

STUDENT'S HANDOUT

3S-ADO Multimedia centre in Benin



Background Information

Currently over 40 million people around the world suffer from HIV/AIDS. Africa is certainly the most affected continent, with close to three quarters of all cases. The high mortality rate of AIDS victims is creating a serious and increasing number of orphans. In Benin, teens are an especially vulnerable group, often exposed to various problems such as a lack of educational resources, social discrimination, child trafficking, genital mutilation, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, early and unwanted pregnancies, and black-market abortions that can lead to sterility or even death. Fortunately, initiatives have been taken to educate youth and to enhance the general awareness of these problems.



Instructions

Read the text below, the interview that follows, and take a peek at the statistics presented. Afterwards, answer the questions to verify your comprehension of the subject.

3S-ADO Multimedia Centre in Benin

In Benin, a small french-speaking country in West Africa, a project is working to enhance awareness of sexual health and reproduction amongst youth, and is using every possible communication channel in order to do so. It's called the *Health and Social Services of Adolescents in Benin (3S-ADO)* project. The idea is based on a non-medical approach where youth work for youth.

In the city of Cotonou, the 3S-ADO project established a multimedia centre consisting of radio and television broadcasting stations and internet connections. The centre is organized by teenagers to educate other teenagers. Through the project, training was organized for them in various fields such as radio and television programming, journalism, sound technology, framing, editing, internet, computer aided production, community programming, and drama.

The 3S-ADO Multimedia Centre aspires to improve teenagers' quality of life. These aspirations become real by promoting the adoption of positive behaviours related to health and reproduction as well as a change of attitude amongst teenagers, parents, society, and religious and political leaders towards youth. The centre also seeks to increase the participation of youth in the development process, for example in the establishment of long-term solutions to problems related to health and reproduction. Additionally, the project condones enhanced communication between parents and children, which can be accomplished through an attitude change in society and in religious and political leaders towards teenagers. From 2002 to 2003, nearly 300 teenagers benefited from training in these various subjects.

By the end of 2004, 50 youth within various sectors of training had already found employment thanks to this program. Moreover, about ten youth specialized in health and reproduction education founded a visual production association named Inov Production. Others who received drama training from the project have been touring France and Belgium to enhance awareness of HIV/AIDS. Some chose to continue their journalism training in Senegal and Canada. Lastly, about ten youth took part in an exchange program between Canada, Senegal, and Benin in journalism and human rights, organized by Canada World Youth (CWY) and partly financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Statistics on Benin

Largest city economically: **Cotonou**

Population (2004): **8 177 000 inhabitants**

Life expectancy at birth: **54 years**

Percentage of women aged 15 to 24 who know that condoms can prevent HIV (2000-2004): **45%**

Illiteracy rate amongst women (2000-2004): **23%**

Estimated number of children under the age of 17 made orphans by AIDS in 2003: **34 000**

The In-Terre Actif Network (RITA) met with a program organizer and a participant. Here is part of the interview that took place.

Tony Simard, primary technical adviser of UNFPA at the 3S-ADO Multimedia Centre

RITA: Who is Tony Simard?

Tony Simard: A sociologist by training and a project manager until 2004, when I was mandated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to provide counsel to the 3S-ADO project. After 20 years of effective presence in the field, and involvement in project development in Africa, I became interested in this project. The project is a result of progressive policies within the youth ministry of the Beninese government that promote a better quality of life for youth.

RITA: Could you talk to us about the creation of the 3S-ADO Multimedia Centre in Benin and its objectives?

TS: The Beninese government, together with a few international organisations, created a national communication strategy aiming to enhance the participation of youth in the development of their country. This action is responsible for the creation and the purpose of the 3S-ADO Multimedia Centre. Inspired by recommendations of international youth conferences, the Multimedia Centre is a communication channel that helps young Beninenses to achieve by themselves the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These objectives aim to reduce extreme poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS around the world by one half before 2015. Youth can contribute in their own way to the realisation of these objectives.

RITA: What are your feelings now, three years after the creation of the centre and one year after your departure?

TS: What I remember, three years after its creation, is above all the satisfaction of seeing youth reach their potential, thanks to the centre. I also take pride in the numerous personal efforts that I have made for the project's realisation. At first, I was perceived as a fool even by youth themselves who were saying that it's difficult to train 10 youth, let alone 300. But in the end, for them, I was a hero.

Testimony of Nina Agossou, a young journalist at the 3S-ADO Centre

RITA: How did you discover 3S-ADO?

Nina Agossou: I heard about the opening of the Benin Youth Multimedia Centre (3S-ADO) through a radio broadcast. After applying to the centre I was chosen to take part in the training.

RITA: What does the centre represent for you?

Nina: This centre represents for me my first real step into the media world and my first volunteer experience. It is a window to other opportunities. 3S-ADO saw the birth of my first writings as a journalist, and last year I found myself involved in a grand adventure with exchange projects of an organisation called Canada World Youth (CWY). Like we often say in Africa, one must know how to draw the maximum benefit from a small opportunity.

RITA: Do you think the centre's objectives were achieved?

Nina: Saying no would be outrageous because this centre trained hundreds of youth in subjects such as journalism, sound recording, media technology, framing, drama, Internet, television, and radio broadcasting. Numerous youth have found employment thanks to this centre. At this time, however, the centre does not have sufficient resources and even its existence is at risk if concrete measures are not taken by the Beninese government.

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

**Reading Comprehension Evaluation
3S-ADO Multimedia Centre in Benin**

1- What are the risks for teenagers in Benin?

2- Give three objectives of the 3S-ADO Centre.

3- Which events inspired the birth of the 3S-ADO Centre?

4- Find in the text two of the centre's achievements and a difficulty that was encountered.

Achievements:

Encountered difficulty:

5- What is the purpose of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) that was mentioned in the text?

6- What does Nina warn the Beninese government about?

7- What impact did the centre have on Nina's life?

8- With the help of the three texts above, explain how the centre's achievements could help to reduce poverty in Benin.

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
In-Terre-Actif Network of the Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières



**PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
THROUGH THE**



Canadian
International
Development
Agency