strengthening accountability on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in the most fragile areas of our countries. What a challenge!

SRHR is often a delicate subject. And not just in Africa. Everywhere. But what makes it especially tough for us are the traditions and myths. Some believe you can’t get HIV/AIDS after midnight. That using contraception encourages infidelity. Or that drinking a glass of water with detergent is an effective way to end a pregnancy at home...

At school, some teachers tell us off if we even use the word “sex”. The law is also sometimes against us as it is not in favor of adolescents under 18 accessing family planning services or sexual diversity.

The Internet has helped us to gain more knowledge and share ideas among us. However, the digital tools have not yet reached everyone everywhere: in fact only the wealthiest living in large cities have access to them.

In such a context, how can we develop ourselves and be informed?

And yet, five years after joining the Jeune S3 programme, we have all contributed to greater recognition of and freedom for our generation. It’s a major shift in mentality for all of us and it took a lot of effort to open doors which were previously closed for us.

This report assesses the successes, challenges and opportunities that Jeune S3 has offered us on sexual and reproductive health and rights. You will read our personal stories, those of our friends, our parents, our community leaders, nurses, etc. All these people have one thing in common - they decided at one point, to take the plunge - to trust us. For the first time, they took us seriously and understood that our future is in our hands. Not in theirs.

Even if there are still major hurdles to ensuring the health and well-being of young people, we are committed to continuing our work with the support of stakeholders.

We hope that what we have learned from Jeune S3 will open up new perspectives and understanding of the environment in which we live. But above all how we, the young, can impact it for a better and brighter future in which we can say openly “This is my body. This is my choice. These are my rights”.

Happy reading,

Aminatou, Jean-Aimé, Marietta and Soudeissi,
Jeune S3 young ambassadors of Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Benin.
In conflict-prone and fragile contexts, women and young girls in particular are highly vulnerable. They are often confronted with violence and aggression throughout society, with little to no protection against assault. Within these environments, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are neither recognized nor addressed. Laws, parents, teachers, religious leaders, as well as health care workers can be barriers for young people to find the right answers and services to respond to their SRHR needs. For four years (2016-2020), the Jeune S3 program (S3 stands for Santé, Sexualité and Sécurité) aimed to ensure that young people, including the most marginalized and vulnerable populations - especially girls between the ages of 10 and 14 years old, were able to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and to have their rights respected. Jeune S3 did so through a comprehensive multi sectoral approach that consists of four intervention areas: youth voice and participation; SRHR knowledge and skills; responsive SRHR services; enabling environment and respect of rights. Each of these strategies are essential in its own right and mutually reinforcing (cf. theory of change on page 27).

What is Jeune S3?

Benin
- 5.2% Prevalence of modern contraception among young women aged 15-19. It is 9.5% for 19 to 24 year olds.
- 44% Primary school completion rate for girls. It is 51% for young boys.
- 15% Percentage of women, among young people aged 15-24, who have full knowledge of HIV and AIDS.

Source: Benin Demographic and Health Survey, 2017-2018.

Cameroon
- 122 per 1,000: Adolescent birth rate (15-19 years).
- 10.3% Prevalence of modern contraception use among young women aged 15-19. It is 22.6% for 20-24 year olds.
- 33% Percentage of young men, aged 15-24, who have comprehensive knowledge of HIV prevention methods. It is 36% for young women aged 15-24.

Source: Cameroon Demographic and Health Survey, EDSC-V, 2018.

Central African Republic
- 229 per 1,000: Adolescent birth rate (15-19 years).
- 68% Percentage of young girls married before the age of 18.
- 18% Prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) among adolescents aged 15 to 19.


Democratic Republic of Congo
- 207 per 1,000: Adolescent birth rate (15-19 years) in South-Kivu. It is 180 per 1000 in North Kivu.
- 38% Child marriage rate (before age 18) among young girls.
- 28% Percentage of young women, aged 19-24, who have experienced sexual violence. It is 16.4% among young women aged 15 to 19.

Jeune S3
Santé, Sexualité, Sécurité

- 695,635 young people reached\(^1\) by Jeune S3 (51\% girls)
- 164,210 young people received a family planning consultation (71\% girls)
- 194,498 young people tested for HIV (43\% girls)
- 140,809 young people received comprehensive sexuality education in or out of school, of whom 45,857 were girls aged 10-14 years (33\%)
- 552,153 reproductive services provided to young people (76\% girls)
teachers from 253 primary and secondary schools trained in providing comprehensive sexuality education

parents sensitized on young people’s SRHR and engaged in important conversations with their children

young people involved in the development and/or implementation of SRHR activities

radio broadcasts produced by young people

young people involved in advocacy activities to become active leaders in their families, communities, organisations, and countries

1 Young people who participated in at least one Jeune S3 activity
2 Young people who had a role in advocacy activities, either at development or implementation phase; most actually met with and talked to specific actors of interest
We are... stronger than we were before

Young people have vision. Young people have passion. Young people are leaders.

Young leaders need platforms to speak their minds, gain empowering knowledge and harness their enthusiasm into concrete action. Jeune S3 worked to facilitate all of this and more. Cultivating the practical skills of individuals and organisations - including lobbying, advocacy, multimedia communication and organisational capacity building - was a first step to ensuring young people will carry the benefits, work and momentum of Jeune S3 well into the future.

The leaders of ‘tomorrow’ are already active. Leadership, lobbying and advocacy.

Jeune S3 trained 543 young people in leadership, lobbying, and advocacy. Young people used their acquired skills to strengthen their voices, increase the visibility of their organisations, and direct local and national initiatives and policy making. From obtaining free SRH services for young people in Benin to lobbying local leaders in Cameroon to condemn forced and early marriage, from representing youth on the Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) National Coordination Committee in Central African Republic to serving on Community Health and Development Committees in Democratic Republic of Congo, young people made their voices heard by shaping policy in concrete ways.

Jeune S3 trained young people in the monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive sexuality education in schools and SRH services for young people in health facilities. In Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, young people used Quality Score Cards to collect data on SRH services and in-school education. Involving young people in quality assurance increased the accountability of educators and service providers to young people and improved the quality of SRHR education and services in meeting young people’s needs.

1,682 young people involved in advocacy activities
543 young people trained in leadership, lobbying, and advocacy
317 young people trained in multimedia communication including journalism, radio production, and social media
710 radio broadcasts produced by young people

Accountable to young people. Monitoring & evaluation for better education & services.

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3 Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) works with governments, civil society, multilateral organizations, donors, the private sector, and the research and development community to enable 120 million more women and girls to use contraceptives by 2020.
Many changemaking actions by Jeune S3 participants started by gathering and presenting quality data to community decision makers. In Banikoara, Benin, Jeune S3 participants cited high rates of unplanned pregnancy in their campaign for free SRH services for young people (see page 12). Jeune S3 participants in Kabaré, Democratic Republic of Congo, conducted undercover research to find the number of minors working in bars or brothels in their communities before leading legal efforts to protect minors from future exploitation (see page 9). Data-driven lobbying helped young people hold leaders accountable and advocate for the prioritization of young people’s needs.

Amplifying young voices.
Capacity building and networking.

317 young people were trained in SRHR and multi-media communication including journalistic writing, social media engagement, radio journalism, and production. Over 156 youth organisations across the four Jeune S3 countries benefited from organisational capacity building activities such as inter-organisational collaboration, leadership and lobbying. Young people’s organisations put their acquired skills into practice, using Jeune S3 platforms to spark productive exchange between young people across different countries. Youth advisory committees were also established in communities across all four Jeune S3 countries. Comprising Jeune S3 youth ambassador representatives from community organisations, youth advisory committees organised lobbying and advocacy actions on pressing issues affecting young people --- bringing the power of a youth-driven, collective voice to local elected officials, religious and community leaders and health authorities. In Benin, Cameroon and Central African Republic, Youth Advisory Committees lobbied local leaders to take a stand against early and forced marriage. In the Central African Republic, youth advisory committees also obtained authorization from the Ministry of Health for free access to voluntary HIV testing for young people under the age of 18. National legislation to implement this policy is being introduced. Youth advisory committees in Democratic Republic of Congo obtained places for young people (one female, one male) on community-level Health Development Committees. Across all four Jeune S3 countries, young people showed leaders and decision makers they were serious about their mission. Young people wanted more than acknowledgement from people in power. They demanded formal recognition. They demanded commitment to prioritizing the voices and concerns of young people. And, they demanded action from their leaders.
We are... lobbying for the respect of our rights

Jeune S3 made space for young people to raise their voices through local, national, and international lobbying and advocacy activities. By amplifying young people’s voices, Jeune S3 helped young people have an impact on their future... and the future of others like them for generations to come. Skilled advocates emerged from Jeune S3’s capacity building activities. The passion and drive of these young advocates fueled real and sustainable change.

Networking for change. Supporting and learning from each other.

107 Jeune S3 ambassadors were elected by their peers over the course of the programme. Ambassadors each served for a term of two years, receiving lobbying, advocacy, leadership, and SRHR education training to represent and advocate for young people’s interests in local and national spaces. At the close of their terms Jeune S3 ambassadors put their refined mentorship skills to use training newly elected ambassadors. This handover gave continuity to participant involvement in Jeune S3 activities and further strengthened networks of young people within and between countries. Ambassadors advocated for the rights of their peers, including vulnerable young people. In the Central African Republic, ambassadors advocated on behalf of young deaf people. Thanks to these dedicated efforts, sign language translators are available to accompany young deaf people on visits to health centers.

Levelling up. Conversations for change with people in power.

Across the four programme countries, Jeune S3 brought young people to decision-making tables alongside parents, school authorities, religious and community leaders, elected officials and policy makers. Thanks to effective lobbying, young people have a permanent voice in many of the decision making bodies that determine their future. In Benin, ‘Plateformes d’eveil’ (‘Advocacy Platforms’) in each programme commune bring together young people with other key stakeholders in civil society. Young people themselves set agendas for local discussion and action items. In the municipality of Kandi, the mayor ensured Jeune S3 participants permanent positions on a monitoring committee to discourage early and forced marriage. Young people in Democratic Republic of Congo interact directly with provincial policy makers as members of the government technical committee for family planning policy in the provinces of North and South Kivu.
Young people say ‘No more!’ to exploitation of minors

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Jeune S3 ambassadors in the territory of Kabaré, Democratic Republic of Congo, minors now have legal protection against sexual exploitation. These young people identified a problem and did not rest until decision makers delivered a concrete solution. Esther, a Jeune S3 ambassador, described their actions: “The first thing we did was research the situation. We identified 23 brothels and 53 minor girls being exploited. With our [local] partners, we met and discussed our objectives and the lobbying strategies we would undertake to stop [this exploitation].”

The ambassadors met with parents, representatives from civil society, the police, military and, of course, other young people to advocate for protection for minors. The ambassadors submitted a letter to the territory administrator demanding an end to the sexual exploitation of adolescents under 18 years of age and met several times with the territory administrator in person. In November 2019, fantastic news came that there was an official policy (N°5072/12/BUR/AT/KBR/2019) and this has resulted in concrete change:

• Minors (females and males under 18 years of age) are prohibited from entering hotels, bars, restaurants and nightclubs without their parents;
• Establishments are required to post ‘Entrance prohibited to minors’ at their entrance and are prohibited from hiring minors as workers.

“We lobbied for this for a year,” said Seraphin, another Jeune S3 ambassador.

“We hope that young people in other territories are inspired by the example of Kabaré. It is a big moment for young people to exercise our rights and embody positive change in our communities.”
For young people to make informed choices about their health, their bodies and their lives, they need access to accurate sources of information. They need safe spaces to have open discussions. They need to be empowered and confident to stand up for their rights.

Power to young people.
Increasing access to information.

A total of 695,635 young people were reached by Jeune S3 SRH education activities both in and out of school. The dissemination of factual information to young people was a programmatic priority. Educators, illustrators, and, of course, young people themselves collaborated with Jeune S3 to produce two culturally-adapted teaching tools for comprehensive sexuality education in schools, health facilities and community centers. 391 health centers and schools were involved in providing SRHR education and services across the four Jeune S3 countries. 1097 teachers were trained in the delivery of comprehensive sexuality education for both primary and secondary school students and 253 schools are now providing comprehensive sexuality education.

Foundational shifts for fundamental change. Open dialogue to move social norms.

Young people deserve to have people they trust at their side, advocating for their rights and delivering accurate SRH information. Thanks to programme activities across Jeune S3 countries, a total of 6,866 health care providers, teachers, young peer educators, religious leaders, and government officials supported young people in discussions on comprehensive sexuality education. Jeune S3 also prioritized structured interactions with policy makers to bring young people’s needs to the forefront of policy discussions.
In Cameroon, Jeune S3 worked with Ministers of Education and UNESCO to integrate comprehensive sexuality education into classroom activities. This work is ongoing. The first round of teacher training was so successful that the Ministry of Education asked Jeune S3 for a second round of training, resulting in 174 teachers trained in CSE in Jeune S3 intervention zones across Cameroon. Jeune S3 developed an entirely new comprehensive sexuality education curriculum for use in schools across Central African Republic. While in Democratic Republic of Congo, Jeune S3 participated in the implementation of the National Coordination Commission for the programme Education for the Health and Well-being of Adolescents and Youth. Jeune S3 facilitated the training of Congolese government officials in comprehensive sexuality education and the curriculum was adopted nationally by the Ministry of Education. Monitoring and evaluation systems were also set up to ensure programme responsiveness and quality. 

Destigmatize and normalize. Menstrual health and hygiene education for gender equity. 

Taboos and limited access to menstrual hygiene products can leave young girls and boys without the knowledge and resources they need to confidently manage the physical and emotional realities of adolescence. Jeune S3 worked in concrete and sustainable ways to address these conditions which can exacerbate gender inequities. To destigmatize menstruation, menstrual health and hygiene activities took place with both girls and boys in all four countries. Most menstrual hygiene discussions were integrated into comprehensive sexuality education in schools and sessions for community organisations using the Jeune S3-produced SRH education book ‘Like Sarah, Miriam and Joe’. In some countries, Jeune S3 ambassadors and religious leaders also facilitated these important conversations with young people in the community. In 2016, the social enterprise KmerPad became a Jeune S3 partner organization in Cameroon. Founded by a Cameroonian woman, KmerPad organizes educational activities and locally produces and markets cotton sanitary pads and washable, reusable menstrual health and hygiene products. KmerPad organized menstrual health and hygiene awareness raising campaigns and discussions with both girls and boys in the East and in the Far North of Cameroon. 174 young girls and 90 young boys participated in education sessions and 3000 locally produced menstrual health kits, including reusable sanitary pads, underwear and user guides, were distributed. In Democratic Republic of Congo, teachers in Jeune S3 target schools reported that girls were absent or were sent home from school if they were menstruating because they lacked menstrual products. Health providers were treating a number of young girls for infections related to the use of unhygienic menstrual products. In response, Jeune S3 organized hygiene pad production projects in 20 schools in North and South Kivu provinces. Teachers and 40 female student leaders across schools fabricated washable, reusable sanitary pads. The pads, usable for up to one year, were then sold at schools at cost ($1.80 USD). In Jeune S3 community centers, young female leaders also fabricated reusable sanitary pads to sell in the community and trained other young girls to make their own pads as well. A community nurse observed a significant change at her health center after the Jeune S3 menstrual pad pilot project in her area: “We always noticed that in addition to infections from unprotected sex young girls also had infections from using unhygienic menstrual pads. We proposed that Jeune S3 make sanitary pads available to young [girls]. And since then, we have noticed a decrease in young girls seeking consultations for infections.”

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We are... sharing our skills

Who better to spread the word about adolescent and youth SRHR than young people themselves? Using their newly acquired skills, young people raised their voices to share important knowledge with their peers, their parents, and decision makers.

Sharing is caring. Well-informed resources.

8,928 young people were involved in the development and/or implementation of SRHR activities across the four Jeune S3 countries over the course of the programme. 648 peer and community educators from 156 youth organisations were trained by Jeune S3 community partners to provide comprehensive sexuality education to their peers. These educators and mentors facilitated discussions and activities to increase access to comprehensive SRHR information in the community, especially for young people not in school.

Spread the word. Community SRHR sensitization and promotion.

Jeune S3 participants effectively utilized social media and produced 710 radio broadcasts to reach as many young people and community members as possible. Radio discussions covered a range of relevant topics for young people such as SRHR, sexuality, contraceptives, sexual and gender-based violence, and alcohol use. In Benin, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo young leaders wanted to make sure important SRHR messages were internalized by community members. Using their leadership and facilitation skills, they organised ‘Clubs d’écoute’ (‘Listening clubs’). Discussions were moderated by young people creating an important space for intergenerational dialogue and exchange. In Democratic Republic of Congo, hundreds of young people, parents of students, local authorities and community partners came together on comprehensive sexuality education days for important intergenerational dialogue. These community education days sensitized the community to young people’s SRHR, dispelled common myths and rumors, and built parent, community, and public support for young people’s SRHR. These community-wide events included engaging forms of communication like poetry and theatre, linking various activities across Jeune S3 pathways. Young people’s many, diverse contributions to Jeune S3 activities demonstrate that Jeune S3 is more than a programme. It is sustainable progress fueled by the knowledge, participation and energy of young people themselves.
Meet Marietta: “Jeune S3 opened my eyes and is guiding me towards a better future!”

Looking for a vibrant young leader? Look no further than Marietta Poutou Piri from Bangui, Central African Republic. In 2016 Marietta became a Jeune S3 ambassador and, recognizing her leadership skills, her colleagues elected her as President of the Ambassador Advisory Board. Marietta’s achievements as Ambassador are impressive: she oversaw the integration of young deaf people into Jeune S3 activities, was the youth focal point for the International Family Planning 2020 conference and even moderated a televised debate with government ministers pressuring them to put young people’s SRHR at the top of the national agenda!

“Jeune S3 opened my eyes and is guiding me towards a better future: to work for the causes that are close to my heart.” Marietta said it best: Jeune S3 is about positive change for young people, led by young people.
When it comes to SRHR services for young people, one size does not fit all.

Social and cultural taboos about SRHR can prevent young people from seeking out SRH information and services and many health providers may not know how to respond to the specific challenges facing young people. This is where Jeune S3 stepped in.

Quality matters. Ensuring SRH services are youth-friendly.

Making health services ‘youth-friendly’ or welcoming to young people and responsive to their particular needs was a cornerstone of the Jeune S3 approach. 138 health centers were involved in Jeune S3 activities and 412 health staff were trained to provide youth-friendly SRHR services. In Benin, Jeune S3 peer educators participated in the training of health staff so that the real needs of young people were at the center of ‘youth-friendly services’ in practice. So, what does a youth-friendly health facility actually look like? Jeune S3 transformed intimidating and out of touch health facilities into welcoming and relevant resources for young people. In 2018 Human Centered Design was adapted in Cameroon to engage young people in identifying strategies to attract more young people to health centers. Using the participatory process of ideation, rapid prototyping, user feedback, and iteration, the young people themselves came up with interventions for 12 health centers that addressed both the atmosphere of the health care setting (attitude of providers and favourable waiting areas) and enabling factors (attitudes of parents and religious leaders). This participatory approach proved effective and the number of young people accessing health facilities increased drastically from 549 total in 2018 to 397 young people the first quarter of 2019 alone. A number of health facilities in all four Jeune S3 countries dedicated reception and SRH resource areas to young people. These were termed ‘Super Cool Reception Areas’ in Cameroon and ‘Youth Corners’ in Democratic Republic of Congo. Jeune S3 also directly involved young people in the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of services. Young people in all four Jeune S3 countries were trained to use Quality Score Cards to rate the quality of youth-friendly SRH services. Young people across countries also posed as ‘mystery clients’ to evaluate their experiences as consumers, sharing their feedback directly with health staff so that services continually improved.

We are… getting the products and services we need

552,153 reproductive services provided to young people
194,498 young people tested for HIV
160,511 young people received FP consultation

Responsive SRH Services
Not backing down:
free sexual and reproductive health services for young people

In Banikoara (Benin) Jeune S3 ambassadors educated parents, religious leaders and community members on young people’s SRH needs. They coordinated partnerships with national allies including the Benin Association for the Promotion of the Family. They also brought the high rates of unplanned adolescent pregnancy in their community and cost barriers preventing young people from accessing SRH services to the attention of local health and elected officials. Sabi Simon Seko Boro, Jeune S3 ambassador, described the ambassadors’ interaction with the chief district medical officer of Banikoara: “We presented him with the challenges we face regarding sexual and reproductive health and lobbied for free screening for sexually transmitted infections and for free contraception in health centers.” The ambassadors’ unwavering commitment paid off. In 2019, they obtained free sexual health services and free access to contraception for young people, as well as an administrative budget line dedicated to adolescent reproductive health.
Imagine a courageous young person decides to exercise their right to use a contraceptive of his or her choice… only to arrive at the health facility and find there are no contraceptives available. Experiences like these discourage young people from seeking out SRH services and contribute to ongoing poor health outcomes such as unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Recognizing the need to prevent contraceptive stockouts in health facilities, Jeune S3 filled this gap in SRH services in Democratic Republic of Congo. To encourage sustainable follow up, Jeune S3 organised the Multisectorial Coordinating Committee on Family Planning in two provinces in the country. This standing committee, which includes young people, ensures that health facilities maintain a three month supply of contraceptive products at all times. In addition, Jeune S3 and an implementing partner successfully reduced stockouts in health centers. From 2016 to 2019, the annual average number of days of stockouts for all methods of modern contraception across Jeune S3 partnering health facilities dropped notably. In 2016 health facilities in North Kivu province reported up to 30 days of stockouts on average by method. By 2019, the highest annual average number of days of stockouts by method was five (for female condoms). A number of other contraceptives (implants, injection and pills) reported zero average days of stockouts in 2019. In South Kivu, province the highest average number of days of stockouts in 2016 was 10 for female condoms. In 2019, no stockouts were reported for five out of eight methods.5

We know that certain young people have to face extraordinary challenges, making the realization of their rights, especially SRHR, extremely difficult. Jeune S3 made certain that especially vulnerable groups of young people would benefit from programme activities no matter how many barriers had to be broken down.

Jeune S3 worked to connect vulnerable and hard to reach young people with the education and services they needed to make positive decisions for their health and well-being. Jeune S3 provided a total of 97,675 adolescents aged 10-14 years with comprehensive sexuality education. 45,857 of whom were young girls, as well as 799 female sex workers and 747 young mothers. In addition, radio broadcasts and recorded video series were used strategically to reach young people and educators living in remote and hard to reach areas. 1,285 young people who survived traumatic events in the Central African Republic, including gender-based violence, were also supported by professionals to process their experiences and meet their physical needs.

4 Includes male and female condoms, contraceptive pills, implants, contraceptive injections and IUDs
5 For data source see I+ Solutions Rapports Annuel et Financier 2019.
Meet Aminatou: speaking up when it counts the most

Aminatou Oumarou, Jeune S3 ambassador from Cameroon, can be reserved in her day-to-day interactions, but when she is advocating for the rights of young women and girls then it’s Look out, world! Aminatou takes her concerns about the early marriage of young girls directly to the religious and traditional leaders who hold strong sway over members of her community.

At the 2018 International Conference on Family Planning in Kigali, Rwanda, Aminatou’s networking and advocacy skills shone. She connected with young people from around the world, finding their fight for SRHR was all too familiar. Returning from Kigali, Aminatou shared what she learned with young girls in her community: “Problems with young people’s reproductive health are the same in all African countries, especially francophone ones. We need to become more involved in advocacy efforts... to stop early marriages and unplanned pregnancy.”

Aminatou’s wish for the future: “As a Jeune S3 mentor, I hope to see every young girl in my community study [and] to make choices which are hers alone, without coercion.”

Investing in their future. Economic empowerment for independence and healthy futures.

Economic independence can mean the difference between a lifetime of struggle and a lifetime of opportunity. Lack of economic resources, especially for young women and girls, is linked to high risk health behaviours such as transactional sex and sex work, non-use of condoms, and the associated risks of gender-based violence and HIV. To mitigate these risks for young people, Jeune S3 programming in Democratic Republic of Congo focused on a number of income generating activities. 125 young adolescents aged 10-14 years, adolescent mothers, and young people living with HIV participating in Jeune S3 SRHR education activities also received financial literacy mentorship. These vulnerable adolescents were given rabbits to raise, breed and sell for sustainable income generation. In another project, 791 young girls, including adolescent mothers, young girls living with HIV, and young sex workers, became members of Village Savings and Loan Groups. Group members received training, administered their own meetings, and were able to borrow money from the group fund they each bought into for up to four weeks. With these loans, girls invested in beginning or expanding their own small businesses like hair styling, clothing and boutique sales, street food vending and restaurants. The interest paid on these loans generated more loan capital for group members and for future income-generating projects and training.

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Jeune S3 created spaces for open dialogue with community leaders including parents, religious and traditional leaders, local authorities, and decision makers. As always, the voices and concerns of young people drove these important conversations. Jeune S3 young leaders knew the next generation of young people was not far behind - and this next generation of young people deserved to access and exercise their SRHR from day one.

Education begins at home. Engaging parents for young people’s health and rights.
As children’s first educators and advocates, parents can be central allies in the fight for young people’s SRHR. Socio-cultural taboos, however, can prevent important SRH conversations between parents and their children from happening. This is why Jeune S3 education efforts extended beyond the classroom into the community to create safe spaces for parents to explore their own knowledge and ideas on SRHR. 57,475 parents participated in sensitization activities on the SRHR of young people. 1,017 ‘parent champions’ educated other parents in the community on young people’s SRHR and advocacy work. 4,193 religious and traditional leaders were also sensitized on young people’s SRHR, taking important information for both young people and parents directly to their communities as respected mentors. Jeune S3 activities in Cameroon broke down barriers in homes by engaging young people and their parents in facilitated dialogues - “Open Talk” - to improve discussions on SRHR between generations. “[Parents] talking about sexuality with their children is not easy,” explains Maman Hélène, a Jeune S3 community partner. “But with round table discussions like ‘Open Talk’, we understand that it is possible. The most important thing is to know how to approach the topic.” After consistent parental engagement in Jeune S3 activities, parents themselves now encourage their children to visit health centers for health services including HIV testing. In Central African Republic, ‘Between Parents’ is an educational exchange on the radio which helps to facilitate intergenerational dialogue within households. Jeune S3 also gave technical support and financing to the National Parents Federation of Central Africa. Through this strategic collaboration, Jeune S3 educated parents on young people’s SRHR. Parents were encouraged to communicate openly and honestly with their children regarding health and sexuality and create a home environment receptive to young people’s SRHR.

685 parents in Democratic Republic of Congo participated in Jeune S3 ‘Train the Trainer’ workshops in 2019 alone. These parent-advocates are now better equipped to talk to their children as well as other parents about the importance of young people’s SRHR. Parents have access to Jeune S3-designed informational flip charts and supportive educational materials such as “Dad, Mum, where do babies come from?” to help them in these key conversations. Certain Protestant schools in one health zone initially resisted the comprehensive sexuality education curriculum. Parents involved in Jeune S3 programming were key negotiators in getting these schools to realize the value of quality SRH education for young people and eventually accept the curriculum. Jeune S3 also facilitated partnerships between parent-teacher associations and the Provincial Ministries of Education to respond to reports of abuse and violence in 160 schools in North and South Kivu Provinces.

Meet Jean-Aimé, gender justice activist

Jean-Aimé, Jeune S3 ambassador, is a central figure in the fight against gender-based violence in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo. As an ambassador, Jean-Aimé was trained in SRHR and advocacy. Today, young people look to him for advice and support. Jean-Aimé refers young people in his community to health facilities, even accompanying them to the facility if necessary. In 2019, he convinced the parents of an eight year old female rape survivor to report the incident to authorities and access health services. “The parents lived in extreme poverty,” recounted Jean-Aimé. “The perpetrator wanted to make an arrangement with them. Desperate, the parents almost accepted. After long discussions, I finally was able to reason with them. Together, we can stop ignorance and impunity.”

Want to know more about him and his lobby successes? Then watch his video here or copy the following link: https://bit.ly/2IPBp1a
If local, national, and international agendas are to reflect the needs of young people, young people have to make their concerns the concerns of the agenda-makers. It takes a village. Intergenerational dialogue with community leaders on SRHR.

Logistics, socio-cultural norms and generational power dynamics often make it difficult for young people to interact with community leaders who influence so much of their lives. Jeune S3 activities broke down these generational barriers and, thanks to Jeune S3 capacity building and training, young people successfully navigated intergenerational conversations for lasting change. 554 religious and traditional leader-champions across all four Jeune S3 countries engaged in intergenerational dialogues on young people’s SRHR. Some leader-champions integrated comprehensive sexuality education into youth groups and others focused specifically on delivering accurate information on family planning, including modern contraception. Imam Abdoulaye Sabi Kote from Benin explained: “Before Jeune S3, it was hard for me to talk about sexuality in mosques. I didn’t even know where to start… It was such a taboo subject. But now, thanks to [Jeune S3] training, I can talk about it freely.”

In Benin, Central African Republic and Cameroon, Jeune S3 organised training of trainers with groups of traditional chiefs and religious leaders across different faith groups. The training focused on how to work with their religious peers to mobilize communities in support of young people’s SRHR, including comprehensive sexuality education. These newly trained religious and traditional leader-facilitators in turn trained their peers. 1,087 religious and traditional leaders in the Central African Republic were trained on the importance of including SRH messages in their sermons. In Benin, Jeune S3 facilitated joint capacity building sessions between young people and religious leaders. Jeune S3 young leaders and religious leaders drew up action plans to lobby local authorities and religious leaders still resistant to SRHR messages. These intergenerational teams organised radio broadcasts and ongoing lobbying efforts in support of young people’s SRHR. A major outcome of implicating traditional and religious leaders in community dialogue about young people’s rights is a firm commitment from leaders across Jeune S3 countries to fight against early marriage in their communities. A reduction in the incidence of early marriage will have an incredible impact on the health and well-being of young people, especially vulnerable adolescent girls. In Democratic Republic of Congo Jeune S3 brought together young people with parents, religious and traditional leaders, and local administrative authorities for intergenerational training on SRHR. Young people’s organisations organised intergenerational dialogues between these actors, resulting in the implementation of 41 action plans in local communities to address specific SRH challenges.

We are… actors of change

57,475 parents sensitized on the SRHR of young people
4,193 religious and traditional leaders
1,682 young people involved in advocacy activities
Owning the stage. Contributions to local, national and international policy making spaces.

Jeune S3 young leaders amplified the needs and rights of young people in local settings, Jeune S3 administrative committees, national coordinating bodies and at high-level international conferences.

- Young people’s lobbying efforts in Democratic Republic of Congo led to improved protection for young people. In the territory of Idjwi, the use of child labor in mining activities is now banned and authorities in the Goma health zone of are involved in the fight against early pregnancy.

- In the Central African Republic, a Jeune S3 ambassador represented young people’s interests on the national Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) Coordination Committee. The integration of the Central African Republic in the Family Planning 2020 process includes strengthening of the SRHR commodity supply chain and securing increased access for the country to vital Family Planning 2020 funds.

- Two Jeune S3 ambassadors from Benin participated in the ‘Youth to Youth’ initiative, sponsored by the Ministry of Health and supported by WHO, to develop action plans specifically focused on the promotion of SRHR for young people.

- Ambassadors in Cameroon took an active part in meetings of the United Nationals Junior Deputies and in the ‘Holidays Without AIDS’ campaign.

- Six ambassadors from Benin, Cameroon and Central African Republic participated in the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Kigali, Rwanda where they organised and facilitated three conference sessions on young people’s advocacy efforts and SRHR issues.

- Three ambassadors from Benin, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo participants in the ICPD+25 Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, interacting with high-level decision makers and strengthening networks with their peers from other countries. Ambassadors shared lessons learned with colleagues in their home countries, diffusing important perspectives throughout Jeune S3 networks.

- Jeune S3 participants also took their message to the international stage in Abidjan to share their experiences implementing comprehensive sexuality education at the Francophone Summit for Social and Behaviour Change 2019.
Challenge faced
and to come

Jeune S3 facilitated positive and powerful changes in the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people. However, the road to change is not without challenges. Shifting behaviours and beliefs for improved health outcomes can be a slow process. Social and cultural taboos surrounding SRH can make frank conversations difficult. Some people resist expanding SRHR for young people, especially in contexts where young people’s participation in public dialogue and policy making is traditionally limited. Gender power imbalances can leave young women and girls behind. Working in fragile, under-resourced contexts, many of which have experienced civil conflict, adds a further layer of complexity and uncertainty.

The adaptability and strength of Jeune S3 programme partners and participants went a long way in overcoming challenges. However, a number of hurdles proved particularly difficult to surmount and merit consideration in future programme planning and implementation.

Laws that limit access to certain health services can prevent the full realization of young people’s SRH and access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services for minors of age, to acquire freely contraceptives of choice from non-judgmental health providers. The interpretation of law sometimes hindered access to contraceptives for youths or women without consent of a male guardian.

Politics can have a profound impact on the availability and quality of public services, including education and health. Political instability and civil conflict are either recent memories or current realities in each Jeune S3 country. In some countries, health facilities and/or schools are targets of ongoing violence. Under-resourced services, coupled in some contexts with threats of direct violence, can severely limit public service availability, access and quality, especially health services.

An overall lack of economic opportunities, especially in remote areas, can lead to high rates of poverty and the associated negative determinants of health. Individual and household access to food, education, and health services is severely jeopardised. Consequences for young women and girls can be especially severe as early marriage, transactional sex, and sex work have all been linked to poverty.

Certain social, cultural and religious practices, traditions and beliefs are deeply connected to communal identity and belonging. Some of these same practices, traditions and beliefs, however, can be detrimental to young people’s SRHR. Entrenched gender inequities can be used to justify intimate partner, gender-based and sexual violence especially for young women and girls. Young women and girls from certain ethnicities in Jeune S3 countries have a high risk of undergoing female genital cutting. And some Jeune S3 activities, especially those related to young people’s sexuality and use of contraception, met with resistance by religious communities.

Jeune S3 confronted two of the biggest global health emergencies in recent memory. The 2018 Ebola outbreak in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, Democratic Republic of Congo quickly escalated into the second largest Ebola outbreak in history. For two years the outbreak sent an active conflict zone into further crisis. Health resources were diverted to fight Ebola and health care workers were targeted by violent attacks. Ebola lasted through July 2020 and had a significant impact on Jeune S3 programming in North and South Kivu provinces. By the early months of 2020, the world was engulfed by the direct and indirect effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Interruptions to public services including education and health systems, the freezing of travel and movement, and limits to gatherings all seriously disrupted Jeune S3 activities.

11 WHO. 2015. HIV and Young People Who Sell Sex.
Five years of organizing and action for young people’s SRHR in challenging contexts led to a multitude of important accomplishments across all four Jeune S3 countries. Each victory for young people’s SRHR also revealed important Lessons Learnt. These insights informed improvements in ongoing programme activities throughout the programme period and offered perspectives on how similar programming might be approached in future.

Positive change for and by young people. Centering young people’s engagement.

Young people’s meaningful participation in all aspects of prioritizing, planning, and action was a mainstay throughout Jeune S3 activities. Across all four Jeune S3 countries, the purposeful engagement of young people resulted in many vocal and committed young women and men ambassadors who became the radiant face of the programme. Jeune S3 has left these strong, informed, and motivated young leaders in its wake who will carry on with the work of Jeune S3 and partner with the next generation to enact more meaningful changes in young people’s lives.

Context matters. Local factors to consider to facilitate success.

Contextual factors of programme implementation cannot be overestimated, especially in fragile, insecure, violent and otherwise under-resourced places. In these settings, the starting points for awareness raising with youth are very basic. To facilitate programmatic success, the extent of unfulfilled needs and the full range of disempowering factors must be addressed in the design, planning, and adaptation of the programme. While addressing the basic needs and fundamental skills of programme participants may take time, the Jeune S3 experience showed us that investments in these first steps are vital to programme success.

- Certain basic needs and priorities of young people, including capacity building, psychosocial support, and economic capabilities, must be addressed before young people can become SRHR leaders in their own communities. Jeune S3 addressed these needs through attention to young people’s personal development, responsive psychosocial services, and context-specific income generating programmes and savings groups. These foundational investments set young people up to be long-term drivers of change.

- Facilitating transformative changes to parents’, religious and traditional leaders’ understanding and attitudes toward young people’s SRHR was essential. Supportive and influential adult actors and mentors created an enabling community environment in which trained young people could become young leaders and effectively advocate for SRHR.

- Despite comparable programmatic approaches, capacity building, and funding in each country context, quantifiable programmatic results and prospects for sustainability varied per country. Investments in sustainability, such as capacity building activities for government staff and their successful involvement in programmatic activities, were essential but also required a long term commitment, a deliberate process and patience.

- The positive reputation of the Jeune S3 programme extended the programme’s circle of influence beyond programme implementation. This is evidenced by some of the biggest programmatic successes including youth ambassadors becoming Family Planning 2020 representatives, young people trained by Jeune S3 in advocacy for SRHR winning a court case on sexual and gender-based violence and guaranteed free STI services at the municipality level.

- Some contextual factors remained beyond programmatic influence. In very difficult contexts, expectations for programmatic achievements might need to be adjusted. For example, in the Central African Republic, years of civil conflict and government turmoil have left public services severely under-resourced. The implementation of comprehensive sexuality education activities in the overcrowded schools in this context was extremely challenging for programme staff. In addition, health centers across country contexts where contraceptives were often out of stock remained an ongoing challenge. In fragile environments such as these, sustained long-term investments are needed to achieve larger changes.
Too often, programmes targeting young people lack the most important component: the involvement of young people themselves!

It is now time to recognize and acknowledge the power, the courage, and the ambition that young people possess... and let it fully flourish.

This is what Jeune S3 is all about. During the past five years, I have seen so many impressive, inspiring actions by young people: from taking the floor during high level meetings to producing and presenting radio programmes on SRHR to fearlessly defending their SRH rights and those of their peers. Our alliance of seven international partners with different expertise on several topics (SRHR, health, behaviour change, leadership, education, SRHR monitoring and evaluation, supply chain management, social marketing approaches, radio programming) have worked hard together to equip young people with the life skills and concrete tools they need to change their lives and the future of their countries. What has impressed me most during this programme is the flexibility of the young people to act, learn and adapt. Their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn more about SRHR, leadership and advocacy and to put it into practice made community dialogue meaningful. Their self-esteem and confidence became noticeably stronger with every year of the programme. By strengthening the leadership of young people, with equal involvement of young women and men, we see that we can influence gender equality from the bottom up if we ensure from the beginning that young women and men alike are given equal opportunity for success. Both young women and young men were selected as youth ambassadors, radio journalists, and researchers, collaborating and contributing from a foundation of gender equity. The results of this equitable partnership are apparent. Young women received the same opportunities as the young men, developing their talents in an equal way and taking on equal responsibilities.

The foundational Jeune S3 principle of ‘By, with and for young people’ also drove the magnitude and quality of programme accomplishments. Local organisations acknowledge the success of this approach and have integrated it into their own programmatic philosophies, which makes me very proud. Young people have more and more taken the lead and convinced programme staff of their relevance and power with their capacities and abilities to act. Programme staff have evolved and grown into their role of supporting and mentoring rather than leading and supervision. Collaboration with young people’s organisations as well as the engagement of multiple stakeholders, such as local elected officials, religious and community leaders, parents, teachers and health workers, enabled young people to develop effective advocacy and it also improved access to SRHR information and services for those who needed it most - young people. Now, we must share these great, encouraging achievements - and lessons learnt - from Jeune S3 and extend these proven approaches to other regions and countries so that more young people can use their voices to lead, to change, and to succeed. As the SRHR of young people is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development policy, we must prioritize them, so that the rights of young people are respected and defended by all.

Karin de Graaf, programme manager Jeune S3

Get to know more

Reach us on info@cordaid.org
Watch our videos on YouTube: Jeune S3 Alliance

Jeune S3 - 2020 video - Delivering Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in fragile contexts. Click here to watch our institutional video or copy this link: https://bit.ly/3kGFZsa

Jeune S3 - 2017 video - Delivering Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in fragile contexts. Click here to watch our institutional video or copy this link: https://bit.ly/3m3DJjM

Jean-Aimé - youth rights defender
Click here to watch his portrait or copy this link: https://bit.ly/2IPBp1a
Young people (especially girls) and key populations in fragile countries are able, motivated and have the opportunity to make informed choices about their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and their SRHR are respected.

Young voice, knowledge and confidence. Responsive services, enabling environment & respect for rights.
Talking about health, reproduction, relationships and love to children and adolescents is an essential stage for their development and understanding of life. Jeune S3 has produced a broad range of tools for different target groups (parents, adolescents, facilitators, teachers, religious leaders, etc) with two main objectives:

to raise awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and maintain a positive dialogue about it.

1. “Like Sarah, Miriam and Joe”
   (in french, “Comme Sarah, Miriam et Joe”)

Description: The children and young adolescents’ story “Like Sarah, Miriam and Joe” can help this age group to start thinking about important choices in life related to sexuality, relationships, gender and peer support. It helps them to talk more easily and openly about difficult personal topics with friends, teachers, (grand)parents, etc. The book is supported by a separate didactic folder for teachers and youth group leaders.

Target groups: Girls and boys aged around 10-14 years.

Languages: English, French, Arabic (limited to flipbook), Amharic, Lungandese, Sango, Sidamigna and Swahili.

2. “Like Pamela”
   (in french, “Comme Pamela”)

Description: The story for adolescents “Like Pamela” is an attractive story for girls, 12 - 19 years old to discover how to find their way in life as a single mother. They will discover their own ‘Girl Power’ and how to find support in their community. The book is supported by an accompanying guidebook with group activity suggestions and fact sheets for use by facilitators of groups of teenage mothers or adolescents and teachers.

Target groups: Can be used for groups of adolescent girls and especially useful for new teenage mothers, but also for girls becoming caretakers of young infants in the home for the first time, regardless of the family relationship.

Languages: English (generic), English (Uganda), French, Luganda and Amharic.

Download the files on https://bit.ly/34hHmMu or click here
3. “Dad, Mum, where do babies come from?”
(in french, “Papa, maman, d’où viennent les bébés?”)

Description: This booklet for parents aims to encourage them to talk to their children about love, relationships and sexuality as they may sometimes wonder what can or cannot be said to a child or adolescent. It includes 25 questions frequently asked by parents (for example «What kind of language should I use?» Or «What to do when my child sees pornographic scenes on television or the Internet?») and adequate answers for each age group.

Target groups: Parents.
Languages: French.

4. “Picture box: Dad, Mum, where do babies come from?”
(in french, “Boîte à images: papa, maman, d’où viennent les bébés?”)

Description: This Picture Box is a complementary tool in support of the booklet of the same name “Dad, Mum where do babies come from?” to help qualified facilitators to lead parent awareness training sessions in small groups. It helps facilitators to guide parents through the different chapters in a structured way. It uses attractive images to catch the interest of parents and generate discussion. Each chapter consists of three distinct sections: one introduction, questions to debate and finally the main messages to convey.

Target groups: Facilitators and trainers.
Languages: French.
5. “Lexicon Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”
(in French, “Lexique Santé et Droits Sexuels et Reproductifs”)

Description: This lexicon of 115 words on the thematic of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) aims to help people to familiarize with the frequently used terms on this subject.

Target groups: Everyone interested in learning and understanding SRHR vocabulary: young people, parents, teachers, health professionals, etc.

Languages: French.

6. “Card game: True or false”
(in French, “Jeu de cartes : vrai ou faux”)

Description: This fun 80-card game aims to tackle taboos and misinformation by providing objective information to help young people make decisions during their adolescence. The attractive cards are divided into eight broad categories of questions (Knowing your body; Life cycle; Love and sexuality; Contraception; STIs and HIV and AIDS; Pregnancy; Abortion; Rights), which must be answered with “True” or “False.” An explanation is given on the back of each card which helps to open up discussion among the young players.

Target groups: Adolescents aged around 15-24 years.

Languages: English and French.

Description: This easy and fun two-page flyer aims to teach more about the different contraceptive methods and their use. A section can be personalized to redirect the young person to the nearest health center or health professional.

Target groups: Adolescents aged around 15-24 years.

Languages: French.

8. “Sexual and Reproductive Health for young people: facilitation guide for working with religious leaders” (in French, “Santé sexuelle et reproductive pour les jeunes : guide de facilitation pour travailler avec les leaders religieux”)

Description: This facilitation handbook (+ annex manual) for religious leaders on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of young people is a flexible training curriculum that has been designed to be used on an interfaith and intercultural basis. It aims to educate and empower religious leaders with the necessary information and skills to better understand and support young people in making critical decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Note that this facilitation guide does not intend to change the fundamental religious positions of religious leaders - instead it informs them about the SRH of young people. The intention is for religious leaders to reflect on and understand how they can practice their leadership and be good role models for vulnerable young people.

Target groups: Religious leaders with official responsibilities in their communities.

Languages: English and French.