

# NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLES' SRH: IVORY COAST

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## SUMMARY

In Ivory Coast, 38.4% of the population is under 15 years old. Currently, 31.9% of 20 to 24 year-olds have had a child before the age of 18, 20% of women and 14% of men have sex before the age of 15 and contraceptive prevalence among young people does not exceed 13.9%.

Frequent pregnancies and pre-mature births, low utilisation of family planning services, pre- and post-natal consultations, and low rates of assisted deliveries are among the leading causes of death, especially among pregnant adolescents. 75% of unwanted pregnancies result in illegal abortions with 15% of deaths related to post abortion complications. There is 50% more neonatal deaths among children of teenage mothers.

## CHALLENGE

Young people do not go to health centres because services are often unsuitable for their needs and they do not trust their confidentiality and impartiality, especially when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. In addition, access to counselling, information and psychosocial support is only available to a limited extent in the school and university health services, and these are even less accessible to out-of-school youth.

## SOLUTION

Action Against Hunger is working in close collaboration with the National Programme in charge of Youth and Adolescents to provide an adaptive and innovative response to the information and communication needs of young people on their health, by proposing three complimentary strategies that allow referral to appropriate support when needed.

Firstly, teenage classes have been created to meet the sexual and reproductive health information needs of young people in the poorer neighbourhoods of Abidjan. 205 classes were completed and reached a total of 3,750 young people and adolescents.

Then, four friendly spaces dedicated to young people were opened in December 2018 to ensure that young people were listened to, and received the guidance and support they needed to care for their specific needs. The spaces were refurbished and equipped to receive young people in a welcoming place, and each one had a psychosocial listening point with a trained counsellor. Six training sessions on adolescent health and psychology were organised, which benefited 60 health workers, 35 young peer educators and 33 community members.

Finally, a mobile application was created, which aims to respond to youth health issues in real time. It includes a chat function that enables young people to ask questions to health professionals; forums for discussion; and the transmission of messages of prevention without taboos. It is a free service and is downloadable online.

## LEARNING

In addition to the effectiveness of the three-pronged approach, there were several learnings that emerged from the project:

1. The mobile application development process is lengthy and requires information system expertise and additional developers.
2. Particular attention has to be paid to the protection of personal data.
3. For approaches like this one, that are not part of Action Against Hunger's 'classical' intervention areas, support and expertise may not always be available and may need to be found externally.



Teenage classes in the community.