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Hermine Bokossa, one of the UN Youth Volunteers, speaks with young students in Sémé City, Cotonou, about sexual and reproductive health.

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UN Volunteers go the extra mile to counter gender-based violence in Benin

Within the framework of its activities in Benin, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is operationalizing a series of innovative strategies to fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and improve reproductive health. Adolescents and youth are at the heart of these strategies, driven by eight UN Volunteers who support UNFPA in various projects.

In Benin, UNFPA has established a network of Youth Champions committed to fighting gender-based violence. They serve with a project that targets gender-based violence prevention, protection and empowerment of girls and women in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is funded by Canada.

Six of these Youth Champions are UN Volunteers who serve in Cotonou, Abomey-Calavi, Parakou and Natitingou. They educate young girls and boys on the minimum standards of prevention and how to cope with GBV emergencies. They lead young people through various activities on different platforms, such as Ma Vie, Mon Choix, Mapathon, Fati, ado-violence-Covid-19, and on social media, thus getting youth involved in the fight

against violent practices within their communities.

The champions recently coordinated an advocacy campaign ahead of the Generation Equality Forum to convey young people's messages against GBV. They met the UN Resident Coordinator, the Minister of Social Affairs and Microfinance in charge of gender issues, and the National Assembly. Since the beginning of their sensitization and training activities, they have reached nearly 5,000 youth.

“ One of our biggest challenges is going the extra mile to ensure that young people have access to information about their sexual and reproductive health. And UN Volunteers are answering this challenge. --Barbara Laurenceau, UNFPA Resident Representative in Benin

UN Volunteers are also involved in UNFPA's maternal health interventions by actively strengthening the health system to save lives and train midwives.

As a national UN Volunteer Midwife in Parakou, Nafissate Hounkpatin initiated a network of midwife reporters named [ODD3, pas sans les sage-femmes](#) on Facebook. She empowered 30 midwives in Benin with digital communications skills to help them create and share prevention messages on reproductive health and complications around pregnancy and childbirth. In one year, the network recorded nearly 1,500 people.

Midwives not only educate Beninese women and girls, but also benefit from exchanges and knowledge sharing among them. "Creating this network is a concrete way for me to contribute to the 2030 Agenda. The changing wind that is currently blowing is powered by digital technology. We must adapt now to reach our audience," says Nafissate.

UNFPA Benin relies on technological innovations to improve the delivery of health services. The lack of access to essential medical supplies for maternal and newborn health has dramatic consequences for women and babies.

As a national UN Volunteer Innovation Specialist, Djawad Ramanou reinforces the UNFPA's Innovation and Maternal Health team. He proposes innovative solutions to challenges, such as the availability of emergency supplies in some health centres, one of the causes of maternal mortality. Djawad coordinates a project that uses drones to deliver health products, including blood, to remote locations.

“ My proudest achievement is to have completed the proof of concept of drone usage. Thanks to technology, people from remote areas will have uninterrupted access to health services and we will be able to save the lives of more mothers and babies. --Djawad Ramanou, national UN Volunteer Innovation Specialist

Among other innovations, Djawad supervises the implementation of a mobile application created by a Beninese startup to facilitate collaboration between midwives and help them manage emergency cases in real-time.

“ There is no doubt that UN Volunteers have a strong impact on our activities and more generally on the dynamism of our Office. They bring innovation, youthfulness to the organization and facilitate collaboration between young and old. We deeply appreciate that. --Barbara Laurenceau, UNFPA Resident Representative

Over the past three years, more than 260 UN Volunteers have supported the UNFPA mandate in West and Central Africa. UN Volunteers develop the capacity of health service providers and their trainers, contributing to UNFPA's goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health.



• 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence • maternal health •

Youth

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being SDG 5: Gender equality SDG 10: Reduced inequalities SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals