



Kingdom of the Netherlands

# Youth Strategy



*Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands*

**Benin**

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#### **Cover images**

**Upper:** Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour la Planification Familiale (JA/PF) during sensibilisation trip in Northern Benin.

**Lower:** 'Game without Taboos', handmade by and for youth to increase knowledge of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights – Centre Amour et Vie in Dangbo, Benin.



## Map of Benin



Retrieved from: <http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/benin-political-map.htm>

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## List of abbreviations

ABMS/PSI	Association Béninoise pour le Marketing Social (et la communication pour la santé) / Population Services International
ABPF/IPPF	Association Béninoise de Promotion de la Famille / International Planned Parenthood Federation
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
BAD	Banque Africaine de Développement
COCA	Checklist Organisational Capacity Assessment
CTB	Coopération Technique Belge
DGGF	Dutch Good Growth Fund
DSRP	Document Stratégique de Réduction de la Pauvreté
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FNUAP	Fonds des Nations Unies pour la Population
GdB	Gouvernement du Bénin
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IST	Infections Sexuellement Transmissibles
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JA/PF	Jeunes Ambassadeurs Planification Familiale
LGBT	Lesbiennes, Gays, Bisexuels, Transgenres
MAJ	Mouvement Action de la Jeunesse
MASP	Multiannual Strategic Plan
NABC	Netherlands African Business Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCJ	Organe Consultatif de la Jeunesse
ODD	Objectif Développement Durable
OMD	Objectif du Millénaire pour le Développement
PJB	Parlement des Jeunes du Bénin
PTF	Partenaires Techniques et Financiers
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
THP	The Hunger Project
UE	Union Européenne
ToC	Theory of Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## Executive summary

International acknowledgement of youth as important beneficiaries and actors in development processes has grown significantly in recent years. Many governments, UN bodies, NGOs and other development actors now realise that investing in young people is not only desirable, but in fact *imperative* in ensuring long-term sustainable development results. Namely, while a large youth population has the potential to constitute a strong workforce (which may boost both the economic and social development of a country), it could also increase the risk of illegal migration, criminal activity, violent protests, civil war and radicalisation, when youth are left without jobs and are not able to take part in decision-making. At the same time, youth have historically proven to be 'change makers' and their energy, curiosity, dynamism and entrepreneurial spirit are valuable resources in finding innovative solutions to persistent societal or environmental problems.

Being aware of these risks and opportunities, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Benin has explored how it can better respond to the needs, rights and aspirations of young people. The results of this endeavour are presented in this policy document, which consists of four parts: (1) a discussion of the context and justification for increasing the Embassy's focus on youth, as well as the methodology that has been used to conduct the research (2) an analysis of the current youth situation in Benin, (3) a Theory of Change (ToC), and (4) practical recommendations of how the Embassy can work towards achieving the vision and outcomes as presented in this ToC.

The analysis of the youth situation in Benin has found that Beninese youth face multiple challenges in terms of education, employment, health and political participation, most of them similar to youth in other (developing) countries. The main priority of Beninese youth is finding (and keeping) employment, closely followed by following good quality education, maintaining their (sexual and reproductive) health and participating in decision-making. While many programmes and initiatives exist to respond to the challenges youth face in these domains, these often largely lack coherence and complementarity, which inhibits their efficacy and synergy. Also, while an increasing number of young Beninese organise themselves to take action on issues that are important to them, youth in general are still mostly considered as a passive and risky target group, which lacks the capacity to be recognised as equal partners. As a result, youth are often side-lined in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes that concern them, leaving them frustrated and without much prospects for the future.

The most important finding of this research therefore is that both the **enormous potential** as well as the **serious risks** related to Benin's approaching *youth bulge* are largely underestimated by the Beninese government and the majority of development partners that are active in the country. As a consequence, Benin might not only be unable to reap the benefits of a *demographic dividend*, but in fact be well on its way towards a *demographic disaster* when no significant investments in the human capital development of youth are made in the near future, and when youth are continued to be marginalised.



## Summary of recommendations

The Beninese youth consulted for this research overwhelmingly mentioned **unemployment** and **underemployment** as the main challenges faced by them and their peers. A thorough review of the literature on youth programming, as well as conversations with Technical and Financial Partners working with youth in Benin, further pointed out that youth un(der)employment is strongly linked with other domains such as *education and training*, *health*, and *participation in decision-making*. When youth do not possess the knowledge and skills required by the labour market; are ill, injured or pregnant; and are not able to voice their needs and concerns in order for these to be addressed, they are less likely to find (and keep) adequate employment. Additionally, other factors that may significantly impact the job prospects of youth, include *cultural factors* (generation dynamics, religion), *psychological factors* (self-esteem, mental health) and *institutional factors* (policy frameworks, coordination of initiatives). Also vice versa, when youth do not find themselves in an environment where they feel valuable and are able to develop personally and professionally, and when they do not have a daily routine and stable income, they are more likely to fall ill or take part in risky activities that are deemed illegal or negatively impact health (such as smoking, drinking, drug-use and unsafe sex). Interventions in all of these areas are thus needed in order to generate a conscientious and employable youth population, thereby reaping the benefits of a *demographic dividend* and avoiding a *demographic disaster*.

Given its technical and financial means and expertise, the Embassy is advised to work towards four strategic outcomes in order to achieve its overall vision (*having a Beninese youth population which has the capacity (knowledge and skills) and opportunities to take ownership of its own development (socio-economic well-being) as well as that of their local communities and Benin as a whole*):

1. A more knowledgeable and better skilled youth population
2. Increased employment opportunities for youth
3. Improved sexual and reproductive health of youth
4. Enhanced civic engagement and participation in decision-making of youth

In all four areas, the focus should be on **developing capacities** (knowledge and skills), **increasing access** (to information, services and employment) and **encouraging participation** (at the preparation, validation, execution and evaluation levels of all programmes and policies that concern them).

As bilateral development partner in Benin, the Embassy will be able to obtain results by means of **financial aid**, **technical aid** and **advocacy/lobbying**.

In terms of *financial aid*, the Embassy should prioritise to financially support those programmes that either directly or indirectly benefit youth, as well as youth organisations themselves. In fact, preferably youth are mobilised and financially supported as actors (rather than mere

beneficiaries) in development programmes that concern them.

In terms of *technical aid*, the Embassy is advised to share its sector expertise with youth (students, young professionals, activists, entrepreneurs, politicians) and its knowledge on youth programming with development partners and government. With the help of (Dutch) experts and professionals, workshops and trainings on topics such as water and sanitation, health, food security, political participation and entrepreneurship can be organised for Beninese youth. Also scholarships, study tours and exchanges with universities and knowledge institutes in the Netherlands should be promoted amongst relevant youth groups (for example in universities, colleges and entrepreneurship hubs) in order to further the knowledge and skills of Beninese students and young professionals.

In terms of *advocacy and lobbying*, the Embassy should aim to increase awareness amongst development partners and government of the importance of youth as strategic beneficiaries and actors in development processes, whose needs, rights and aspirations should be valued and realised. A dialogue tool answering the 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions considering youth integration have been developed in order to facilitate this dialogue (see Annex VI).

Throughout its efforts, the Embassy should continuously examine which specific *sub-group of youth* is targeted in a certain activity, as this might differ per sector and programme. One of the SRHR activities may for example be focused on adolescent girls, while a programme in the food security cluster is concerned with youth enrolled in agricultural colleges. Sections 11.2 and 12.1 describe in further detail how the concept of youth can be operationalized per sector.

Also the strategic axes as pursued in the Embassy's annual plan for 2016 should be reflected in its work with youth. First and foremost, it must be kept in mind that Benin is categorised as a transition country in Dutch foreign policy. As such, activities concerning youth should at the same time aim to realise this *transition from aid to trade*, for example through stimulating youth entrepreneurship or through linking youth with Dutch businesses. In terms of *inclusive development*, the activities should make sure that ultimately the most marginalised youth benefit, thereby paying special attention to human rights and gender equality. In order to ensure *sustainable development*, the Embassy's activities (especially in the water and food security sectors) should support youth initiatives that aim to protect the environment and promote sustainable lifestyles. With regard to *good governance*, youth participation at all levels of the development process (planning, implementation, evaluation) should be ensured. In addition, the Embassy should also look to support youth initiatives that campaign against corruption or aim to stimulate youth civic engagement.

More concretely, the following **overall recommendations** (points for action) are given:

1. Starting at the base: **institutional transformation**. Make youth part of day-to-day life at the Embassy by employing more (local) interns and young experts/consultants, and by developing more youth-centred consciousness and attitudes amongst Embassy staff.
2. **Question all partners who receive funding from the Embassy** on how their programmes affect youth and how they (plan to) integrate/mainstream youth in their programmes. The "Youth Audit Tool" (Annex VI) can be used for this.

3. **Lobby for greater public and private investments in youth.** Explain to ministries and businesses what the benefits are of investing in youth, as well as what the risks and dangers are when youth are neglected. The “Youth FAQ and talking-points for (policy) dialogue” (Annex V) can be used for this.
4. **Lobby for greater youth participation in decision-making.** Explain to ministries, businesses and PTF what the benefits are of youth participation, as well as what the risks and dangers are when youth are ignored.
5. **Create a sector group for “youth”** where government and PTF are able to discuss their activities targeting youth, thereby sharing knowledge and creating partnerships, in order to establish the greatest synergy possible.
6. **Finance more studies of the youth situation in Benin**, especially in terms of
  - 1) a mapping of youth organisations and initiatives in the Northern part of the country, and
  - 2) a study of the security situation concerning youth in Benin, i.e. youth attitudes towards terrorist organisations and radicalisation.
7. **Engage with youth:**
  - Speak with youth (in the field as well as by inviting them to the Embassy for consultation) and let their ideas and opinions inspire your work.
  - Help youth organisations in doing their work by sharing your knowledge and expertise, forwarding relevant information or studies, and by using your network to link them to relevant partners.
  - Make sure to encourage and motivate youth, showing them that their ideas and activities are valued, but at the same time ...
  - ... challenge them to improve.

Annex VII (outlining certain recommendations for youth organisations that resulted from frequent interactions with members of various youth organisations in Benin) can be used to inform such discussions.

For more specific **recommendations per sector**, please refer to Chapter 13.

## **Part 1: Context, justification and methodology**

*Youth: rebels, entrepreneurs, change-makers*

## 1. Introduction

Interest in the nexus between youth and sustainable development has grown significantly in recent years. This interest is partly fuelled by recent events such as protests and riots with a high social media factor (Occupy, Arab Spring, Umbrella Movement etc.), the European migration crisis, and the advancement of rebel groups and terrorism - all in which youth play(ed) an important role - but it can also be seen as a consequence of ever increasing advocacy from youth themselves to gain greater 'voice' (decision-making power) in the formulation of policies and programmes that affect them. For a long time youth have been largely excluded from political processes and the specific needs, rights and aspirations of young people were largely ignored. In recent years however, the world's youth population - which is larger, more educated, and better connected than ever before - is increasingly acknowledged as a key population of beneficiaries and actors in development processes, without whose active involvement development goals will remain largely unmet.

Since the last two years, also the Dutch Embassy in Benin has slowly begun to explore how it can better integrate youth in the programmes it supports. This consciousness originated in the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) sector where youth have long proven to be a critical population group, but interest soon also grew in other sectors. In May 2015 Benin was visited by the Dutch Youth Ambassador to the UN in the context of the *Building Bridges* project (see section 3.4), who further underlined the importance of youth in achieving positive development outcomes. These instances led the Embassy to recruit an intern to study the youth situation in Benin and provide practical recommendations on how the Embassy can increase its focus on youth. More specifically, through thorough desk study, field research, focus groups, and consultations with the Embassy's sector experts, the intern aimed to answer the following research question and sub-questions:

*How can the Embassy assist in realising Benin's demographic dividend (and avoiding a demographic disaster), by better responding to the needs, rights and aspirations of Beninese youth in the programmes that it supports?*

### Sub-questions:

1. *Who are youth and why are they important?*
2. *To what extent is the importance of youth recognised in the Dutch development priorities?*
3. *How do the Embassy's main programme sectors affect youth?*
4. *What are the specific needs, rights and aspirations of Beninese youth?*
5. *What youth servicing organisations, programmes and activities already exist in Benin and what are their strengths and weaknesses?*
6. *(In what ways) are youth already integrated in the Embassy's programmes?*

7. Overall; what is the main problem regarding youth in Benin and what is the change the Embassy wants to see (vision)? What are the necessary steps to reach this vision and what are the underlying assumptions and expected risks? (Theory of Change)
8. What practical recommendations can be given in order to better integrate youth in programmes supported by the Embassy?

The results of this study are presented in this policy document, in which findings to the sub-questions are organised in four different parts: (1) a discussion of the context and justification for increasing the Embassy's focus on youth, (2) an analysis of the current youth situation in Benin, (3) the proposed Theory of Change (ToC), and (4) practical recommendations of how the Embassy can work towards achieving the vision and outcomes as presented in this ToC. This report was presented in a plenary meeting with all Embassy staff in January 2016. The feedback gathered during this session has been integrated in the final version of this report.



Picture of Jilt van Schayik and Teun Meulepas, the Dutch *Building Bridges* cyclists, during their visit to Benin. Exposed in Mill, the Netherlands, in October 2015.

## 2. Who are 'youth' and why are they important?

### 2.1 Definitions and characteristics of youth

Before the youth situation in Benin can be effectively studied (or meaningful recommendations can be given on how best to respond to the needs, rights and aspirations of young people), it is necessary to first critically examine who 'youth' actually are. In fact, wide international disagreement exists on a common definition of youth. According to some (i.e. those working in the medical sector), the youth transition starts early (around age 10 or 12) when the body begins to show changes, and also ends early, when the body is fully developed and ready for procreation. Others, for example those working to address youth unemployment, are typically concerned with an older age-group (sometimes up to 35 years), as they focus on those youth that are without work while they are legally allowed to be employed (normally at age 16, while 14 in Benin) and do not want to exclude those older young men and women who have been unsuccessful in making a transition from education to employment earlier in life.

However, while no internationally accepted definition of youth exists, many people would acknowledge the existence of a transition between childhood and adulthood during which several important physical and psychological changes take place. A person's body becomes ready for procreation; he or she leaves school and moves on to university (or a first job); and a person begins to develop a social and political consciousness. In fact, in its 2007 World Development Report on youth ('Development and the Next Generation'), the World Bank identifies five transitions that indicate the development from childhood to adulthood:

1. Learning as adolescents and young adults
2. Beginning to work
3. Taking risks that impact health
4. Forming families
5. Exercising active citizenship

At what age and how these transitions occur, varies widely between people, and can depend on – amongst others – gender, genetic factors, the (part of a) country one grows up in, one's socio-economic background, health-status, or the religion or ethnic group one identifies with. Some boys and girls might still be in formal education at age 25, while others have already started to work full-time when they were 16 years old. For some the transition from being a child to becoming a young

Characteristics of youth
Energetic, enthusiastic, dynamic
Innovative, creative, entrepreneurial
Risk-taking
Eager to change social norms and practices
Questioning authority
Curious
Seeking different perspectives
Making mistakes (and learning from them)
Aspiring, motivated
Impressionable, malleable, manipulable

adult develops without any specific notification, while for others it is marked by a 'rite of passage', such as a Bar Mitzvah, debutante ball, Walkabout or other event or ritual.

'Being young' is also often associated with a range of personal characteristics (see table 1). While all people surely have different personalities, youth as a group are often seen to be more risk-taking than adults. They make more mistakes, but also learn from them. They are generally curious, question authority and are eager to challenge existing norms and values. Also, as young people are at their 'physical prime' they often have much energy, are creative and entrepreneurial, and actively seek ways to improve their lives. At the same time, given their limited life experience and often marginalised position in society, youth can also be very impressionable and easily manipulable.

For many people, being young can be a difficult and confusing time. They are not a child anymore, but also not yet an adult. While many expectations are put on young people (i.e. in terms of contributing to the household income, taking wise decisions in planning their future, and generally being 'responsible'), they are often not provided with sufficient information to base these decisions on or given the 'voice' to influence the social and political spheres that they are part of. This may cause youth to feel desperate, frustrated and alone.

While 'youth' can thus be seen as a life stage, which is entered and exited gradually, many governments and organisations use age brackets to indicate the youth target group in order to facilitate policy making. The age bracket 15-24, as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, is internationally most commonly used. However, given the fact that when and how the youth transition occurs depends on many contextual factors, other age brackets exist as well (see table 2). For example, in many African countries people up to age 35 are still considered youth, based on the argument that in these countries younger people live with their parents for a longer time and it takes them longer to become financially independent.

In terms of rights, the youth group overlaps with 'legally' being a child or adult. While also the legal minimum ages to work, marry, drive, drink alcohol, vote and stand for election differ between countries, these normally lie at the lower or higher end of the youth transition. For example, in many countries children are legally allowed to work (although limited hours) at age 15 or 16, and to marry, drive, vote or drink at age 18 or 21. Also from a legal perspective it is thus acknowledged that at a certain point during 'youth hood' (normally about half-way), one has assumed the position of a responsible person and citizen who is liable for his or her actions. However, whether or not youth are 'ready' to take up this responsibility depends to a large extent on whether they possess the necessary capabilities and are given the opportunities for doing so.

**NB:** This youth strategy generally focuses on youth between 15 and 24 years of age. However, in order to not exclude certain crucial groups in programmes, this age range is expanded to 10 - 24 for programmes related to health and education and 15 - 35 for programmes concerned with employment and political inclusion.



Different age brackets for youth	
United Nations (UNGA, UNESCO, ILO)	15 – 24
UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA	10 – 19 → adolescents
	10 – 24 → young people
	15 – 24 → youth
UNHabitat	15 – 32
UNDP, USAID	15 – 24 (but flexible to extend age range according to national country's definitions)
World Bank	12 – 24
African Union, Benin	15 – 35
European Union	15 – 29

## 2.2. Importance of youth

Youth are important targets and actors in development processes for a number of reasons. Four primary reasons of why this is the case will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

### 2.2.1. Human rights perspective

The global youth population has never been as big as it is today. Worldwide, there are currently more than 1.8 billion youth aged 10 to 24, which represents around a quarter of the overall world population (UNDP, 2014). Most of these youth live in developing countries, where the share of youth as part of the overall population equals 47% (ibid). However, despite their large numbers, young men and women often do not receive their fair share of resources and opportunities. In most countries, youth are poorer than adults, youth un(der)employment rates are higher than those of adults, youth more often lack access to information and finance, are more often illiterate and overall are not given an equal 'voice' in the household, community or political domain. This situation is still more desperate for the most marginalised youth, such as young women and girls, ethnic and religious minorities as well as uneducated and/or rural youth. In some countries girls are more likely to die in childbirth than they are to finish school, and an estimated one in three girls is married before the age of 18 (UNFPA, 2007). According to the UNFPA, more than 500 million young people live on less than \$2 a day, and nearly 175 million of them in poor countries cannot read a full sentence (ibid).

### **2.2.2. Demographic dividend**

Most low-income countries (LICs) have been characterised by high birth rates and high infant mortality rates. Once these countries experience socio-economic development this often means that health-services improve and people become better educated. While child survival improves, fertility and birth rates remain high leading to a rapid increase in the population which is concentrated in the youth age group. When access to family planning information, services and supplies is increased (as well as its use), and benefits of smaller families are recognised, fertility and population growth decrease: a youth bulge is then established in the population pyramid. Consequently, the country will have an exceptionally large youth population (or 'youth bulge') which in the coming years moves up in the population pyramid. The 'youth bulge' of children becomes the 'youth bulge' of adolescents and thereafter the 'youth bulge' of young people who then start having children themselves.

Several studies indicate that having such a large youth population presents an enormous opportunity in terms of constituting a large and productive workforce while at the same time having to support fewer dependents (Basu and Basu, 2014; Drummon, Thakoor and Yu, 2014; Fadayomi, 2011). This phenomenon is also known as a 'demographic dividend' (World Bank, 2007). As a first step in bringing about this demographic transition, investments in family planning are needed to curtail fertility and birth rates. At a second stage, in order to 'seize' this dividend, strategic investments in key areas such as education, training, health services and employment creation for young people are vital to mobilise and to capture the economic potential of the large number of young people. East Asian countries such as China, South Korea and Singapore are often mentioned as having responded effectively to their demographic transitions and being successful in reaping the benefits of a demographic dividend through heavily investing in human capital development and job creation for youth during this critical time (Bloom et al., 1999; Mason, 2003).

### **2.2.3. Demographic disaster**

On the other hand, having an exceptionally large youth population can also be seen as a challenge. It is often difficult for countries (especially low- and middle-income countries) to create sufficient jobs or educational opportunities to satisfy the rapidly growing demand generated by a(n) (approaching) youth bulge. Consequently, when youth are not enrolled in school, university or other training programs, while at the same time not being able to find adequate employment, this can pose a great threat to (inter)national stability. For example, youth may become involved in criminal activities such as drug or weapon trade or people trafficking, or abuse substances themselves (alcohol/cigarettes/drugs). Also a greater chance for political protest or violence exists, as youth bulges have been linked to protests and riots in the Northern African region (2011), Istanbul (2013), Baltimore (2015) etc. At the same time, uneducated and unemployed youth are generally more easily recruited by extremist/rebel groups, misused for political purposes or exploited in dangerous

underpaid jobs (i.e. in mines and factories, or as prostitutes) (Cincotta et al., 2003; Goldstone, 2012; Urdal, 2004).

The fact that youth are more susceptible to take part in criminal activities, cause unrest or generally 'get into trouble' than adults can be explained by their marginalised situation and lack of opportunities, their inexperience and unawareness of the consequences of their actions or even their hormonal activity and eagerness to impress a potential partner. It is also easier for youth to take risks, as they have fewer responsibilities and less to lose (i.e. a partner, house, job, children etc.) than adults do.

#### **2.2.4. Strategic perspective**

Young people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have grown up in a world that is significantly different than the one their parents grew up in. Today, children and youth around the world are healthier, better educated and more politically aware than their parents were at their age (UNDP, 2014). Youth are also at the forefront of technological innovation and active users of social media, which helps them to mobilise and organise their actions. At the same time, a surge in research on youth-related topics indicates that while youth were traditionally seen as a difficult group that should be 'managed', it is now increasingly recognised that the energy, creativity, dynamism and strength of young people are a critical resource in ensuring the sustainable development of their countries and communities.

### **3. Youth and the Dutch development priorities**

Also in Dutch foreign trade and development cooperation youth are increasingly deemed important. This section will highlight four examples of how and where youth have been given (or have taken) an important role as targets and actors in Dutch development policies and programmes.

#### ***3.1. A World to Gain: youth and the new agenda for aid, trade and investment***

In the 74-page long key policy document for Dutch foreign trade and development cooperation ('A World to Gain: the new agenda for aid, trade and investment'), remarkably the word 'youth' is not mentioned. However, in the document two references to 'young people' are made.

First of all, youth are mentioned in relation to the Dutch commitments to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), especially for young people, and to fight child marriage. In the document it is stated that, 'the spread of HIV/AIDS can be brought to a halt only if everyone – including young people, gays, prostitutes and drug users – has access to health care' and that 'the number of teenage pregnancies will decrease only if young people receive good sex education' (p.37). Young people are thus seen as a key group in SRHR interventions. Moreover, the document states that 'child marriage cannot be condoned, even for reasons of culture, tradition or religion', and that for this reason the Netherlands participates in international campaigns as 'girls not brides' (ibid).

The second reference to youth is made in relation to the Dutch 'Young Expert Programme'

(YEP). This is a programme set up by the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Dutch Water Partnership (NWP), which trains Dutch youth (as well as local youth in several developing countries) as water and food security experts.

### *3.2. European migration crisis and increased (budgetary) focus on African youth*

Since early 2015 discussions of undocumented migration to Europe have heated up international debates. From April 2015 - when five boats carrying migrants sank in the Mediterranean Sea - the phrases 'European Migrant Crisis' and 'European Refugee Crisis' became widespread across the media. While many migrants are fleeing warzones, also a large number of migrants make the decision to come to Europe in the belief that they can find better opportunities there than they have in their country of residence.

European politicians are currently thinking deeply about what can be done to provide relief to those refugees in hazardous situations, but about also how to address the root causes of these problems and stop the influx of undocumented refugees to Europe. On 11 and 12 November 2015 the Valetta Summit in Malta took place, in which European and African heads of state and government discussed the challenges and opportunities of migration and how to improve cooperation on this cross-border issue. This crisis and the subsequent discussions led the Dutch government to provide humanitarian aid in the regions that receive the largest number of refugees. At the same time, the Dutch government invests in those areas in the expansion and improvement of services such as education, health services, water and sanitation.

In June 2015 the Dutch Cabinet decided to also intensify its efforts to provide better perspectives to those people that consider illegal migration to Europe. In doing so, it will focus specifically on young Africans. Since June, three initiatives are launched with the aim to support young Africans in finding employment or starting enterprises. First of all, a new facility was launched on 31 July 2015: Local Employment in Africa for Development (LEAD), which has a total budget of EU 25 million. LEAD provides civil society organizations and social entrepreneurs the opportunity to submit project proposal that create jobs or self-employment opportunities for African youth in 8 countries: Algeria, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Tunisia. Secondly, EU 25 million of extra budget will be added to the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF). From this amount, EU 20 million is reserved for local enterprises and investments and EU 5 million for Dutch finance and investments.

Moreover, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bert Koenders, referred to youth in his speech during the opening of Africa Day 2015, which was organized in the Amsterdam Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT) on 7 November. In his speech, the Minister emphasized that **'the key to greater stability and lesser migration pressure is making an end to the complete ignorance of a new generation Africans'**. According to the Minister, momentarily **'the youth is forgotten'** and that is why **'the Netherlands has given a renewed priority to creating employment for youth'**. The Minister also called upon others to give priority to the younger generations, such as businesses (by providing traineeships and internships for youth), financial institutions (by lowering the

threshold for access to finance for youth), civil society (by defending the rights of youth and supporting them in acquiring more skills for the labour market) and governments (to invest in education that prepares youth for the job market and life).

### *3.3. Increased attention to "inclusive development"*

Pursuing inclusive development is one of the key development priorities of the Netherlands. The Netherlands recognises that while international inequality has diminished in recent decennia, inequality within countries has sharply increased. It is therefore important that development policies and programmes focus on the poorest and most marginalised groups, such as women, handicapped people, religious and ethnic minorities and those living in rural or slum areas and youth.

Since youth are identified as one of the marginalised populations which should be better included in development processes, the Dutch government is looking actively at ways to promote their inclusion. Also in this regard addressing youth unemployment in Africa is mentioned as a key priority for the Netherlands. According to Lilianne Ploumen, minister of foreign trade and development cooperation, **investing in youth unemployment is one of the keys to greater stability and lesser migration pressure**. The minister emphasizes that several studies point out that a lack of jobs and opportunities for the future are important reasons for African youth to migrate to Europe<sup>1</sup>. The above-mentioned programmes such as LEAD and DGGF are part of the Dutch efforts to stimulate more inclusive development. Another tool to promote inclusive growth and development is 'dialogue for change'. The Netherlands will focus on both bilateral and multilateral dialogue to demand a greater attention for inclusive development and inclusive governance. It will speak about subjects such as how to reach the poorest populations and how to guarantee that the rights of specifically vulnerable groups are respected. Also the role of businesses and the private sector in promoting inclusive development will be discussed.

### *3.4. Youth councils and parliaments, the Dutch Youth Ambassadors and the 'Building Bridges' project*

In the Netherlands several initiatives exist to let the voice of youth be heard and to connect youth with each other.

The **National Youth Council** (Nationale Jeugdraad, NJR), which exists since 2001, is the umbrella organisation of Dutch youth organisations and represents all Dutch youth between 12 and 30 years old. The NJR advises the Dutch government in terms of youth policies and mobilises youth to take active part in activities and programmes both at the national and international level. The board of the NJR counts seven members and the council represents 39 youth organisations. At the same time, the NJR helps to select and guides the **Dutch Youth Ambassadors** (jongerenvertegenwoordigers). The Netherlands has eight youth ambassadors, two representing each of the following four topics: sustainable development, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), UNESCO and European

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<sup>1</sup> MINBUZA-2015.519290

Affairs. The youth ambassadors make sure that the voice of Dutch youth is heard at various summits and conferences at an international level. The Dutch Youth Ambassadors are supported by several ministries, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Public Health, Wellbeing and Sports; and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

In 2015, the Dutch Youth Ambassador to the UNGA, Jilt van Schayik, went beyond his duties and initiated the **Building Bridges** project. Together with a friend, Jilt cycled from Amsterdam to Cape Town in the hope to find out more about the development priorities of youth across the two continents - which he would then be able to present during the next United Nations General Assembly session in September 2015 -, while at the same time increasing awareness of the importance of youth participation and 'voice'. As part of this cycling tour, the pair spent four days in Benin in May 2015, where they were welcomed by the Dutch Embassy, who helped to organise several consultation sessions and field visits, as well as a cycling tour from Ouidah to Cotonou.

Besides the National Youth Council, Dutch youth are also able to participate in two parliaments created for young people: the **Kingdom Youth Parliament** (KYP) and the **European Youth Parliament** (EYP). The KYP exists of youth representing the Netherlands, Aruba, Bonaire, Saba, St Eustatius, Curacao and St Maarten. A first conference of three days - which was opened by Princess Beatrix - took place in 2014 as part of the '200 years of Kingdom of the Netherlands' celebrations. During the conference a group of 50 youth representing the Netherlands and all islands of the Kingdom spoke about issues such as culture, child rights, and sustainable development. During the conference an action plan was established in which the youth pledged to take a more active stance in their own development, for example through making a Kingdom Career Website for youth and by countering 'brain drain' on the islands. The Dutch National Committee to the EYP was established in 1998 and trains high school students to critically reflect on and discuss European issues. After preliminary rounds at a regional level, a small group of youth is selected to participate in international conferences across Europe.

In 2014 also the first **Dutch Youth Ambassador for SRHR** (Lotte Dijkstra) was appointed. Lotte advocates for the needs and rights of young people in terms of SRHR on a national and international level.

#### **4. How the Embassy's main programme sectors affect youth**

In its foreign trade and development cooperation policy the Netherlands aim to promote sustainable economic growth in developing countries and ensure global stability and security. In doing so, it focuses on four thematic areas in which the Netherlands has a proven expertise: SRHR; food security; water and sanitation; and security and the rule of law. Gender equality, the environment, and human rights can be seen as three transversal axes, which should be considered in all policies and programmes across the four areas.

The Embassy of the Netherlands in Benin has staff working on programmes in three out of four thematic areas: SRHR; food security; and water and sanitation. At the same time, Benin is

identified as a country with which the Netherlands has a 'transitional relationship', which means that the Netherlands-Benin bilateral relationship is based on both aid and trade. Two members of staff in the Embassy are currently working on realising the transition from a traditional trade relationship to a more trade-based relationship, by seeking opportunities to stimulate commerce and investment. Private sector development is an important strategy in this. That youth play an important role in all three programme sectors, as well as in the transversal axes and in realising the transition from aid to trade, will be explained in the following sub-sections.

#### *4.1. Youth and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)*

Youth are key beneficiaries and actors in efforts to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. This is primarily the case because youth make the transition from being children to becoming sexually active adults, who are ready to procreate but often lack the information and services to make safe and informed choices regarding their sexual health and family planning. In many countries (especially low and middle-income countries) SRHR is still seen as a taboo subject, which is rarely spoken about. While young people have many questions regarding their changing bodies, safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), they often do not receive sufficient or accurate sexual education from their parents or at school, and mostly depend on their peers or the Internet to find answers to their questions. According to the UNDP (2014), AIDS-related deaths among adolescents rose by 50 percent in 2014, which is in stark contrast with the generally diminishing numbers of AIDS-related deaths globally. Also child marriage and unwanted teenage pregnancies continue to be problems that are complex to deal with but which gravely limit the future opportunities of girls. Furthermore, in terms of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, becoming victim of sexual violence, or being abused in the sex industry, youth (especially young girls) are often disproportionately represented. The difficulties youth face in terms of maintaining their sexual and reproductive health are often highly related to deeper issues such as a lack of confidence and self-esteem or cultural practices which allow child marriage and FGM, and/or that do not accept same-sex relationships. Sexual practices and gender attitudes are established during entry in adulthood after which they become more difficult to influence.

#### *4.2. Youth and Food Security*

Potentially, youth play a key role in the food security sector. This is the case first and foremost because of the fact that while sustainable global food provision depends to a great extent on future generations, young people are in great numbers moving away from rural areas. Several studies have been conducted to better understand why youth are moving away from rural areas, and what can be done to prevent this. Some of these reasons include a lack of land available to youth, a lack of access to modern farming techniques and agricultural technology for young people, and a general disinterest in agricultural careers (due to globalisation, better connections and roads to urban areas, etc.). Initiatives to transform primary products (small scale industries), more access to credit facilities/financial instruments and a better access to markets would provide opportunities to mobilise

the economic potential of young people, also in rural areas.

At the same time, due to a lack of education, training, information and income, youth living both in rural and urban areas are often unable to achieve food security for themselves and their families. They often do not possess proper knowledge of nutrients and do not know how to properly grow, store and process food. Also their limited incomes often do not suffice to buy adequate and nutritious food.

#### *4.3. Youth and Water and Sanitation*

Water and sanitation are vital in the lives of young people. Not only do young people need access to clean water and adequate sanitation facilities to be able to grow up healthily, water and sanitation also influence their lives in different ways. For example, it often rural children and adolescents (especially girls) have the household duty to collect water from wells and water sources. This task is labour-intensive and can take several hours to complete. This means that they have less time for other things, such as going to school, do their homework, or simply pass leisure time with friends. When they are fortunate enough to finally attend school, they are often too tired to learn.

Safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools is especially important for girls. Many schools in developing countries have shared toilets for girls and boys, sometimes even without doors. Some schools have no sanitation facilities at all. Because of shame, privacy and dignity, as well as cultural reasons, this can be a reason for girls not to attend school. Also when teenage girls start to have their periods, they often miss several days of school each month, because of lacking facilities.

At the same time, youth play potentially an important role in the water sector because of their dynamism, innovative ideas and energy. In order to build integrated water systems and improve the water sector in developing countries, young people need to be trained as water engineers. Also in terms of hygiene education young people play an important role in breaking the cycle of poverty, as they will bring the messages they learn in school home, by teaching their parents (and later their own children) about sanitary practices. Young people have also proven to be especially concerned about the environment and climate change, and are eager to protect natural resources and find solutions to achieve sustainable development in the water sector.

#### *4.4. Youth and Private Sector Development*

Youth may also play an important role in realising the development of the private sector, as many young men and women are eager to find employment and/or start enterprises. However, often youth are not able to fulfil their potential as they face various barriers in making the transition from school to the labour market, or in finding support to set up a business. In general, youth face four constraints in finding employment: (1) they lack the skills that the labour market demands, (2) they have limited access to finance to set up their own business, (3) there is a lack of employment policies and programmes adopted to youth and (4) there is a lack of national coordination between existing policy and programmes. Many young people find their way into the informal sector through apprenticeships while vocational/professional training has been neglected for a long time.



## 5. Methodology

Qualitative research methods have been used to gather the data on which the findings and recommendations of this policy paper are based. The data was collected in the following three phases.

During the **first phase** (August – September 2015) several resources (reports, academic papers, websites, news articles etc.) were consulted to better understand the importance of youth more generally, the importance of youth for the Dutch Embassy in Benin and to study the youth situation in Benin. At the same time Beninese youth and youth organisations were spoken with, in order to hear more about the needs and aspirations of Beninese youth. Also PTF, government and Embassy staff were consulted to ask about their initiatives and ideas with regard to promoting youth participation and creating opportunities for youth. These findings were used to construct a broad 'Theory of Change' of how the programmes supported by the Embassy can better integrate youth, and thereby become more successful in reaching their outcomes. On 1 October 2015, these initial findings and the Theory of Change were presented to the Embassy sector experts.

During the **second phase** (October – November 2015), the preliminary findings were solidified through further conversations with youth, youth organisations, and PTF. Also the Embassy's sector experts were spoken with in individual meetings, where they were asked to reflect on the role of youth in the programmes the Embassy currently supports within their sector. They were asked the following questions:

- What are according to you the linkages between your sector and youth? (What is the role of the sector in the lives of youth?)
- To what extent are youth already integrated in the programmes in your sector? (Indicate specific programmes)
- What is the level of youth integration in these programmes? (Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, ANNEX III)
- Do you believe that the programmes could in any way harm youth, i.e. by excluding them from processes / reinforcing existing power structures etc.? (Why yes/no?)
- (How) do you believe youth integration in the programmes can be improved?

The initial findings of the youth situation in Benin and a general framework for the youth policy (Theory of Change and general recommendations) were written down in a first draft of the report, which was presented to the Embassy sector experts on 24 November 2015.

During the **third phase** (December 2015 – January 2016) more practical recommendations were sought, which will be relevant to the Embassy staff as well as their sectors, partners and programmes. In order to do so, a further desk study was carried out with the aim to find examples of 'best practices' in terms of youth integration. Also field visits were taken place to speak with partners about the current Embassy programmes, and brainstorm together about how youth can be better reached. Throughout the month December (as well as in early January), a series of 'mini youth consultation workshops' were organised for each different sector to hear from youth how they believe

the Embassy can better respond to their needs and aspirations within the sector (without creating expectations for future collaboration). For each of these workshops (in the themes of SRHR, water and sanitation, and youth entrepreneurship), a group of around 10 youth were invited to participate. The Youth Policy intern and Embassy sector experts of the relevant sector were present to facilitate and participate in the workshop. On 12 January 2016 the final report was presented to the Embassy staff and interested PTF and youth organisations.

A limitation of this study lies in its perhaps insufficient representativeness of the Beninese youth population. While an effort was made to speak to a diverse group of youth as possible (educated/uneducated; rural/urban; male/female, etc.), research participants were mostly inhabitants of the Southern part of Benin, and the city and surroundings of Cotonou in specific. One of the proposed recommendations is therefore to carry out further research – perhaps in collaboration of the Organe Consultatif de la Jeunesse (OCJ) – to better map the youth situation and networks in the Northern part of the country.

Furthermore, even in Cotonou there has been a slight tendency towards speaking with a similar group of youth on multiple occasions. It was noticed that it are often the same youth who join youth organisations (and are member of several boards, councils and organisations at the same time) and who circulate within the same networks. One of the concerns raised (both within the Embassy as well as by certain development partners) is that the aspirations and horizons of these youth may rise along with their success, and that they may lose touch with youth on the ground. It is important to keep this question of representativeness of youth organisations and youth ambassadors in mind at all times, and to make sure that the voices of youth from all walks of life are heard and valued equally.

## **Part 2: Baseline study Benin**

*Beninese youth face multiple challenges in terms of education, employment, health and political participation; are mostly considered as a passive and risky target group; and are often side-lined in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes that affect them*

## **6. Youth in Benin**

### **6.1 *Demographic facts***

Benin has a very young population. Roughly 45% of the Beninese population is younger than 15 years old (OXFAM Quebec, 2014) and 64% is younger than 24 years old (CIA World Factbook, 2015). USAID (2011) estimates that Beninese youth between 10 and 24 years constitute around 32 percent of the total Beninese population.

The youth development index of Benin (as measured by indicators of health, education, employment, civic participation and political participation) is 0.48, which makes it rank as number 123 out of 170 countries for which data is available (Commonwealth, 2013). Merely 52.55% of Beninese youth is literate: 62.58% of male youth and 42.50% of female youth (youthpolicy.org). Less than 20% of youth is enrolled in secondary school (25.36% male youth and 12.02 of female youth). While according to UNICEF (2014) 55% of the Beninese population still lives in a rural setting, there is a high urbanisation rate of 4% as many young people move to the cities for employment.

Youth unemployment rates of Benin vary considerably depending on different sources. According to the USAID Youth Assessment Report (2011), Benin had a youth unemployment rate of 0.7% in 2007 and of 2.6% in 2011. In 2013, the youth unemployment rate seemed to have dropped again to 1.7% (ibid). UNFPA (2012) further points out that only around 58% of youth between 15 and 24 years old participates in the labour market, and USAID (2011) shows that a shocking 95% of the Beninese workforce depends on the informal sector, of which youth form a significant part. The French Embassy in Benin (2015) further highlights the fact that in reality no reliable estimate of unemployment rates in Benin is available to date, but that employment and underemployment are severe preoccupations throughout the country, and especially so for youth.

### **6.2 *Needs, challenges and aspirations***

The international literature often identifies four priority areas for youth: education, employment, health and political participation. Conversations with Beninese youth, youth organisations and PTF working with youth indicate that the same areas are of great importance also for youth in Benin. The following sub-sections briefly outline some of the main needs and aspirations of Beninese youth in these domains.

#### **6.2.1 Education**

Primary school enrolment rates in Benin have grown rapidly in the last 20 years. While in 1990 Benin still had one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates in the world, currently almost all Beninese children are able to access school. However, while a growing number of children is graduating from primary school, still a large gap exists in making the transition from primary to secondary school, as less than 20 percent of Beninese youth aged 15 to 24 are enrolled in secondary school. Even fewer youth make the transition to higher education. Furthermore, large gender gaps still exist, with many

more boys attending school than girls. The quality of education in Benin is also still a point of concern. Many PTF and private sector organisations have voiced concerns regarding the lack of relevant or adequate skills of graduates to meet labour market demands. Also those working with SRHR note that there is a great gap in terms of Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) in schools.

Youth that were spoken to indicated that schools do not provide enough information to their students about opportunities for scholarships, internships or extra-curricular activities. One student studying Computer Science complained that the even though he studies at the best educational institution for Computer Science in Benin, the facilities at school are dire. While the students are supposed to work with all different operating systems, the computers available often only contain out-dated systems and there are insufficient available for all students. This student also noted that professors often take the subject matter for the classes straight from the Internet and that it has happened more than once that students know more than the professors do. Other students mentioned that their courses did not contain sufficient practical components and that they graduated without having the skills that employers demanded. Many young Beninese especially voiced a desire for more education and guidance in terms of entrepreneurship, as starting an own business seemed an attractive idea for many.

### **6.2.2 Employment**

As mentioned before, Benin has high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment. Most Beninese youth are employed in the informal sector, which may be dangerous, badly paid, and overall insecure/unstable. One of the reasons why so many youth work in the informal sector is because employers find that youth do not possess the necessary knowledge, skills or experience, or believe that they are lazy and unreliable. On the other hand, many youth also mentioned that they actually very much like the flexibility of the informal sector and of being self-employed. Even though several PTF complained that Benin is far behind countries such as Ghana and Nigeria in terms of youth entrepreneurship, many Beninese youth voiced a desire to start their own businesses. For example, a member of the US Ambassador's Youth Council is currently working on a programme to promote chess at primary and high schools which he aims to make profitable, one of the Young Ambassadors for Family Planning (JA/PF) dreams of setting up a fashion brand, and a member of the NGO ANELS wants to start an enterprise to produce fruit juice. Interestingly, also many youth mentioned wanting to start a business with a social cause. For example a Beninese-Ivoirian (30 years old), who organises entertainment for children's parties, mentioned that once her business starts growing, she would like to develop a business model with which she is able to charge more for the richer families (for example her large Lebanese clientele) so she can offer the same service for a small fee (or for free) to those less well off. Another Computer Science student from the Central African Republic (25 years old) mentioned he wants to start an enterprise to provide cheap or free education to disadvantaged Beninese. A Beninese intern at the NGO *Citoyennes des Rues* (22 years old) mentioned wanting to start a cultural space for children to come and paint and make music. A young reggae musician (25 years old), has the desire to follow a training in Germany and then come back to bring his knowledge

to practice by energizing the country's cultural sector. The young pianist mentioned that there is so much musical talent and creativity amongst Beninese youth, but that not enough channels exist for them to bring these to a wider audience (or to make money from it).

However, in order to start up businesses, young Beninese face many challenges, most specifically in terms of access to finance and access to mentorship/coaching. Certain incubation centres exist in the country (i.e. the NUFFIC incubation centre at the University of Parakou, the Agrobusiness Center in Porto Novo, the Business Promotion Centers from the UNDP or the Bluezone Start-up Center), but not many youth know about these. Certain entrepreneurship competitions are organised where start-up capital and/or mentorship can be won, but this only opens up opportunities for a select few. Another problem, which limits entrepreneurship opportunities for young people is a general lack of confidence in youth entrepreneurship for the part of elders. Older people in Benin often provide a quite negative and sceptic image of Beninese youth in the labour market: they are supposedly lazy, uninterested and unreliable. They believe that, if they would get the chance, all Beninese youth want to become "douaniers" or work in transportation/logistics. That way they can make a lot of money without working hard. An alternative way of making easy money quickly is becoming a zemijan (motor taxi) driver. Conversations with Beninese youth themselves contradict this however. Many have great aspirations to find productive employment or set up businesses, but just do not have access to the right means for doing so.

### **6.2.3 Health**

In terms of health, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights are the main priority both voiced by Beninese youth themselves, as well as in the literature on youth programming. In fact, ensuring Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is key in order to reap the benefits of a demographic dividend. When women have children at a later age and more babies survive their first years, families often begin to see the benefits of having smaller families. At this moment, demand for family planning increases and when this demand is met, a youth bulge (disproportionally large youth population) is on its way. With a population growth of 3.4% per year, Benin still finds itself at the beginning stage of developing a youth bulge. The Beninese population (which now counts more than 11 million people) still increases with around 300.000 each year. Use of contraceptives is around 12.4%. However, demand for contraceptives is growing rapidly, especially amongst youth. Beninese youth generally start to be sexually active at a young age, have several different partners, and sexual violence is not uncommon. Moreover, many Beninese youth are insufficiently informed about sexuality and family planning, and have only limited access to health services because social norms do not recognise that they are already sexually active. A low self-esteem of young people undermined by a poorly functioning education, high youth unemployment and low recognition of the "voice" of young people and their potential, contributes to risk-taking behaviour, including risky sexual behaviour. Although the decrease of female circumcision is at least stagnating, child marriages are increasing (8.8% of girls marry before age 15), especially in the North of Benin. All this leads to a high transmission of HIV among young people, an 'epidemic' of teenage pregnancies, which leads not only to a high dropout

rate of girls in secondary education but also to a large number of (illegal, unsafe) abortions, high maternal mortality (351/100.000) and lots of complicated deliveries that often lead to mutilating fistula and a high neonatal mortality.

#### **6.2.4 Political participation**

While in general not many Beninese youth seem very interested in national or local politics and often do not believe that their vote in elections will make any difference, many are politically concerned in a different way. For example, many youth find out about the news and what happens in their country, the region, and the rest of the world over social media. Here, news stories and YouTube videos from questionable sources circulate rapidly. Many youth are concerned with issues such as corruption, nepotism and injustices; both within their country as well as on a global scale. They often complain that no jobs and opportunities are available for them and that their government is not doing anything to address this. They speak about rising terrorism and radicalisation (in Europe, the Middle-East, Nigeria and even in Northern Benin) and are interested to hear and spread stories about upcoming threats and conspiracy theories. When Embassies in Cotonou formally stated negative travel advises to the North of Benin in November 2015 (without a clear explanation of what exactly was happening), this was all Beninese youth could talk about. While the concerns and unrest amongst urban youth in Cotonou may well be seen as a ticking time-bomb, youth in the more rural and Northern parts of the country are even further detached from national politics.

## **7. Overview of existing youth servicing organisations, programmes and activities**

### **7.1 Government**

Benin's advisory body for youth, the Organe Consultatif de la Jeunesse (OCJ), exists since 1991. The OCJ is the national platform for dialogue, expression, action and representation of Beninese youth and has the same function as similar structures such as 'National Youth Councils' in some African countries and around the world. The OCJ is a democratic, apolitical and autonomous structure, and communicates with youth and youth organisations on the one hand, and with the Ministry of Youth on the other. It is legally registered and under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Youth. The OCJ recognises an age range of 15 – 35 for youth, but members have to be between 15 and 32 years old to be elected. The main objectives of the OCJ are the following:

- Contributing to the development and implementation of the National Youth Policy;
- Promoting cultural, socio-educational and socio-economic activities that benefit young people;
- Promoting active and free participation of youth in the execution of public service activities;
- Developing cooperation between associations, youth movements and institutions;
- Promoting consultation and dialogue between young people, governments and international agencies;

- Ensuring the inclusion of youth needs through their representation in all local, national and international decisions;
- Facilitating youth access to information to enable them to know their rights and opportunities available to them.

In addition, Benin also has an advisory body for children: the Conseil Consultatif Nationale des Enfants (CCNE), which exists since 2006. It is supported by the Ministry of family Affairs and Social Welfare. The CCNE consists of 25 members elected by their peers at a departmental level. Each department elects two delegates, with the exception of Littoral department which elects three. Members of the CCNE must be between 8 and 17 upon election. The specific objectives of the CCNE are as follows:

- Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Annual Work Plans (AWP) of Council bodies
- Promoting children's participation in the defence of their rights at national, sub-regional and international level
- Participating in debates on all issues relating to children's rights;
- Representing children on all decisions that affect them;
- Involving children and youth in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other laws and conventions ratified by Benin texts;
- Advocating with the authorities at all levels (development partners, communities National and International) in promoting the rights of children:
- Question children about their duties and rights;
- Raising awareness and challenging the authorities and civil society for the survival, protection, participation and development of children;
- Enabling children and youth to denounce and report cases of abuse against children;
- Setting up a network of children in the context of trade on the violence against them;
- Creating a framework for exchanges and between children on issues of violence and protection.

Benin's first youth policy was made official in 2002, and a second version was validated in 2016. While Benin's Ministry of 'Youth, Sports and Recreation' is the leading ministry with regard to youth affairs, also the Ministry of 'Family, Social Affairs, National Solidarity, Disabled Persons and Pensioners', the Ministry of 'Microfinance and Employment for Youth and Women', the Ministry of Work and the Ministry of Health all have certain policies and programmes targeting youth, such as employment schemes and health programmes. However, policy documents and action plans are difficult to find online; actions are vaguely formulated; and when ministers are asked about certain activities they seem either uninformed or they avoid to answer directly. In general, government officials seemed unconcerned with youth and unaware of the enormous potential as well as the serious risks related to Benin's approaching youth bulge.



## 7.2 Youth organisations

An ever-increasing number of youth organisations exist in Benin, most of them operating in the fields of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights or environmental protection / sustainable development. While members of these organisations often do not lack enthusiasm or good intentions, not all organisations are equally dynamic. Besides doubts about organisations' representativeness of Beninese youth population, another frequently heard critique of young activists or politicians is that these youth only join an organisation to be able to put this on their CV's, thereby increasing their chances to find an internship or job. Moreover, certain organisations are believed to lack focus (they want to do too many things at the same time), or insufficiently aware of what others (government, PTF, the private sector) are already doing in their field. As many youth are member of organisations voluntarily (without being compensated financially) they can hardly be blamed for not fully committing. Membership of an organisation is for many also only part-time or a secondary preoccupation, as they study or have jobs on the side. The struggle to secure funding for their activities (or internal functioning) also makes it difficult for youth organisations to do to their work effectively.

Despite these difficulties, many youth organisations still manage to do very valuable work. For example in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, organisations such as the Association Nationale des Etudiants pour la Lutte contre le SIDA (**ANELS**), ABPF's Mouvement Action des Jeunes (**MAJ**) and ABMSs youth groups have done admirable work in terms of awareness-raising of responsible sexual behaviour, providing information of where to find youth-friendly health services, and campaigning to end stigma's. The Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour la Planification Familiale (**JA/PF**) are taking a leadership position in voicing the needs and rights of youth at a higher level. The Young Beninese Leaders Association (**YBLA**) works intensively to improve maternal health and promote gender equality, and to monitor the government's commitment in following up on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. In the area of environmental protection, organisations such as the Parlement Nationale de la Jeunesse pour l'Eau et Assainissement (**PNJEA**), Initiative Citoyenne pour la Protection de l'Environnement (**ICIPE-ONG**), Eau et Assainissement pour Generations Futurs (**2EGF-ONG**), **ONG Ultime Geste** et ONG Environment and Water Insurance for New Generation Family (**EWING Family**) are working tirelessly to raise awareness of environmental protection and sustainable lifestyles, to advocate for the right to water and to hold their government accountable on environmental agreements.

The Parlement des Jeunes du Benin (**PJB**) works, amongst others, to promote the rights of youth and children and increase civic engagement amongst Beninese youth. More specifically, the objectives of the PJB are as follows:

- Creating a framework for dialogue and exchange for young people;
- Developing civic education by introducing young people to parliamentary activity;
- Involving young people in the implementation of any national or international legislation concerning youth and convention against violence against women;
- Challenging young people about their duties;

- Raising awareness and challenging the National Assembly, the authorities and civil society actors involved in the implementation of any national or international legislation on youth and children;
- Generating proposals of laws favourable to the promotion of youth;
- Educating young people, parents, government and opinion leaders on the rights of children and youth;
- Promoting the rights of children and youth;
- Promoting a youth culture of peace, tolerance, dialogue, development and democracy;
- Strengthening solidarity among young people;
- Protecting children against all forms of violence and harmful practices for their development;
- Searching for solutions to the problems of children and youth;
- Involving young people in the dissemination and implementation of conventions and laws relating to children's rights

The PJB exists since 2014 and has its office attached to the seat of the National Assembly in Porto Novo. The youth parliament is composed of 85 young Beninese from 77 Communes in Benin. Members must be 18-23 years at the time of selection and the selection of members is made by the National Assembly.

Annex II contains a full overview of the organisations that have been spoken to in creating this policy.

### *7.3 Technical and Financial Partners*

Along with the Netherlands embassy, the three organisations with probably the greatest focus on youth in their development work in Benin are the Embassy of the United States of America (USA) / USAID, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Oxfam-Quebec.

**The Embassy of the United States of America** and **USAID** have several programmes focused on youth, most of them with a focus on entrepreneurship. The Embassy organises workshops, trainings and competitions for young entrepreneurs. In addition, the Embassy also has its own Youth Council ("US Ambassador's Youth Council-Benin"), which exists since 2014 and consists of 25 young Beninese that are appointed to advise the Ambassador on developmental issues of their country. The Council is also provided with the financial means to organise various events for youth, such as entrepreneurship and innovation fairs, or sports events. The Embassy has also started the first Model United Nations (MUN) group in Benin (in 2014) and promotes various educational and training opportunities, such as the *Mandela Washington Fellowship* and the *Young African Leaders Initiative*. One member of Youth Council is currently working on a project to map all opportunities offered to Beninese youth by the different Embassies in Benin.

Just as the United States Embassy, also the **UNFPA** has its own youth advisory group: Panel Ados et Jeunes. The group exists since 2012 and consists of 25 members, representing different youth organisations in Benin. The main goal of the youth panel is that the voices and preoccupations of youth are heard, most notably in the negotiations and discussions on the post-2015 development

agenda. In addition, UNFPA also supports many programmes for youth in Benin, mostly with regard to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

**Oxfam-Quebec** has also recently begun to look at how it can better integrate youth in their programmes, thereby focusing specifically on youth economic empowerment (“autonomisation économique des jeunes”). OXFAM held a “co-creation” workshop with youth in September 2015, where for three days a group of around twenty youth worked together with OXFAM staff to mainstream youth throughout its strategic country plan. The organisation also currently employs Beninese youth as interns to help out with activities varying from gender programs to organising events.

In addition, also most organisations that work in the sector of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (such as **ABMS, ABPF, UNICEF, CERADIS, APESSA** and **The Hunger Project**) have a strong focus on youth. UNICEF and **Plan International** mostly work with children, but occasionally expand their approach of development focused on young people to adolescents and youth.

Besides UNFPA and UNICEF, other United Nations organisations that have programmes that target youth are the UNDP and UNCDF. The **UNDP** has, for example, its Business Promotion Centers (BPCs) where various training and assistance for youth entrepreneurship is given. **UNCDF** is currently developing their plans to launch *YouthStart*, a five-year programme aiming to, on the one hand, provide financial education and education of entrepreneurship, and on the other hand support youth employability.

## **8. Current youth integration in Embassy programmes and activities**

### **Recognition of the specific needs, challenges and aspirations of youth**

In the Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (MASP) for 2014 – 2017 youth concerns are mentioned on various occasions, mostly in relation to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. For example, it is noted that Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) are especially high amongst youth and that only 17% of adolescent girls and 31% of boys have comprehensive knowledge of HIV. Also girls’ education and youth nutrition are mentioned as priorities. Recognizing the potential of youth to be actors in development processes that concern them – and the importance of the voices of youth being heard – the Embassy has also supported several JA/PFs and Loukman Tidjani, youth ambassador, to take part in international conferences and high-level meetings. In an attempt to strengthen youth representation at the government level, and to improve the coordination between youth organisations, the Embassy (in collaboration with the UNFPA, Plan Benin and the UNDP/UNV) is currently working to help the OCJ, PJB and CCNE to develop their strategic plans. In helping these organisations to develop compelling plans for the three years ahead and to organise meetings with PTF which would be able to support them financially or technically, it is hoped that the capacity of these organisations will increase and that they will become more independent from their ‘parent’ organisations (the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Family and the National Assembly).

While no direct references to youth are made in the Water and Sanitation or in the Food Security sections of the MASP, youth do sometimes already benefit (indirectly) from the programmes in these sectors. For example, youth-specific targets were set in the WASH programme of PPEA II. Also in the 'Community Led Total Sanitation' (CLTS) approach which is followed in most UNICEF and government programmes recognizes the potential of young people to be change-makers in their community. In the Food Security sector, the sector experts recognized the importance of securing employment for youth and are currently looking at possibilities to support youth entrepreneurship in fish farming.

### **Partnerships with youth(-serving) organisations**

Until the end of 2015 most partnerships with youth(-serving) organisations were concentrated in the SRHR sector. In this sector, all coalition partners (ABMS, ABPF, UNICEF, CERADIS and THP) work directly with youth. Both AMBS and ABPF have their own youth groups, while UNICEF, CERADIS and THP work with youth as both beneficiaries and actors in their programmes. The JA/PF is a subgroup of and is trained by the Coalition of NGO's in Family Planning. So far it is the only youth organisation that is directly financially sponsored by the Embassy. During the passage of the Dutch Youth Ambassador Jilt van Schayik, the embassy complemented the activities of the 'Building Bridge' project. In addition, also several NUFFIC NICHE programmes are currently running, which train students at some of Benin's most prominent universities (i.e. the University of Abomey-Calavi, the University of Parakou, and the Technical Universities in Djougou and Ketou) in practical education programmes relevant to the Embassy's sectors.

### **Level of youth participation**

When looking at the Hart's Ladder of youth participation (ANNEX III), still much improvement can be made in terms of the level of youth participation. Allowing youth to participate in one way or another in a programme does not always mean that the opinions of youth are actually taken seriously and that youth also have "voice" (decision-making power). Especially in the water, food security and private sector development youth currently have little opportunity to influence the programmes that concern them. Although throughout the development of this youth policy some meaningful steps have been made in terms of sector experts being consulted by youth at the Embassy or by meeting them in the field. In the SRHR sector youth participation has been recognised as important for a longer period of time, and partners are continuously questioned on the role and decision-making power of youth in their programmes.

### **Part 3: Theory of Change**

*Having a youth population which has the knowledge and capacity to be able to take ownership of its own development (socio-economic well-being) as well as that of their local communities and Benin as a whole*

## 9. Theory of Change: the results chain

### 9.1 Problem identification

The baseline study of Benin has found that Beninese youth face multiple development challenges, especially in the domains of education, employment, health and political participation. While many organisations and initiatives exist to respond to these problems, they largely lack coherence and complementarity, which inhibits their efficacy and synergy. Also, while an increasing number of Beninese youth organise themselves to take action on issues that are important to them, they are still mostly considered as a passive and risky target group, which lacks the capacity to be recognised as equal partners. This has the result that youth are often side-lined in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes that concern them.

*In general, both the enormous potential as well as the serious risks related to Benin's approaching youth bulge are largely underestimated by the Beninese government and the majority of development partners that operate in the country. As a consequence, Benin might not only be unable to reap the benefits of a demographic dividend, but in fact be well on its way towards a demographic disaster when no significant investments in the human capital development of youth are made in the near future, and when youth are continued to be marginalised.*

### 9.2 Impact/Vision

The long-term change the Embassy hopes to see is the following:

*Having a Beninese youth population which has the capacity (knowledge and skills) and opportunities to take ownership of its own development (socio-economic well-being) as well as that of their local communities and Benin as a whole.*

### 9.3 Outcomes

In order to reach this vision, the Embassy will focus on the following strategic outcomes:

#### **A more knowledgeable and better skilled youth population**

*Through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, youth learn new knowledge and skills that are relevant to the market, thereby increasing their self-esteem and making them more employable.*

#### **Increased employment opportunities for youth**

*More jobs become available for youth and youth are better supported in setting up their own enterprises.*

### **Improved sexual and reproductive health of youth**

*More youth have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information, services and supplies. Fewer youth suffer from sexually related illnesses (including HIV/AIDS), discrimination or gender-based violence; marry or become pregnant at an early age; or have to undergo unsafe abortions.*

### **Enhanced civic engagement and participation in decision-making of youth**

*Youth have a greater understanding of political processes (as well as the capacity and motivation to participate in elections and hold their national and local governments accountable) and greater "voice" (decision-making power) in the development, implementation and evaluation of development policies and programmes that concern them.*

## **9.4 Inputs and outputs**

The Embassy hopes to work towards this vision through **financial support, technical support and advocacy/lobbying**.

In terms of *financial aid*, the Embassy should prioritise to support those programmes that either directly or indirectly benefit youth. Preferably, youth are mobilised and financially supported as actors (rather than mere beneficiaries) in development programmes that target them.

In terms of *technical aid*, the Embassy is advised to share its sector expertise with youth (students, young professionals, activists, entrepreneurs, politicians) and its knowledge on youth programming with development partners and government. With the help of (Dutch) experts and professionals, workshops and trainings on topics such as water and sanitation, health, food security, and entrepreneurship can be organised for Beninese youth. Also scholarships, study tours and exchanges with universities and knowledge institutes in the Netherlands should be promoted amongst relevant youth groups (for example in universities, colleges and entrepreneurship hubs) in order to further the knowledge and skills of Beninese students and young professionals.

In terms of *advocacy and lobbying*, the Embassy should aim to increase awareness amongst development partners and government of the importance of youth as strategic beneficiaries and actors in development processes, whose needs, rights and aspirations should be valued and realised. A dialogue tool answering the 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions considering youth integration has been developed in order to facilitate this dialogue (see Annex VI).

Through these interventions, the following direct, tangible, and measurable outputs are aimed for:

- Youth concerns (obtained through consultations with youth directly) are integrated in all strategic plans of the Embassy; the strategic plans and project proposals of Embassy partner organisations; Community Development Plans, and the SCRP.
- A mapping study of the youth situation in Northern Benin will be conducted and shared with partners.
- Workshops and training sessions will be organised for youth

- A sector group for youth (including government representatives, PTF and youth organisations) will be created
- More jobs, traineeships and internship opportunities for youth are created.

A schematic overview of the Theory of Change can be found in **Annex IV**.

## **10. Underlying assumptions and influencing actors and factors**

### *10.1 Underlying assumptions*

The Theory of Change is based on the following assumptions:

- Youth will only be able to take ownership of its own development (socio-economic well-being) as well as that of their local communities and Benin as a whole when they have the capacities (knowledge and skills) and opportunities to do so.
- Because youth know best what their own needs, challenges and aspirations are, including them is instrumental in order to properly meet these needs, address these challenges and realise these aspirations.
- In order for youth to be able to express their needs, challenges and aspirations accurately; to be able to contribute productively to meetings; and to be successful in the work they do, they need their capacities (knowledge and skills) should be strengthened.
- Since many PTF and government ministries work with youth, a collaborative effort will reach the greatest synergy and most positive results.
- Since youth are generally more open-minded and willing to change their behaviour than older generations, training them will be more likely to bring about positive results. Educating and training youth is also expected to bring about more long-term development results, as these youth will have more opportunities when they grow up, and are also likely to transfer their knowledge to their families or children.
- The creative and innovative ideas of youth may help the Embassy staff towards new solutions or approaches to persisting development challenges, thereby making the embassy programme more dynamic and increasing its effectiveness.
- 

### *10.2 Influencing actors*

Youth-centred policies and programs should take into consideration all actors that are (directly and indirectly) part of the lives of youth. This includes the youth's parents, wider family members, teachers, employers and religious leaders, but also government officials and other PTF that are working with youth.



### *10.3 Influencing factors*

A number of factors are likely to influence the successfulness of the youth policy. These factors include, amongst others, the following:

#### **Economic context and the 'aid to trade' transition**

This youth policy aims to find opportunities for youth to be used as important change-agents in realising the transition from aid to trade. However, over the last years realising this transition has proven to be difficult and a number of factors may influence whether youth are able to find (and keep) employment or become successful entrepreneurs. For example, Benin is ranking very low on the "Doing Business" index of the World Bank and many business challenges that adults face (complex and costly regulatory processes, weak legal enforcement, low opportunities for investment) are often similar or even stronger for youth. Agriculture (subsistence farming, cotton) remains the largest contributor to the GDP (40%), followed by services (The harbour is an important source for national income but its activities are mainly based on re-export to neighbouring countries) and manufacturing (textiles). The ICT sector is rapidly developing and the tourism sector also offers opportunities.

Next to considering youth capacities as an input in the production process, the 'aide to trade' transition should look into the opportunities of 'markets' constituted by the large group of young people ('youth bulge') with a potentially increasing purchasing power.

#### **Upcoming elections and political commitment**

In February 2016 presidential elections will be held in Benin. The outcome of these elections, and the political commitment and aspirations of the new president may influence to an extent what the social, economic and political priorities of the country are for the coming years and what place youth take in this.

#### **Cultural factors**

Development is a process of change. A process of social, economic, and political change, but perhaps most of all a process of changes in people's thought and behaviour. The way people think and behave can decide to a great extent the direction and outcome of a certain policy or program. The youth strategy must be carried out in a culturally sensitive matter, by recognising cultural customs and religious practices and navigating between these, while at the same time trying to influence it by challenging stigmas and fighting against harmful practices. Most importantly, the Embassy should seek to challenge generational conflicts and help to make elders aware of the importance of youth participation.

#### **Capacity of youth, partners and Embassy**

This policy is based on the assumption that youth, the Embassy's partners and the Embassy itself have the capacity to successfully implement the youth strategy. However, this might not necessarily

be the case. Many youth may not (yet) have the knowledge and skills that they require to find employment or to take meaningful part in political processes, youth organisations might not yet fully understand the broader structures within which they operate, and the Embassy and Embassy partners might (despite their proven expertise in their fields) not (yet) have sufficient experience of working with young people or know how to respond to young people's needs and aspirations. Additionally it might be difficult for the Embassy and the Embassy's partners to know where exactly to find the most marginalised youth or how to work with these groups.

In terms with youth, their capacity must not be underestimated, while at the same time the Embassy should make an effort to develop their capacities. In terms of Embassy partners, dialogue (with the help of the Youth Audit Tool in Annex VI) can help to assess this capacity, and – if required – assistance may be offered to strengthen the capacity of partners to work with youth (i.e. through Nuffic's Tailor Made Training). The Embassy itself can increase its capacity through being consulted by experts or to let sector experts follow online or in-person training.

## **11. Expected challenges and how to deal with them**

### *Challenges of working with young people*

Many negative stereotypes of youth exist. Policy makers, parents and other authorities often see young people as lazy, unmotivated and inexperienced. On the one hand, these stereotypes are often false as many young people are eager to improve the lives of themselves and their communities, and are capable of working hard and coming up with innovative ideas and projects. The Embassy should therefore actively seek to challenge such negative stereotypes. On the other hand, the Embassy('s partners) can take an active role in encouraging youth to continue their work and help them to build more self-esteem. The benefits of working with young people, as described earlier on in this strategy, by far outnumber the presumed challenges.

#### *11.1 Not a homogenous group*

'Youth' is a rather broad classification and within this group large differences exist based on gender, education and socio-economic background. While greater attention to the needs and aspirations of youth in general is desired, specific policies and programmes should narrow-down (operationalize) their target group by focusing on young girls, students, young entrepreneurs, rural youth, young people living on the streets etc. For each programme, the Embassy should, together with its partner organisations look at which specific youth group is affected by a certain programme or policy and which youth are best to be mobilised to reach a certain objective.

#### *11.2 How to reach the most marginalized?*

Reaching the most vulnerable or marginalised youth remains to be a challenge for most development partners. However, despite the challenge, it is important to continuously keep thinking about how a certain programme is able to benefit youth with the least opportunities (i.e. those that are uneducated,

do not have a job, do not have television/Internet/a mobile phone/sufficient money to buy magazines or are otherwise unable to receive most mainstream channels of information). A first step is to think actively at where these youth can be found. Mostly, this is within their communities. Approaching community leaders, or youth representatives at a local level may thus help to reach these youth. Moreover, offering basic skills programs (literacy, numeracy, life skills) or individual or group counselling (art therapy, developing self-esteem, examining their lives and hopes for the future) might also benefit vulnerable youth and can be attached to other programme components. While youth without access to phones might still not be able to benefit from this, certain youth with few opportunities have much to gain from hotlines. Many youth are insecure or scared to approach youth centres or community workers and may feel more comfortable by calling to receive an answer to their concerns. Lastly, it must be kept in mind that in reaching out to the most vulnerable youth, programmes should take an active approach and not wait for these youth to take the first step (i.e. by visiting a youth centre). Organisations such as the MAJ do this very well, by going into the communities and approaching youth directly.

### *11.3 Limited funding*

Mainstreaming youth does not necessarily have to impact existing budgets. Meaningful changes can be realised through, for example:

- **Inviting** members of youth organisations to relevant meetings
- **Thinking critically** about how certain policies and programmes are likely to affect youth and how youth can be better targeted
- **Discussing** with government and other development partners how the needs, rights and aspirations of young people can be better integrated in policies and programmes
- **Sharing information** (such as studies, examples of good-practice, summaries of international conferences) with youth organisations, as well as with colleagues within your organisation
- **Speaking** with youth! Asking youth about their opinions, needs, challenges and ideas may well give you new ideas and thereby inspire your work!

### *11.4 'Another transversal theme?': advantages and disadvantages of mainstreaming*

While 'transversal theme' or 'mainstreaming' in general often has a negative connotation, in reality their effectiveness largely depends on how these terms are used. Most importantly, the main value of acknowledging a theme or target group as 'transversal' lies in the fact that these are recognized as important. The evolving consciousness within the organisation – as well as how this is transferred to the outside world – is already a first step towards positive change. As such, having few or many transversal themes does not necessarily have to impact their value.

However, mainstreaming certain concepts throughout the development work also requires active commitment. This does not necessarily have to be financial commitment, but has more to do with attitude and small actions or changes in behaviour. All members within an organisation should be convinced of the importance of the concepts and look actively at how they can best realise their implementation. Policy documents that further investigate and demonstrate how the concepts can best be integrated throughout the organisation's work, or sector specialists that are tasked with their implementation, can help to ensure such commitment.

### *11.5 How to measure results: indicators of success*

Success of the youth policy can be measured by the following output and outcome indicators.

#### **Output indicators:**

- Youth concerns (obtained through consultations with youth directly) are integrated in all strategic plans of the Embassy; the strategic plans and project proposals of Embassy partner organisations; Community Development Plans, and the SCRP.
- A mapping study of the youth situation in Northern Benin is conducted and shared with partners.
- A sector group for youth (including government representatives, PTF and youth organisations) is created.
- Number of workshops and training sessions that are organised for youth.
- Number of youth that graduate from TVET programmes.
- Number of jobs, traineeships and internship opportunities that are created for youth.
- Number of youth that are able to find employment or enrol in traineeships or internships.

#### **Outcome indicators:**

- Youth are more knowledgeable and better skilled.
  - Youth graduate from TVET programmes with higher results.
  - Youth have higher self-esteem.
  - More youth are able to make the transition from education to the working place.
  - Employers recognise that the pool of eligible employees has grown.
- More employment opportunities for youth are available.
  - More youth are able to find (and keep) employment.
  - Youth are better supported in setting up enterprises.
- Youth are better able to maintain their sexual and reproductive health.
  - More youth have access to SRHR information
  - More youth have access to SRHR services
  - More youth have access to contraceptives

- More youth have access to medicines
- Fewer youth suffer from sexually related illnesses
- Fewer youth suffer from discrimination
- Fewer youth suffer from gender-based violence
- Fewer youth get married below age 18
- Fewer youth become pregnant below age 18
- Fewer youth have to undergo unsafe abortions
- Youth have more knowledge of political processes (and how to influence these).
  - Youth have a greater understanding of political processes
  - Youth have a greater capacity to participate in elections and hold their national and local governments accountable
  - Youth are more motivated to participate in elections and hold their national and local governments accountable
  - Youth have greater “voice” (decision-making power) in the development, implementation and evaluation of development policies and programmes that concern them.

Moreover, the Embassy will be able to monitor progress by completing the Youth Audit Tool (Annex VI). This tool will help to identify what is going well and where improvement is needed. As mentioned on the tool itself, it is a good idea to circulate the questionnaire amongst the sector experts and then hold a meeting to discuss the different answers. After a couple of months a new meeting can be scheduled to discuss whether there has been noticeable progress and what can be done to improve.

## **Part 4: Recommendations**

*Developing capacities,  
Encouraging participation,  
Increasing opportunities*

## 12. Overall actions for better youth integration

In all sectors a linkage exists between the sector and youth in terms of young people's role to find employment, as well as young people's role to bring about innovation. With regard to the first, education and training for health professionals, farmers and agribusiness entrepreneurs, and water engineers must be encouraged. In this regard, specific attention must be paid to ensure successful transitions from schools and universities to the labour market, through carefully analysing curricula and evaluating how these respond to the needs as voiced by those working in the public and private sector, government or civil society. With regard to the second point, the ability of youth to act as agents of change must be kept in mind. The dynamism, energy and innovative spirit of young people should be used to benefit the development of the sector.

More concretely, the following **overall recommendations** (points for action) are given:

1. Starting at the base: **institutional transformation**. Make youth part of day-to-day life at the Embassy by employing more interns and young experts/consultants, and by developing more youth-centred consciousness and attitudes amongst Embassy staff.
2. **Question all partners who receive funding from the Embassy** on how their programmes affect youth and how they (plan to) integrate/mainstream youth in their programmes. The "Youth Audit Tool" (Annex VI) can be used for this.
3. **Lobby for greater public and private investments in youth**. Explain to ministries and businesses what the benefits are of investing in youth, as well as what the risks and dangers are when youth are neglected. The "Youth FAQ and talking-points for (policy) dialogue" (Annex V) can be used for this.
4. **Lobby for greater youth participation in decision-making**. Explain to ministries, businesses and PTF what the benefits are of youth participation, as well as what the risks and dangers are when youth are ignored.
5. **Create a sector group for "youth"** where government and PTF are able to discuss their activities concerning youth, thereby sharing knowledge and creating partnerships, in order to establish the largest synergy possible.
6. **Finance more studies of the youth situation in Benin**, especially in terms of
  - 1) a mapping of youth organisations and initiatives in the Northern part of the country, and
  - 2) a study of the security situation concerning youth in Benin, i.e. youth attitudes towards terrorist organisations and extremism.
7. **Engage with youth:**
  - Speak with youth (in the field as well as by inviting them to the Embassy for consultation) and let their ideas and opinions inspire your work.
  - Help youth organisations in doing their work by sharing your knowledge and expertise, forwarding relevant information or studies, and by using your network to link them to relevant partners.

- Make sure to encourage and motivate youth, showing them that their ideas and activities are valued, but at the same time ...
  - ... challenge them to improve.
- Annex VII (outlining certain recommendations for youth organisations that resulted from frequent interactions with members of various youth organisations in Benin) can be used to inform such discussions.

Besides these overall recommendations, the Embassy's sector experts are advised to pay special attention to the following sub-target groups, themes, approaches, and strategic partnerships:

### *12.1 Who? : Operationalizing youth*

Throughout its efforts, the Embassy – in collaboration with its partners – should continuously examine which specific *sub-group of youth* is targeted in a certain activity, as this might differ per sector and programme. One of the SRHR activities may for example be focused on adolescent girls, while a programme in the food security portfolio is concerned with youth enrolled in agricultural colleges. In general, the Embassy will focus on the following sub-categories of youth:

#### **Young entrepreneurs**

The Embassy will make an effort to help those young men and women who have an interesting idea or business plan and the ambition to set up an enterprise, but face challenges in terms of mentorship and financial support. It will focus on young entrepreneurs based on the belief that ensuring employment for youth is vital, and that young entrepreneurs are able to create jobs and ensuring youth employment, without waiting for the government or partners for support.

#### **Young politicians**

The Embassy will look at how it can best support young politicians and youth ambassadors who are able to influence decision-making at national and community level. It will do so from the belief that decisions that influence youth, must be taken in consultation with youth.

#### **Young activists**

Acknowledging the innovation, dynamism and spirit of young people, the Embassy will seek how it can better support young activists to bring meaningful impact to their country and communities.

#### **Young girls**

Given their still very marginalised position in society, the Embassy will focus specifically on creating more opportunities for young girls. The Embassy realises that while at adolescence the horizons of young boys grow, those of young girls shrink. It will make an effort to ensure that girls rights are respected, that girls are able to maintain their health, complete education, find productive employment and take part in decision-making.



### **The most marginalised**

In line with its commitment to inclusive development, the Embassy will make sure to focus on reaching also the poorest and most marginalised youth. These are the youth that are not in school, cannot read or write, do not have access to a television, radio or Internet, and who are not able to pay for health services or buy educational magazines. It can also be rural youth or young girls, while at the same time it is acknowledged that not all rural youth or young girls are vulnerable. A continuous effort will be made to in each programme ensure that also the most difficult to reach youth are able to benefit from a programme. This may entail a shift in focus with more emphasis on programmes in the North of Benin.

### *12.2 What? : Three strategic axes*

In all areas of intervention, the Embassy should focus on **developing capacities** (health, knowledge and skills), **increasing access** (to information, services and employment) and **encouraging participation** (at the preparation, validation, execution and evaluation levels of all programmes and policies that concern them).

### *12.3 How? : approaches and partnerships*

As mentioned before, as a bilateral development partner in Benin, the Embassy will be able to obtain results by means of **financial aid**, **technical aid** and **advocacy/lobbying**. The Embassy should aim to establish more partnerships with youth-servicing organisations, but most importantly also with youth organisations themselves, allowing them to take ownership of their own development.

In terms of *financial aid*, the Embassy should prioritise to financially support those programmes that either directly or indirectly benefit youth, as well as youth organisations themselves. In fact, preferably youth are mobilised and financially supported as actors (rather than mere beneficiaries) in development programmes that concern them.

In terms of *technical aid*, the Embassy is advised to share its sector expertise with youth (students, young professionals, activists, entrepreneurs, politicians) and its knowledge on youth programming with development partners and government. With the help of (Dutch) experts and professionals, workshops and trainings on topics such as water and sanitation, health, food security, political participation and entrepreneurship can be organised for Beninese youth. Also scholarships, study tours and exchanges with universities and knowledge institutes in the Netherlands should be promoted amongst relevant youth groups (for example in universities, colleges and entrepreneurship hubs) in order to further the knowledge and skills of Beninese students and young professionals.

In terms of *advocacy and lobbying*, the Embassy should aim to increase awareness amongst development partners and government of the importance of youth as strategic beneficiaries and actors in development processes, whose needs, rights and aspirations should be valued and realised. A

dialogue tool answering the 'why', 'what' and 'how' questions considering youth integration has been developed in order to facilitate this dialogue (see Annex VI).

Throughout its efforts, the Embassy should continuously examine which specific *sub-group of youth* is targeted in a certain activity, as this might differ per sector and programme. One of the SRHR activities may for example be focused on adolescent girls, while a programme in the food security cluster is concerned with youth enrolled in agricultural colleges. Section 11.2 describes in further detail how the concept of youth can be operationalized per sector.

Also the strategic axes as pursued in the Embassy's annual plan for 2016 should be reflected in its work with youth. First and foremost, it must be kept in mind that Benin is categorised as a transition country in Dutch foreign policy. As such, activities concerning youth should at the same time aim to realise this *transition from aid to trade*, for example through stimulating youth entrepreneurship or through linking youth with Dutch businesses. In terms of *inclusive development*, the activities should make sure that ultimately the most marginalised youth benefit, thereby paying special attention to human rights and gender equality. In order to ensure *sustainable development*, the Embassy's activities (especially in the water and food security sectors) should support youth initiatives that aim to protect the environment and promote sustainable lifestyles. With regard to *good governance*, youth participation at all levels of the development process (planning, implementation, evaluation) should be ensured. In addition, the Embassy should also look to support youth initiatives that campaign against corruption or aim to stimulate youth civic engagement.

## 13. Recommendations per sector

Different steps can be taken to better integrate youth considerations and participation in the Embassy's sector programmes. The following sections will look at each sectors' key areas of intervention, as outlined in the MASP 2014 – 2017, and identify concrete opportunities for better youth integration where this is relevant. Also additional recommendations (for new support of activities or organisations, or for extra lobbying and advocacy) are mentioned. In preparing the 2018 - 2020 MASP, the Embassy will look from the start at how it can best mainstream youth throughout its planned activities.

### 13.1 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

**Working towards:** outcome 1 (education), outcome 2 (employment), outcome 3 (SRHR) and outcome 4 (participation in decision-making)

#### Who?

Young girls (especially those vulnerable to become child brides and teen mothers), disabled youth, key populations (young sex-workers, people living with HIV/AIDS, drugs users), adolescents in and out of school, young activists

#### Opportunities in existing programme

Opportunities for better youth integration in the SRHR sector are identified in relation to the following key areas of intervention as defined in the MASP 2014 – 2017:

##### 1. *More sexual knowledge and freedom of choice for young people*

#### Opportunities:

- Several youth organisations are promoting ASRHR with different approaches and different target groups. The JA/PF evolved through the Coalition of NGO's for FP from youth groups in members of the Coalition and other youth groups. Consequently the JA/PF are linked with the Youth Panel of UNFPA, the Youth Council of the USA embassy, the Youth Movement (MAJ) of ABPF, the youth group of ABMS, as well as other youth groups. Their roots in these youth organisations put them in a good position to argue upwards in favor of adolescents and youth SRHR with authorities and decision makers, including donor agencies, at national and regional levels, while the youth in the root organisations such as the MAJ/ABPF focus more on awareness raising amongst youth in schools and in the community, especially with the more vulnerable and more difficult to reach youth. The challenge in this set-up is to maintain effective communication and collaboration links between the upwards advocacy by the JA/PF and the more operational activities in the institutions and communities. More needs to be done to get involved the large umbrella organisations like the OCJ, PJB and the CNCE (with their network throughout the country) as their link/entry with government

institutions, at national and Communal levels, often is easier. The embassy should make sure that within its partner organisations, youth are playing a meaningful role. Within the framework of the Ouagadougou Partenariat the JA/PF have established an active regional network. For the technical support and financial sustainability it is important for the JA/PF to remain within the Coalition of NGO's for FP. Through the Coalition the embassy could continue to support their activities. Moreover, the input of representatives of the JA/PF during coalition meetings can, because of their youth perspective, add to the quality of discussions. It is important to work with the different youth organisations, all based in Cotonou, to make sure that the activities will not be limited to the regions around the capital, but will also be implemented in the North of the country and with special focus on vulnerable and less privileged youth.

- Currently APESSA (in collaboration with the relevant education ministries), financed by the embassy, is developing a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curriculum for primary and secondary schools. It is important that youth are included at all phases (planning, implementation and evaluation) of this work. Youth must be asked what exactly they want to know and what their needs are. What do youth really want to know? Where do they currently find their information? And what is still missing? Asking these questions to youth can help to make the curricula to meet existing needs thereby making them as relevant as possible. Complementary to this activity is a project supported by NUFFIC to reinforce the capacity of the Teachers Training Colleges to prepare the teachers to use the curricula elaborated with the support of APESSA.
- Partners should be asked to look more into – and raise more awareness of – the situation of girls in schools and universities. Sexual harassment of female students by their teachers or their male classmates is not uncommon, nor are sexual relations in exchange of goods, money or services (i.e. food, telephone credit, supervision or study support). More knowledge on what exactly is happening within schools and universities – and more action against such practices – would help girls to maintain their SRHR throughout their education. Contributions of NUFFIC, MDF-Ghana and CINOP to the fight against HIV/AIDS in universities should be reinforced by support from UNFPA, ABMS and ABPF as well as from the Government.
- Given the Netherlands' renewed focus on fighting child marriage, the Embassy should look at how the greatest collaboration and synergy can be reached amongst its partners, i.e. through linking up with and strengthening the regional *Girls not Brides* network with the activities supported through the, embassy funded, Child Protection programme (UNICEF).
- The, embassy supported, project of ABMS through which religious leaders engage themselves in the promotion of Family Planning, discussion on youth sexuality, child marriage and FP for young people can be strengthened. Youth leaders in the Church

could also be given more responsibilities (i.e. as project coordinators within the programme).

## *2. Improved access to medicines and contraceptives*

### **Opportunities:**

- Important results have been achieved in terms of making it more acceptable for parents to let their children go to youth centers where they know they will receive SRHR advice and where contraceptives are available. Efforts to raise awareness amongst parents of the benefits of these centers should be continued, while at the same time the relevance of multi-functional youth centers should be ensured. In the 'further opportunities' section more recommendations on how to keep youth centers relevant are outlined.
- While family planning was planned to become free for youth in 2015 this promise by the Benin Government could not yet be realized. The Embassy supported the Ministry of Health to conduct a feasibility study and expectations are high that free FP for young people will now become available in 2016. Meanwhile the embassy with its partners should advocate with the Government to increase the budget line for FP/contraceptives in the national budget. Possibilities of innovative financing need to be examined as well as measures that could make FP services more efficient. It is important though not to exclude FP services from the main management systems in the health sector and to ensure youth friendly services in all health facilities.
- The logistics of contraceptives continues to require attention both at national and at community level. In 2015 the embassy made a donation to purchase extra contraceptives and currently discussions are ongoing with UNFPA to consider support for the strengthening of the Government supply lines along with the distribution systems in the private sector. Equally important is the training of service providers to enable them to provide the full choice of different available contraceptives.

## *3. Better health care during pregnancy and childbirth (including safe abortion)*

### **Opportunities:**

- Currently the embassy programme is concentrated around FP and young people. Pregnancy and childbirth are posterriorities but a start has been made to allow for good quality Post Abortion Care, especially in NGO and private sector clinics. Discussions have been initiated with IPAS to consider a programme to improve safe abortion services which is important as teenage pregnancies frequently end up in an illegal, unsafe abortion with a high morbidity/mortality. Medical abortion could become an opportunity to make progress in safe abortion care. Already ABPF provides some medical abortion services within the possibilities of the law. CeRADIS is lobbying and is making proposals for changes in the law and ABMS is working on the registration of

misoprostol. One of the challenges for the embassy is to work on SRHR in such a way that it contributes to the strengthening of health systems which will also help to improve health care in general. There is much scope for improvement of quality of care both in the public and the private sector and use should be made of all possible instruments of Dutch development cooperation that can contribute to this.

4. *More respect for sexual and reproductive rights of groups who are currently denied of these .*

**Opportunities:**

- Stigmatization of 'key populations' in Benin is not as strong as in neighbouring countries and acceptance of LGBT community is growing. AMBS and CeRADIS are working with a number of LGBT organisations that are joined in 2 main networks. Focus is on service delivery and stigma reduction. With the strong right approach of the new strategic plan of ABPF, another opportunity exists to support the 'key population' communities. However the LGBT organisations/networks need support for organisational and institutional strengthening and capacity to advocate themselves for their rights. Another stigmatised population, sex-workers, also need to be organised to allow for a more effective recognition and respect for their rights, as well as service delivery. The embassy need to examine what possibilities exists through existing partnerships to provide such support but likely it is needed to find ways for specific support in organisational strengthening for the organisations of 'key populations'. Tailor Made Training (TMT/NUFFIC) support can potentially also be used for this. Also, as a member of the CCM/GFATM, the embassy needs to promote and to monitor the rights of key populations in the GFATM supported activities. Sharing knowledge of good practices among embassy partners could help also to reduce stigma that exist within partner organisations.

**Further opportunities:**

- Given the common objectives of different embassy partners, it is important that the organisations think thoroughly on how the greatest synergy and complementarity can be reached. To date, all five embassy partners have chosen a specific 'commune' of Benin in which they will coordinate ASHR activities. In two regions progress is made with this. It is a pilot approach driven by the embassy within the framework of government policy/strategy and within an environment of weak governance structures. The NGO embassy partners are there to support the decentralised/decongested units of the Ministry of Health and other relevant ministries. This collaboration between NGO's and with Local Government structures is important for the sustainability of the services and its results.
- AMBS, ABPF, CERADIS and THP all work with multifunctional health centres for youth. However, in the international literature questions are raised about the effectiveness of

such centres and their potential to reach the more vulnerable youth. The scope of the multifunctionality of the centres is important and embassy partners want to work out a more or less common approach for centres with outreach activities that will reach different subgroups of the youth population. Sustainability of such centres is another challenge and in the coming years business models will be elaborated for different youth centres which should ensure their financial and organisational sustainability, and which include a kind of entrepreneurial approach while continued subsidies from local government may be important too. Participation of youth in the elaboration of business models will be important. At the same time opportunities for job creation, entrepreneurship and other income generating activities for young people in which the youth centres can play a role will be examined. Consultations on this are ongoing with the involvement also of SNV, MDF and UNCDF 'YouthStart' programme. Professionalization of such support for entrepreneurship, also within existing activities will be an important aspect.

- During a meeting of embassy partners, most partners mentioned that they still find it difficult to reach the most marginalized youth. While partners collaborate with radio-stations, tv-programmes, magazines, and educational programmes for youth, they also realize that with these measures they are not reaching those youth who do not have televisions, TV's or internet access, who are illiterate and not enrolled in school. So far it is the MAJ/ABPF (youth organisation of ABPF/IPPF) that is most active at community level and bearing fruits in reaching vulnerable young people. Embassy partners should strengthen their collaboration with the umbrella organisations in which youth organisations (OCJ, PJB) are organised and not only at national level but even more so at communal level. Collaboration should be strengthened with NGO's that specifically target marginalised young people. Continuous discussion (sharing experiences) and research might help to improve their approaches.
- Benin has the potential to be a regional leader in terms of ASRHR. It has been observed that in Benin there are several 'low-hanging fruits', which – with a strong, persistent push- the little remaining progress can be picked. Examples of these are youth sexuality, youth family planning and youth friendly services in general, comprehensive sexual education, safe (medical) abortion services, acceptance of 'key populations'. Effective youth participation and responsabilisation will go along with this. While most harmful practices in Benin are taboo subjects which are rarely spoken about, not as much societal resistance (for example from religious leaders) is observed as in surrounding countries. Benin generally is a relatively 'open' society.
- Such a regional influence (innovations, progress) from Benin can be stimulated by the embassy through its executing partners. Both ABMS/PS and ABPF/IPPF have a regional network that can be used to share successful experiences in Benin. The same applies to UNICEF and UNFPA (also partners of the embassy) which both have regional offices

in Dakar. Except for UNICEF, these organisations are member of the Ouagadougou Partnership which is an organisation of 9 francophone West African countries, all with poor SRHR statistics. The West African Health Organisation (WAHO) is another forum to which Benin can make a contribution in the domain of ASRHR which then can be shared with other countries in the region.

- Assumption is that if SRHR for young people is improving, this will positively influence SRHR of the older generation, especially when a system approach is applied to which other actors are contributing with a focus more on adults.

## 13.2 Food Security

**Working towards:** outcome 1 (education), outcome 2 (employment), and outcome 4 (participation in decision-making)

### Who?

Young entrepreneurs, rural youth, unemployed youth, youth working in the (rural) informal sector

### Opportunities in existing programme

Opportunities for better youth integration in the Food Security sector are identified in relation to the following key areas of intervention as defined in the MASP 2014 – 2017:

#### 1. *Market development at communal level* ("Approche communale" / ACMA)

**Opportunities:** The ACMA project exists of three different parts. On the one hand, a team in Porto Novo works on investigating demand in Nigeria in terms of five different products: maize, palm oil, fish, tomatoes and manioc. On the other hand, the project helps to organize the offer of these products in Benin by regrouping producers and helping them to store their products. Lastly, the project aims to bring Nigerian demand and Beninese offer together.

It is observed that many Beninese youth have found the same opportunity in terms of making better use of the Nigerian market. However, they do not know yet where the Nigerian demand lies (or the Beninese offer), which offer-demand exchanges already exist and exactly how they can contribute. These youth would benefit greatly of the knowledge that is gathered by ACMA. The Embassy can play a role here, in directing youth organisations (for example OCJ at regional and communal levels) with ideas in this domain to ACMA for advice, or asking other Embassy partners (such as ABC) to direct youth with an interest in the Nigerian market to ACMA. At the same time, ACMA could make the knowledge it gathers more widely available, thereby targeting especially areas where youth would find their information, such as in universities or online / on social media.

#### 2. *Improved rural transport infrastructure* ("Pistes rurales")

**Opportunities:** Since the development of rural transport infrastructure is reliant on 'high-



intensity manual labour' (MASP) the labour of young people is essential in realizing this project and in its current form the program already relies highly on the labour of youth people. However, positive discrimination of unskilled youth to take up these jobs is often not possible since the offer of labour is already very small. Many people (including youth) are not interested in taking up the heavy manual labour that is involved in building rural roads (just as much as a decreasing number of youth is interested in non-mechanised agricultural activities). However, at the same time there are youth in villages or cities elsewhere who are very much in need to find employment, even if it is just for the short-term as this provides an income for them. Information on the availability of temporary / seasonal jobs in building rural infrastructure can be brought under the attention of young people in villages and cities nearby. This could be done in areas where (low-skilled, unemployed) youth frequently come, such as in the youth community centers of some of the Embassy's partners.

### 3. *Access to land* ("Foncier")

**Opportunities:** This programme is focused on legally securing land of current land-owners. Since it is a well-known problem that already very few youth have access to land, few opportunities exist to help youth directly through this programme. However, when land owners have proof of legal ownership of their land, they can perhaps be more willing to lend pieces of land to other people to work on, including rural youth.

### 4. *Agro-business development*

#### **Opportunities:**

- Together with Agrobusiness Center (ABC; SNV) the Embassy will look at ways in which ABC can better support youth entrepreneurship. It is acknowledged that youth often have innovative ideas, but that they are not equally able to apply for funding or mentorship since they do not have the same means or capacity as adults to do so. Helping these youth directly is difficult for ABC since its objective is to scale up small and medium size enterprises (that are able to sustain itself financially) and young entrepreneurs are often not yet at this stage. The goal of ABC is not to directly help start-ups. However, at the same time, the ABC is able to help youth start-ups in different ways, for example by sharing advice and opportunities online (i.e. on their website or Facebook page). Namely, the ABC also helps youth indirectly, by supporting enterprises which will generate jobs. If the ABC sees that certain jobs may be especially interesting for youth, it can make sure to share this in centers and on media where youth find their information.
- For example the IFAD-funded 'Creating Opportunities for Rural Youth' (CORY) project, focusing on rural young men and women who are involved in agriculture production or activities associated with rural markets, could be approached for potential partnership.
- The potential to support youth entrepreneurship in the fishery sector will be further explored.

5. *Linking research and innovation* (“valorisation des résultats de la recherche”)

**Opportunities:** In this programme some interesting opportunities lie in terms of better youth integration. Namely, this programme is focused on sharing knowledge between research institutions and ‘the field’. For example, when farmers encounter a problem in the field, the National Federation of Farmer Organisations (FUPRO) reports this to an agricultural university, where a professor with much knowledge about the research that has been done in this area, is able to explain the solutions that have already been found to this problem. For farmers it is namely difficult to get access to such information and they often do not know what farmers elsewhere (i.e. in other countries) have already done to solve the same/similar problems. At the same time, making problems in the field known to universities, will help universities to see in which areas new research can add real value.

In this sense, it is especially interesting for university students to also be part of these exchanges. For example, when the FUPRO is invited in the classroom, where it presents the problems encountered in the field and hears about the solutions from the professor, this is an important learning opportunity for agricultural students. Students are not only able to hear what the problems in the field are and what solutions already exist, but can also begin to think themselves in terms of solutions (by doing new research or even by creating enterprises). At the same time, it is acknowledged that despite its experience, it is impossible for a professor to know all information that exists. Opening up the discussion also to students can thus result in interesting exchanges. Students have the opportunity to ask questions and learn, but at the same time they might have read studies that the professor is not even aware of or have innovative ideas themselves. At the same time, FUPRO also reports solutions that are found at village-level to the universities (in terms of reports or video’s) as academics are often not aware of these. Village-level solutions may sometimes be more feasible and cheaper than solutions that are found by researchers. Also in getting access to such information, young students and entrepreneurs have much to gain in terms of acquiring knowledge and finding business opportunities.

6. *Agro-statistics*

**Opportunities:** The Embassy has supported the Food Security and Vulnerability survey 2013 (in partnership with the World Food Programme, the National Institute for Statistics and the Ministry of Agriculture), which has led to interesting outcomes. It thus considers funding this survey again in 2018 (since it is conducted every five years). While this would thus be part of the next MASP, it can already be advised that when this survey is indeed financed again, the Embassy will discuss with the WFP, the NIS and the MoA how youth concerns and youth participation can be best included in this survey. It would, for example, be interesting to know (1) what the greatest needs and aspirations of rural youth are, (2) what makes rural youth migrate to cities, and (3) how rural youth are organized.

## 7. *The Hunger Project*

**Opportunities:** In 2015 THP began to provide leadership training for young people. This followed a specific project on the promotion of leadership of women and their participation in the elections (started in 2013). The women part of the project has led to tangible increases in the 'voice' of women in the management of activities around the epicenters. During a visit to the THP epicentres it became clear that the results of the training of youth have not yet fully materialized as the youth present seemed rather timid and stayed at the back of the room. It proves the importance to work on the empowerment of young people. While it is realized that this is a long-term process, more conversations with THP and the youth (and adults) at the centers – especially about *why* youth participation is important – can help to increase results.

### **Further opportunities:**

- In 2013, the FAO has come to Benin for a mission to hear about opportunities in terms of promotion of youth employment in the agricultural sector. While the Embassy was part of this mission, it could not be present at the debriefing and has not heard from the FAO about this programme since. The FAO will be contacted to hear about the results of this mission and whether the programme has already come off the ground.
- The Food Security section could make more use of cooperation with the OCJ and PJB representatives at community level, for example by setting up meetings with them during field visits to hear about the needs and aspirations of rural youth in their community, or by inviting them at meetings in the field, thereby allowing them to make the OCJ more visible and well-known to others and to give 'voice' to youth in such meetings.
- The Embassy can help in terms of awareness-raising of the importance of youth participation in farmers associations such as the National Federation of Farmer Organisations (FUPRO) and the National Association of Female Farmers (ANAF), as well as during farmers meetings and village and community level.
- The Embassy will look at how it can best promote scholarships and training opportunities on agricultural development in the Netherlands, as well as of the Young Expert Programme (YEP) for young agro food experts in Benin.

## *13.3 Water and Sanitation*

**Working towards:** outcome 1 (education), outcome 2 (employment), outcome 3 (SRHR) and outcome 4 (participation in decision-making)

### **Who?**

Young people in general, more specifically young technicians, young entrepreneurs, students, young girls, and young activists.

## **Opportunities in existing programme**

Opportunities for better youth integration in the Water and Sanitation sector are identified in relation to the following key areas of intervention as defined in the MASP 2014 – 2017:

### *1. Rural water supply*

#### **Opportunities:**

Where previously communities managed rural drinking water supply, the private sector is increasingly involved in managing and providing these services. This change has allowed for new levels of service that were previously not available to rural communities. Among others, these services may include household connections. Private operators therefore need to be able to contract people with new skills, such as plumbing, pump operators, water vendors, and technical engineers. This demand for new skills at municipal level is an opportunity for young people in small towns and rural areas. Youth capacity building may contribute to the development of sustainable basic services in their municipalities.

The emergence of drinking water consumer associations may be another opportunity for young people to engage in constructive dialogue. Being active in community activities is an opportunity to create contacts and networks that might lead to greater involvement in local development, but also in finding an employment in the long run.

### *2. Rural basic sanitation and hygiene*

**Opportunities:** Access to sanitation in rural areas, such as latrines, showers, and hand washing stations, remains extremely low in Benin. This has public health repercussions, but also an impact on youth specific issues as school attendance. Mobilising youth as change agents for behaviour change concerning hygiene has shown to be effective and sustainable. Furthermore, youth can contribute to sanitation design by being involved in choosing which school latrine best suit their needs as children and adolescents. Youth also play an important role in the change in communities. The Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) strategy that is implemented in Benin shows the motivation of young people to contribute to a healthier environment. There is therefore a need to continue and expand young people as primary actors and recipients of hygiene and sanitation programmes.

Moreover, as is the case with rural sanitation, an increased demand for sanitation services will create the need for specialist services. This demand for new services may be an opportunity for the acquisition of new skills and eventually jobs.

### *3. Urban water supply*

**Opportunities:** Urbanisation will continue to increase in the coming years as people move to cities. The demand for drinking water services is even greater in cities where hardly any other reliable drinking water service exists. The proliferation of sales of plastic water bags, commonly known as 'Pure Water', is a symptom of this increasing demand. However, quality of so called 'Pure Water' remains unreliable and consumers look for alternatives. Young

people can be challenged to come up with innovative solutions for these pressing consumer needs. As demand grows, so does the extension of the current urban water supply system managed by SONEB, the national water company. In order to manage an increased demand for young professionals there will be a need for planning and insight to promote young people to acquire technical skills such as engineering, chemistry, and management. Creating awareness and assisting policy makers to mobilise young people to acquire these skills may be necessary.

#### 4. *Urban sanitation*

**Opportunities:** Although in national statistics urban sanitation seems to have a higher coverage compared to rural sanitation, the demand for these services is many times greater than in rural areas. As with urban water supply new services and innovations have a potential to succeed and young people are able to quickly adapt to new opportunities and demands. Individual behavioural change and community ethics concerning keeping public areas clean need to be addressed in order to achieve a sustainable improvement of the sanitary conditions in urban areas. Young people may play an important role as change agents and can be mobilised through schools and trainings. Municipalities need to be aware of the potential of young people and their motivation to positively change their living environment.

#### 5. *Water resources management*

**Opportunities:** Integrated water resources management is relatively new to Benin. Legislation is not fully in place and the institutions that allow for participatory governance of water resources are being created. There is a clear need to implicate young people in these new organisations. Policy makers and youth need to be aware that young people have an added value in influencing water governance. Especially the transversal character of water resources management allows for many different entry points and the participation of all youth. Whether it be on local level concerning the management of a small lake or basin, or on the level of national and trans boundary water resources management, for each level involvement of young people can be beneficial. Local youth groups may be mobilised for this, as well as national youth associations such as the national water and sanitation youth parliament (PNJEA). Moreover, activities such as public awareness campaigns in schools and places where youth meet may allow for greater awareness.

#### 6. *Water and food security*

**Opportunities:** Benin has unexploited agricultural potential. Young people may mobilise this potential through the promotion of new business models. Water wise business models aim to produce “more crop per drop” of water and thus contribute to food security. Current water and agricultural curricula at universities and colleges can be supported to introduce techniques to make optimal use of available water resources. Young people can also be sensitised on the

importance of integrated water resources management to long term food security.

#### 7. *Knowledge of water resources*

**Opportunities:** Knowledge is key to effective integrated water resources management. Collecting high quality data and processing these data is necessary for the creation of this knowledge and demands capacity and resources. Government alone is unlikely to be able to mobilise the resources needed to collect and process this data. Allowing for open source databases allows participation of different actors, including young people. Technologies such as those found in cellular telephones are able to contribute to data collection. Such a technology is currently being used on municipal level using the Akvo FLOW application. Young people can be motivated to contribute to data collection through cellular phones. Analytical skills are mainly concentrated in the universities of Benin. The NICHE programme, funded by the Netherlands, has supported the development and implementation of a water curriculum and the development of the Benin National Water Institute (INE). Universities play an important role in training young people to process and analyse data in order to present information on which decisions concerning integrated water resources can be based. Training young people is therefore a priority.

#### **Further opportunities:**

- Creating opportunities to put their skills to the test during internships. The Young Expert Programme (YEP) for young water experts can be an experience to continue.
- Helping young entrepreneurs in the field of water and sanitation to find financing and mentorship (i.e. through VIA-Water).
- Promoting scholarship and training opportunities on water management in the Netherlands (i.e. the UNESCO Institute for Water Education, linked to the University of Delft)
- Looking more in-depth at how the sanitation needs of young and adolescent girls differ, what this means for the Embassy programmes, and how these needs can best be addressed.
- Since many youth activist and politicians in the water and sanitation sector know about the PPEA II fraud case and are ashamed and frustrated by it, they can be used as important civil society actors to monitor government actions and ensure accountability.
- Proposing youth specific monitoring indicators.

### *13.4 Private Sector Development*

**Working towards:** outcome 2 (employment)

#### **Who?**

Young entrepreneurs

### **Opportunities in existing programme**

The following opportunities exist to better integrate youth in this cluster's planned areas of intervention.

1. *Development of the port of Cotonou*

**Opportunities:** It is important that young people are consulted at all stages of the development of the port. At the moment a master plan for the port is being developed. This masterplan is mostly based on a macroeconomic and environmental assessment. When during the next stage the strategic design is made, also a social assessment will be carried out in which will be looked at how the development of the port is likely to influence youth and how opportunities can be created for youth.

2. *Agro-business Center (ABC)*

**Opportunities:** While supporting start-ups does not fit directly with the objectives of the ABC (which aims to advise small and medium enterprises on how they can scale up), the ABC is able to offer different opportunities to youth. For example, they currently offer courses in business proposal writing which are open to youth. This possibility can be made more attractive for youth by up more spaces and advertising in places where youth would find information. Possibly also the consultation fee can be adjusted (lowered) for youth. The Embassy should continue its discussions with ABC to look at how youth can be better integrated in ABC's activities, without losing sights of the center's objectives. Currently, the ABS has already integrated youth in their annual plan for 2016, and the Embassy should monitor whether the ABC is able to reach the goals that it has set.

3. *E-regulation*

**Opportunities:** *The Association of Youth Entrepreneurs of Benin* is already part of the committee. Through consultation and participation of this association, it must be ensured that the needs and aspirations of youth are included at all stage of the development of the e-Regulation system.

4. *Trade mission to the Netherlands*

**Opportunities:** Between 15 and 20 entrepreneurs will travel to the Netherlands on a trade mission at the beginning of May 2016. At least half of these will be young entrepreneurs below age 35.

### **Further opportunities:**

- Supporting young entrepreneurs through the financial support of incubation centres targeting youth.
- Looking at how the Embassy can support UNCDFs "YouthStart" programme.
- Promoting scholarship and training opportunities on entrepreneurship in the Netherlands.

- Facilitating exchanges between Beninese and Dutch young entrepreneurs.
- Seeking opportunities to host a "Get into the Ring" event in Benin (initiative of the Rotterdam Business School).
- The Embassy can explore opportunities for entrepreneurship curricula development or training in cooperation with the Rotterdam Business School.
- Dutch Embassies in Accra and Lagos can be approached to hear from them about example of good practice in terms of stimulating and supporting youth entrepreneurship.

### *13.5 Good governance*

**Working towards:** outcome 4 (participation in decision-making)

**Who?**

Young politicians, youth in general

**Opportunities:**

It is acknowledged that Good Governance is not a separate cluster at the Embassy. However, at the same time, the notion of good governance has gained priority for the Embassy, especially after the PPEA II fraud case. Several opportunities exist to better integrate youth in the Embassy's efforts to promote good governance, amongst which the following:

- Technically and financially support umbrella youth organisation OCJ to better represent youth concerns at the government level.
- Financially support youth organisations (such as the OCJ and PJB) in their work to educate / raise-awareness amongst youth on governance and democratic values, and that motivate youth to vote, participate in elections and take part in political dialogues.
- Increasing the "voice" (decision-making power) of youth at the local level (THP).
- Question Particip on how they work with youth in their work on democracy promotion, thereby paying special attention to the quality of decision-making and educating youth on informed-decision-making.



## 14. Conclusion

This youth strategy has shown that Beninese youth face many challenges, most notably in terms of education, employment, health and civic engagement. While the Embassy is not able to solve all of these problems all at once, it can however make a notable difference in many of these domains, often without (much) extra financial commitment. The recommendations put forward in this strategy show how the Embassy can help to develop the **capacities** (knowledge and skills) of youth, to increase youth's **access** (to information, services and jobs), and to encourage greater youth-**participation** in decision-making processes, through several tweaks and changes of focus in its existing programmes. In addition, some suggestions have been made for possible new engagements and partnerships.

In essence, the Embassy's recommended new approach towards working with youth is based on a better understanding of (1) why youth are important, (2) what the main challenges of youth are, and (3) in what other ways, besides financial support, the Embassy is able to contribute in creating more opportunities for youth. With this knowledge in mind the Embassy will already be able to make a significant difference to the youth situation in Benin, for example through **raising awareness** amongst government and development partners of youth concerns, the benefits of investing in youth, and the importance of youth participation; through **lobbying** for greater public and private investments in youth and more youth participation in decision-making; through **examining** – together with partner organisations – how those programmes supported by the Embassy affect youth and how more opportunities for youth can be created within these programmes; through helping in **coordinating** existing initiatives for youth (i.e. by creating a sector group for youth or by financing a mapping study of existing youth organisations); and through **engaging** with youth (i.e. by inviting youth organisations to relevant meetings, by encouraging and motivating them to continue their work, or by challenging them to improve). In addition, the Embassy can look more actively at how it can create greater work and internship opportunities for youth at the Embassy itself, as well as in its partner programmes.

None of these actions will directly affect the Embassy's sector budgets for development cooperation or private sector development. However, the expected results of greater youth consideration and participation in terms of achieving set targets of existing programmes are compelling. Given their large population group, their supportive characteristics (dynamism, energy, innovation and adaptability), and their potential to become "change-agents", it is essential that more attention is given to the specific needs and aspirations of young people, and that they are able to participate in the decision-making processes of programmes that concern them. This way youth will not only be able to take ownership of its own socio-economic well-being, but also contribute to improving that of their communities, as well as of Benin as a whole.

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## **ANNEX I: List of organisations consulted**

### **Government**

- Ministère de la famille, des affaires sociales, de la solidarité nationale, des handicapés, et des personnes de troisième âge (MFASSNHPTA)
- Ministère de la jeunesse, des sports et loisirs (MJSL)
- Ministère du Travail

### **Technical and Financial Partners**

- ABMS
- ABPF
- APESSA
- CTB
- Embassy of Belgium
- Embassy of the United States of America
- Embassy of Turkey
- European Union
- GIZ
- OXFAM
- Plan International Benin
- The Hunger Project (THP)
- UNCDF
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- UNV

### **Youth organisations**

- ABMS Youth Group
- Action Jeunesse
- Association Nationale des Etudiants pour la Lutte contre le Sida (ANELS)
- Eau et Assainissement pour les Générations Futures (2EGF-ONG)
- Conseil Consultatif National des Enfants
- Initiative Citoyenne pour la Protection de l'Environnement (iCipe-ONG)
- Jeune Chambre Internationale (JCI)
- Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour la Planification Familiale (JA/PF)
- Mouvement d'Action des Jeunes (MAJ)
- ONG Environment and Water Insurance for New Generation Family (EWING Family)
- ONG Jeunes et Développement (ONG J&D)
- ONG Ultime Geste
- Organe Consultatif de Jeunesse (OCJ)
- Parlement National des Jeunes pour l'Eau et Assainissement (PNJEA)
- Parlement des Jeunes du Benin (PJB)
- UNFPA Youth Panel
- US Ambassador's Youth Advisory Council
- Young Beninese Leaders Association (YBLA)

### **Other**

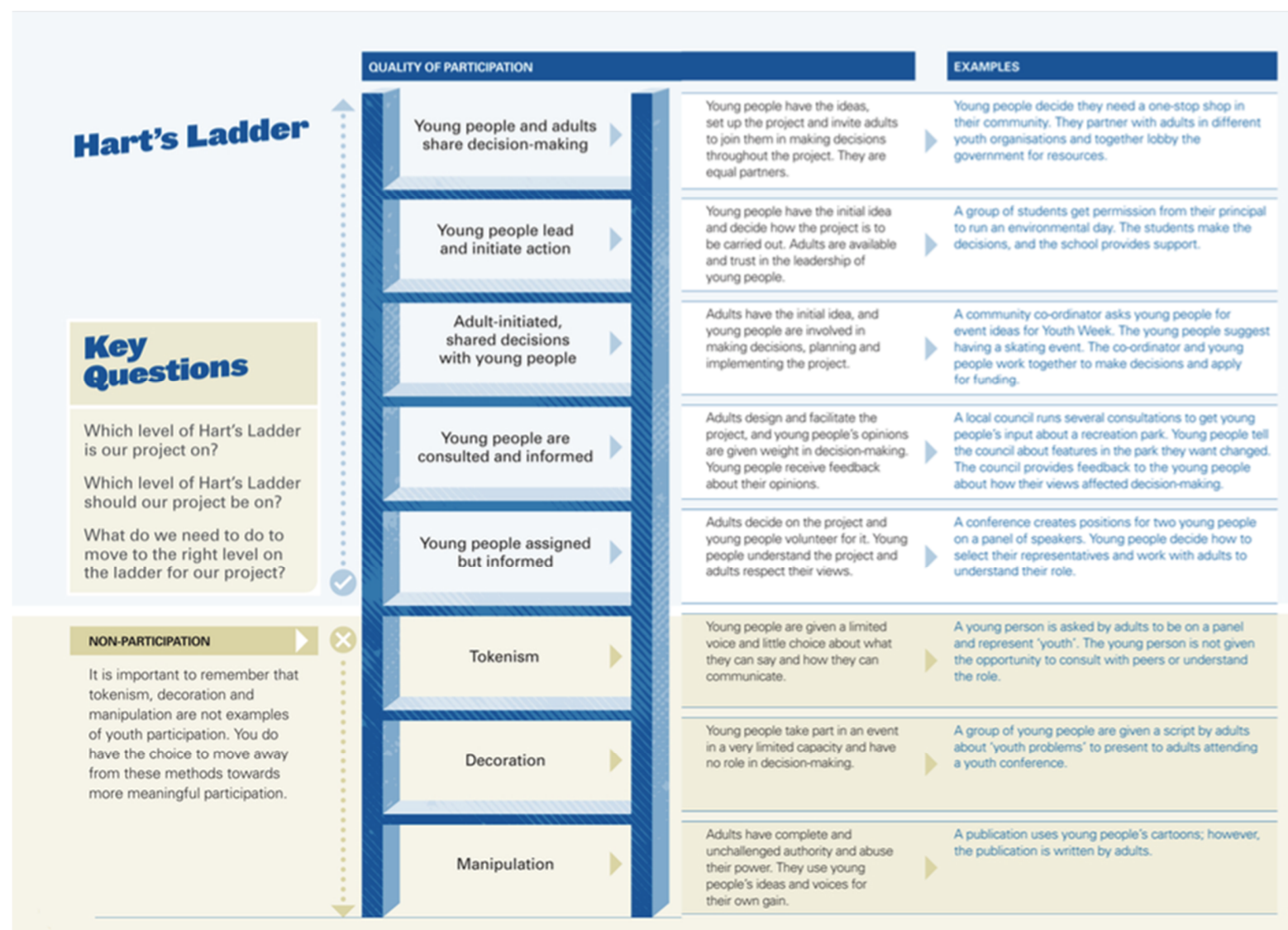
- MINBUZA DDE
- MINBUZA DMM/FS
- Young Expert Programme (YEP)
- Building Bridges
- Nationale Jeugdraad (NJR)
- Youth Ambassador for SRHR

## ANNEX II: Contact list of key informants

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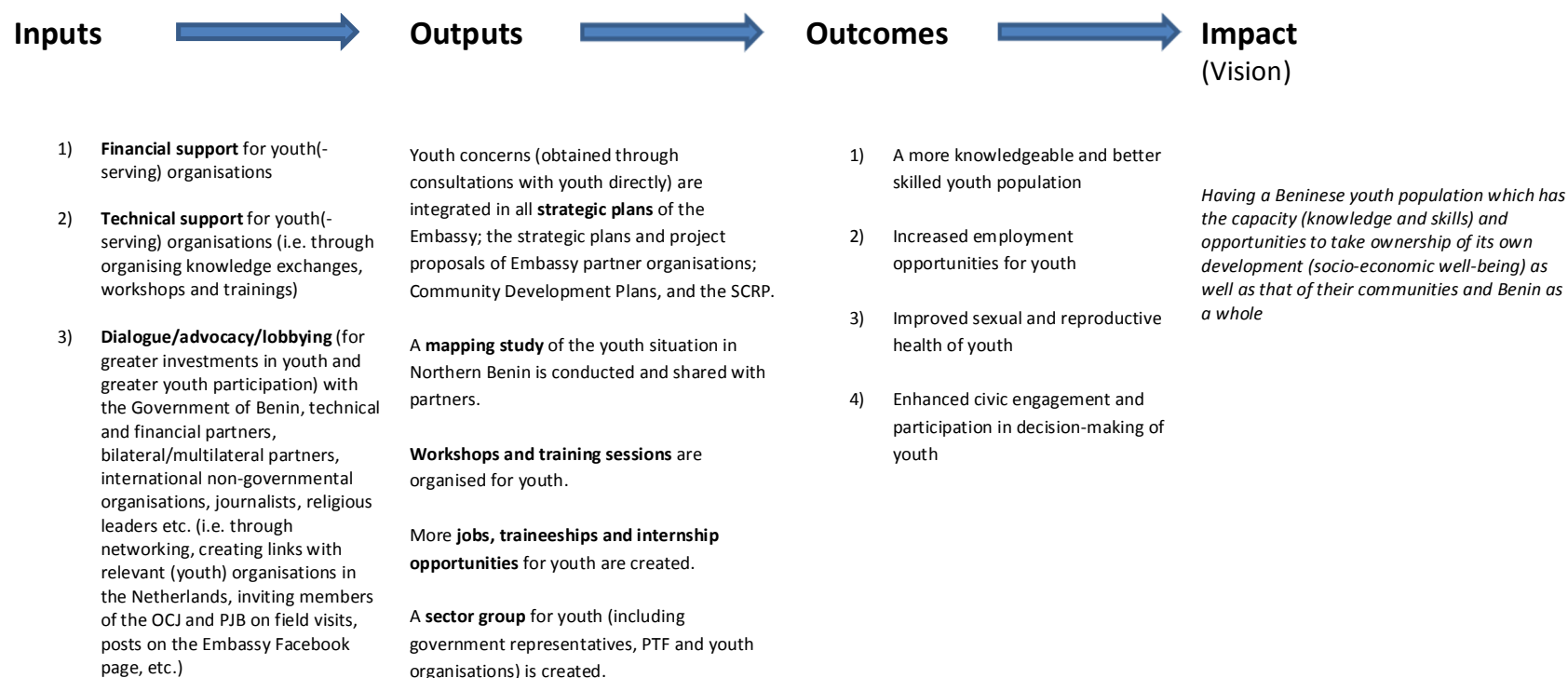
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## ANNEX III: Hart's ladder of youth participation



## ANNEX IV: Theory of Change

*How greater consideration and participation of youth in programmes supported by the Embassy can strengthen these programmes efficacy and efficiency in helping Benin to realise its development goals (as defined in the MASP/SCR/PDC/ODD)*



## ANNEX V: Youth FAQ and talking-points for (policy) dialogue

### Why?

#### Who are youth?

- **Definition:** a transition between childhood and adulthood during which several important physical and psychological changes take place, the most important being:
  1. Learning as adolescents and young adults
  2. Beginning to work
  3. Taking risks that impact health
  4. Forming families
  5. Exercising active citizenship
- **Characteristics:** energetic, enthusiastic, dynamic, innovative, entrepreneurial, risk-taking, eager to change social norms and practices, questioning authority, curious, seeking different perspectives, making mistakes (and learning from them), aspiring, motivated, impressionable, malleable
- **Age bracket:** different countries and organisations use different age brackets to indicate the youth group. The most commonly used age brackets are the following:

Different age brackets for youth	
United Nations (UNGA, UNESCO, ILO)	15 – 24
UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA	10 – 19 → adolescents
	10 – 24 → young people
	15 – 24 → youth
UNHabitat	15 – 32
UNDP, USAID	15 – 24 (but flexible to extend age range according to national country's definitions)
World Bank	12 – 24
African Union, Benin	15 – 35
European Union	13 – 30 / 15 – 29

#### Why are youth important?

*The importance of youth can be explained from four different perspectives:*

- **Human rights perspective**  
*Despite their large numbers, in most countries worldwide young men and women do not receive their fair share of resources and opportunities. Youth are often poorer than adults, youth un(der)employment rates are higher than those of adults, youth more often lack access to information and finance, are more often illiterate and overall are not given an equal 'voice' in the household, community or political domain.*



- **Demographic dividend**

At some point in the development process many countries experience a gradual reduction of mortality rates and fertility rates. As fewer babies are born and fewer people die at a young age, this means that for a short period of time these countries will have an exceptionally large youth population, also known as a 'youth bulge'. Having a youth bulge presents an enormous opportunity in terms of constituting a large and productive workforce while at the same time having to support fewer dependents (children and retirees) with federal funding.

- **Demographic disaster**

When youth are not enrolled in school, university or other training programs, while at the same time not being able to find adequate employment, this can pose a great threat to (inter)national stability. Youth may become involved in criminal activities such as drug or weapon trade or people trafficking; show risky-behaviour such as alcohol/cigarettes/drugs abuse or unsafe sex; start political protests or riots; be recruited by extremist/rebel groups; be misused for political purposes; be exploited in dangerous underpaid jobs (i.e. in mines and factories, or as prostitutes); or migrate illegally.

- **Strategic perspective**

Youth have historically been proven to be 'change-agents'. Their energy and curiosity often allow them to question existing norms and behaviours, and to find new solutions to old problems. Moreover, today's youth is healthier, better educated and more politically aware than their parents were at their age. Many youth are technologically savvy and well connected with their peers around the world. Their creativity, skills and dynamism are instrumental in ensuring the sustainable development of countries and communities.

### **Aren't 'youth' a too large and heterogeneous group to work with?**

Indeed, 'youth' is a rather broad classification and within this group large differences exist based on gender, education and socio-economic background. While greater attention to the needs and aspirations of youth in general is desired, specific policies and programmes should narrow-down (operationalize) their target group by focusing on young girls, rural youth, students, young entrepreneurs, young people living on the streets etc.

### **Our activities/programmes already benefit youth (indirectly). Why do youth need specific attention?**

While it is often assumed that youth benefit from programmes the same way adults do - just by fact that they are not directly excluded from them - this is often not the case. Research indicates that many development programmes discriminate against youth indirectly, as they ignore the specific challenges youth face. Since youth often have fewer skills, knowledge and networks than adults do, it is often more difficult for them to find or process information; to get access to financial services; or to be recruited for jobs or training programmes. In-depth assessments are needed to investigate how specific policies and programmes affect youth, and how youth will be able to benefit optimally.

### **We rather work with/invest in adults, since youth lack the skills and knowledge / are unmotivated / too risky of a group to work with.**

Many negative stereotypes of youth exist. Policy makers, parents and other authorities often see young people as lazy, unmotivated and inexperienced. On the one hand, these stereotypes are often false as many young people are eager to improve the lives of themselves and their communities, and are capable of working hard and coming up with

innovative ideas and projects. On the other hand, working with youth should be seen as a sustainable investment, as developing their skills and experience will allow them to transfer these to their children, thereby ensuring long-term development results.

**We already have so many transversal themes that deserve attention (gender, human rights, good governance, sustainability, etc.). Adding another will only decrease their value.**

While 'transversal theme' or 'mainstreaming' in general often has a negative connotation, in reality their effectiveness largely depends on how these terms are used. Most importantly, the main value of acknowledging a theme or target group as 'transversal' lies in the fact that these are recognized as important. The evolving consciousness within the organisation – as well as how this is transferred to the outside world – is already a first step towards positive change. As such, having few or many transversal themes does not necessarily have to impact their value.

However, mainstreaming certain concepts throughout the development work also requires active commitment. This does not necessarily have to be financial commitment, but has more to do with attitude and small actions or changes in behaviour. All members within an organisation should be convinced of the importance of the concepts and look actively at how they can best realise their implementation. Policy documents that further investigate and demonstrate how the concepts can best be integrated throughout the organisation's work, or sector specialists that are tasked with their implementation, can help to ensure such commitment.

**We do not have sufficient budget to start new programmes for youth.**

As mentioned in the previous point, mainstreaming youth does not necessarily have to cost money. Meaningful changes can be realised through, for example:

- **Inviting** members of youth organisations to relevant meetings
- **Thinking critically** about how certain policies and programmes are likely to affect youth and how youth can be better targeted
- **Discussing** with government and other development partners how the needs, rights and aspirations of young people can be better integrated in policies and programmes
- **Sharing information** (such as studies, examples of good-practice, summaries of international conferences) with youth organisations, as well as with colleagues within your organisation
- **Speaking** with youth! Asking youth about their opinions, needs, challenges and ideas may well give you new ideas and thereby inspire your work!

What?

**What are the main priorities of youth (worldwide)?**

Most studies indicated by youth organisations worldwide indicate that youth face problems in four main areas:

1. **Education**
2. **Employment**
3. **Health**
4. **Civic engagement**

## **What are the main priorities of youth (in Benin)?**

*The youth situation analysis of Benin shows that the priorities of Beninese youth are pretty much in line with those as voiced by youth globally. Interestingly, by far the most important priority as voiced by youth themselves is **employment**. More specifically, youth voiced concern about*

*(1) the lack of jobs available,*

*(2) the poor educational preparation for the labour market in terms of skills development and facilitation of the education-work transition, and*

*(3) a lack of available funds and initiatives to support youth entrepreneurship*

*Moreover, Beninese youth experience significant challenges in terms of ensuring their **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights** and in terms of **political participation**.*

## **How?**

### **Ok, we are convinced. Now what can we do to support youth?**

*This depends per organisation. Each organisation should think critically about what they can offer youth (i.e. in terms of technical support, financial support, lobbying).*

- 1. Ensuring youth participation** at all stages of the development process (consultation, implementation, evaluation)
- 2. Assessing current and future policies and programs** on youth-integration

**→ Girls not Brides youth audit tool**

**→ Hart's ladder of youth participation**

## ANNEX VI: Youth Audit Tool



### Youth audit tool for strengthening youth engagement in your work

#### What is the youth audit tool?

A youth audit tool will help you to reflect upon how you currently engage young people in the work of your organisation. It will help to identify what you do well and where you could potentially improve. It is a great way to involve staff in reflecting upon the potential contribution young people can make to their work, and can also be used by agencies thinking about mainstreaming youth as a cross-cutting issue. NB *The questions addressed in the tool can be tailored to the needs of your organisation. See Further Reading, below for more information on different formats for youth audit tools.*

#### How do you use it and who should be involved?

It can be done **at any stage of the programme cycle**, but it is a good idea to do this before embarking on a new project or programme. A wide selection of staff members, as well as a diverse range of young men and women involved in your projects and programmes, should be involved in this process. Staff members not directly involved in engaging with youth should also be involved in order to gauge the entire spectrum of organisational attitudes towards supporting meaningful youth engagement. Local partner organisations can also take part.

Circulate the youth audit tool before meeting collectively as a group to discuss the questions in the tool. It would be good to choose an impartial stakeholder to facilitate the group discussion, if possible, and to ensure equal contributions from all stakeholders. Allow at least 2-3 hours to complete the discussion or schedule it over two shorter sessions.

#### What do I do next?

Once complete, the youth audit tool helps to highlight where you are engaging young people well, and where there might be room for improvement. Then prioritise **the top three areas** that you would like to improve.

Which areas are we not addressing well?	What will we do to improve?	Who will lead?	By when?

## Situation analysis

	Yes, sufficient	Yes, but not sufficient	No	Comments
<b>1. Are a diverse group of young women and men consulted at programme planning/situational analysis stages?</b>				
<b>2. What tools do you use to consult with young people? Are they youth-friendly?</b>				
<b>3. Are young people supported to play an active role in the situation analysis process – e.g. by gathering data and information</b>				
<b>4. When assessing whether to work closely with another civil society organisation in partnership, do you consider their commitment to youth participation and engagement?</b>				

## Programme planning

	Yes, sufficient	Yes, but not sufficient	No	Comments
<b>1. Does young people's feedback directly influence the design of programmes that will involve them?</b>				
<b>2. Does the monitoring and evaluation framework for the programme plan have indicators that relate to young people?</b>				
<b>3. Are young people invited to strategic planning workshops/meetings where objectives and programme strategies are discussed?</b>				
<b>4. Have we identified in our project plans what roles young people will take in each activity? E.g. will young people be given a chance to lead certain activities? Will we work with young people as partners to implement this activity?</b>				

## Implementation

	Yes, sufficient	Yes, but not sufficient	No	Comments
<b>1. Does your organisation recruit young people as staff members?</b>				
<b>2. Are youth represented on programme decision-making structures such as project management committees?</b>				
<b>3. Are leadership training and capacity development support for young people offered as part of your programme?</b>				
<b>4. Are programme activities held at times that are suitable for young people – in particular young women?</b>				
<b>5. Does your organisation use a range of targeted mobilisation strategies to ensure a diverse range of young people – including young women - are participating in programme implementation?</b>				

## Monitoring and evaluation

	Yes, sufficient	Yes, but not sufficient	No	Comments
<b>1. Do you identify and review the risks of involving young people in your work on a regular basis?</b>				
<b>2. Do your staff understand the benefits and added value of involving youth in monitoring and evaluation processes?</b>				
<b>3. Do you assess or evaluate the quality of youth participation in your projects on a regular basis?</b>				
<b>4. If young people are actively involved in your M&amp;E processes – e.g. as researchers or data collectors, do they receive training and support?</b>				
<b>5. Are young people involved in the analysis of M&amp;E findings?</b>				

## Further Reading

<http://www.ygproject.org/case-study/youth-audit>

## **ANNEX VII: Recommendations for (members of) youth organisations**

### **1. Work on your professional pitch**

Make sure you are able to explain in 3 minutes what your organisation does and why this is important.

### **2. FAQ**

Also be prepared to briefly and accurately answer other questions many people might have about your organisation, such as:

- Since when does your organisation exist?
- How many members does your organisation have?
- How are members of your organisation elected?
- Is membership compensated?
- What activities have you organised during the last year?
- What are your organisation's plans for the future?
- What age bracket for youth is your organisation using (and why)?
- How representative is your organisation of the entire Beninese youth population?
- What is your strategy for reaching the most marginalised youth?
- How does your organisation mobilise its funding?

### **3. Specialise**

Do not want to do too many things at the same time! Focus and specialise in a certain area of intervention or on certain activities.

### **4. Be targeted in who you ask for help**

Make sure to do a thorough research before asking PTF for technical or financial support. In your letter, explain well why you have approached exactly this organisation and why/how you believe they can help you.

### **5. Think broader than just financial help**

Think creatively about how PTF will be able to support your organisation. This does not always have to be financially. For example, an organisation's technical help or expertise or networks could also help your organisation. Ask whether you can come by for a brainstorming session to discuss current topics in the field, or come prepared with questions about the sector. As long as your requests/questions are targeted, many people working at development organisations are happy to share their knowledge and expertise with young people, and to hear in return what innovative and refreshing ideas graduates and young professionals might have about a specific topic. Some organisations can also help you by using their network to link you to other partners that they know that might be interest in helping you further, or will allow you to come on field visits or to events, thereby extending your own professional network and providing a platform to make your organisation known to a wider public.

### **6. Don't be afraid to ask (critical) questions to government and PTF**

Many members of youth organisations do not dare to ask any questions or contradict people when they have a different opinion, when they arrive at a Ministry or the office of a PTF to ask for support. While this is understandable, many PTF appreciate it if youth would be more critical, even of their organisations work, and will even take these youth more seriously if they show that they have a thorough understanding about certain development topics, and are not afraid to voice their opinion.

## **7. Use the OCJ**

While many youth organisations are sceptical of what they believe the OCJ will be able to do for them, registering your organisation with the OCJ will have considerable benefits. The OCJ is the only umbrella youth organisation that is recognised by the government and which will be able to lobby your organisations concerns to ministers. The OCJ also possesses a network of representatives throughout the country, which will be able to spread your organisations efforts further afield. Moreover, when an increasing number of youth organisations recognises the OCJ as useful and important, this will also increase its status towards the government and it is more likely that their ideas will be taken seriously.

## **8. Gender equality**

It is observed that during visits to PTF or participation at events, youth organisations are often represented by merely male youth. Sending a delegation of both genders will not only be more interesting for development partners, it will also be beneficial to your own organisation, as many development discussions might benefit from both male and female opinions.