

YOUTH AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP



LOCAL MONITORING YOUTH
PARTICIPATION CITIZENSHIP GOVERNANCE
CULTURAL STRATEGY INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT
SOCIAL INCLUSION DIVERSITY

1. Context

With a population of 1,071,000, and located in the city of Abidjan, Yopougon is a lively cultural centre where youth, artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and non-profit organisations, all play an essential role. Deeply affected by the social consequences of the political crisis, Yopougon's cohesion was threatened by partisan conflict in spite of citizens' efforts to establish intercultural solidarity.

Faced with the challenge of living together in accordance with the Ivorian New Society Project, the municipality has supported dynamism and creativity for youth, including their new artistic and social practices. There is a need to develop frameworks for municipal policy and intervention to meet the aspirations of youth. This has led the municipality to create a Municipal Youth House, in addition to carrying out cultural actions related to the environment, governance, and artistic and cultural practices.

Given the initiative shown by youth in organising neighbourhood community life, and supported by a proposal by the Department of Sociocultural Affairs (DASC), the town hall adopted the *Youth and Cultural Citizens* programme, to establish guidelines for cultural initiatives. It also helped to shape cultural initiatives for youth, in addition to recognising their role as major cultural stakeholders. Finally, it has led to the formation of partnerships with neighbourhood associations that strengthen cultural life, which municipal activity alone was not sufficient to achieve.

2. Yopougon and Culture

In previous administrations, culture was not a part of municipal policy. Along with a proposal by the DASC, the City has adopted the previously non-existent guidance tools and means necessary for municipal action. These have been adapted to local social, cultural, and economic needs. Aware of its cultural richness in music, intangible heritage, cultural tourism, and education, the town hall developed a *Strategic Plan to promote cultural potential* in 2012. With one of the highest enrolment rates in Abidjan, and some of the best Ivorian secondary schools including the lycée des jeunes filles (All-girls Secondary School) and the lycée d'excellence (Secondary School for Excellence), the city has vital partners for municipal cultural action.

Due to the cultural dynamism of youth associations, in 2013 the city developed a cultural support programme: *Youth and Cultural Citizenship*. Between 2014 and 2015, it subsequently adopted an Infrastructure Management and Cultural Development Support Plan to progressively implement an infrastructure network dedicated to literacy, information, music, the performing arts, and cultural practices. In 2015, the city implemented a *support strategy for developing public literacy*, and an *education strategy for musical training*. These guideline documents have been developed along with cultural stakeholders and civil society organisations, in which technical and financial support is supplied by United Nations agencies, the European Commission, or the International Organization of the Francophonie. To demonstrate its own commitment, the municipality also contributes financially.

ALONG WITH A PROPOSAL BY THE DASC, THE CITY HAS ADOPTED THE PREVIOUSLY NON-EXISTENT GUIDANCE TOOLS AND MEANS NECESSARY FOR MUNICIPAL ACTION. THESE HAVE BEEN ADAPTED TO LOCAL SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC NEEDS.

The programme shares the same vision of Agenda 21 for culture. Through a richness and diversity of cultural expressions, the goal is to establish the conditions for peace in a population traumatised by division and political violence. It seeks to build a relationship of shared responsibility with youth, capable of encouraging collaboration among many of society's stakeholders through their local presence. It also strives to promote cultural diversity and capacity building for youth, as well as support the professionalisation of young cultural entrepreneurs, with a focus on developing artist networks, thereby enabling them to live off of their talents. The goal is to involve the maximum number of inhabitants by taking income into consideration, and subsequently avoiding the exclusion of more disadvantaged people. The initiative favours cultural expressions by youth by considering communities such as troubled groups, those who are illiterate, migrants, and women.

3. Goals and Project Implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific objectives

After emerging from the post-election crisis in which youth were used by those in power for political gains, it is vital to rebuild the relationship with youth by relying on their dynamism and creativity to create the conditions for peaceful coexistence. As a result, the town hall has decided to aid in structuring youth organisations and support their initiatives, along with the following goals:



- Promoting a participative approach for youth in local governance;
- Structuring youth organisations to improve involvement in local development actions, particularly with respect to culture;
- Supporting initiatives for culture, as well as neighbourhood clean-up and beautification.

1.2. Initial Stages

The programme is comprised of four areas:

1. Governance and Citizenship:

A Communal Youth Council (CCJY) with technical and financial support was set up to organise youth associations. It created Youth Districts in the main neighbourhoods of Yopougon to work closely with residents. There are 73 district offices with 25 members that have been established, tasked with organising youth from each area and carrying out sociocultural activities. In addition, they help mobilise the population in support of the city's major events, such as large festivals. Many training activities are organised for the neighbourhood's young community.

2. Participation in the Clean-up and Beautification of Neighbourhoods:

Through its Youth Districts, the CCJY actively contributes to cleaning up and beautifying the neighbourhoods, such as through outdoor paintings and murals. The programme was carried out with the help of the National Urban Sanitation Agency (ANASUR) and the National Youth Fund.

3. Entertainment:

Yopougon organised the zouglo festival, to promote and celebrate youth talents, contribute to quality of life, and consolidate political life. The CCJY participates through neighbourhood music groups like the "Groupes Wôyô". The town hall also organises a talent-spotting contest called "The Next Generation", focusing upon youth from different neighbourhoods.

4. Social Cohesion:

Since 2014, a social cohesion reinforcement project has supported cultural and sports activities organised by the municipal radio station. Additionally, the "We Are One" caravan visits different neighbourhoods and organises public broadcasts with Radio Yopougon. These programmes involve



singing and comedy, and lends people the freedom to express themselves on issues of social cohesion, health, leisure activities, and cultural practices. The municipality regularly meets with leaders from the city-centre and various communities on questions surrounding social cohesion and the protection of cultural diversity.

The main difficulties encountered included convincing youth organisations of the need to organise and build a relationship of mutual trust among youth, cultural actors, and local elected representatives. Another issue was the obstacles preventing qualified human resources from developing actions and facilities for the most needy.

A COMMUNAL YOUTH COUNCIL WITH TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT WAS SET UP TO ORGANISE YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct Impacts

Impact on the Local Government

- Structures all youth programmes in the Yopougon area.
- Identification and implementation of key cultural projects for youth.
- Integration of sociocultural activities into the municipal budget.

Impact on Culture and on the Local Cultural Actors of the City/Territory

- Takes into account the aspirations and challenges of youth and cultural stakeholders
- Involvement of youth associations in local initiatives
- Improved data on the youth voluntary sector
- Carrying out sociocultural activities
- A registry of cultural actors in Yopougon

Impacts on the Territory and Population

- Strengthens social cohesion
- Structures all youth programmes

- Capacity-building for youth association leaders
- Creates a peaceful environment. However, the youth unemployment rate remains high and requires ongoing dialogue to ensure social cohesion.

1.2. Crosscutting Impact

The project has enabled the involvement of youth in local development initiatives, which highlights:

- the need for dialogue between local authorities and youth
- the need for synergy and shared actions between associations
- the need to involve other development sectors in cultural actions, including environmental remediation, or organising governance to include neighbourhood representatives

IT IS VITAL TO REBUILD THE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUTH BY RELYING ON THEIR DYNAMISM AND CREATIVITY TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.

1.3. Evaluation

The assessment of the programme remains to be developed, but is currently being carried out during meetings of municipal service managers, town council meetings, or during Communal Youth Council meetings. The indicators used are the number of actions carried out, budget, the number of people affected, and the degree of satisfaction.

1.4. Continuity

To ensure continuity of the programme the town hall will maintain its technical support, which includes capacity-building, as well as creating a platform for collaboration between the DASC and the CCJY, and financial support through an annual subsidy to the CCJY. A partnership with the DASC is planned for the creation of the multimedia library - a place within the youth centre dedicated to citizens and their knowledge .

5. Further Information

The area of Yopougon was a candidate for the second International Award "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" (January - May of 2016). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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This article was written by Donikpo Koné, Director of Sociocultural Affairs, Yopougon, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Contact : donikpo (at) yahoo.fr