



## Going all-out for human rights and sexual health. Aiming for results in Burkina Faso

### The Context

One of the poorest of the world's poor countries, Burkina Faso also has one of the world's highest rates of natural population increase. Burkinabe women have, on average, six children during their child-bearing years. Families have more children than they can easily afford and consequences include stunting and malnutrition and the tendency of many family heads to require that, instead of going to school, children work and contribute to the family economy.

Burkina Faso is held back in part by the low status given to its women, youth and children by ethnic tradition, local custom and widespread social attitudes and practices. More than one-third of school-age boys and almost one-half of school-age girls are not in school. More than 80 percent of adult women are illiterate and, though the country's laws provide them with basic human rights, most of them are not aware of their rights and have no access to mechanisms for redress if their rights are violated.

A 2003 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that many women would like to use modern family planning methods but do not because men make family planning decisions. Almost half of all women have children before their eighteenth birthdays. Early marriage, forced marriage and sexual violence are common. So are unwanted pregnancies and clandestine abortions, which account for 28 percent of all deaths in hospitals among young women (15 to 24). More than 76 percent of women over the age of 15 have been excised, excision being the country's most common form of female genital mutilation (FGM). Countrywide, the rate of HIV prevalence is 1.8 percent and on the gradual decline, but rates vary from 1.2 percent to 3.8 percent across the country's 13 regions and the rate among young women (15 to 24) is almost twice the rate among young men.

Children of low status within their extended families are often required to begin working in their families' homes or fields at age six. Used to long hours of hard work, they participate in the labour migration that is so common in West Africa and this makes them highly vulnerable to trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. An estimated five percent of all Burkinabe children from 6 to 17 years old are labour migrants living away from their parents and some 160,000 are believed to be

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After this forum theatre presentation, the performers will engage the audience in discussion and debate about child labor and child trafficking.

victims of child trafficking. Most migrating or trafficked girls go to Burkinabe cities where they do domestic work and are often sexually exploited. Most migrating or trafficked boys, many less than 10 years old, go to Côte d'Ivoire where they work in agriculture and mines.

### German HIV Practice Collection

This series of publications describes programmes supported by German Development Cooperation that promote 'promising or good practice,' meeting eight criteria, as assessed by an editorial board of HIV experts from German development organizations and two international peer reviewers. There are short (four-page) and full versions of each publication, with links to related tools and reading. Find out more at [www.german-practice-collection.org](http://www.german-practice-collection.org) or contact the Managing Editor at [ghpc@giz.de](mailto:ghpc@giz.de).

Peer-reviewed

## The Programme on Sexual Health and Human Rights (PROSAD)

Officially launched in January 2004, the Programme on Sexual Health and Human Rights (PROSAD) builds on the work begun by a German-Burkinabe family planning programme launched in 1995. It was chosen for write-up in the German HIV Practice Collection because, over the years, it has become a uniquely sustained, comprehensive and results-driven effort to protect and empower women, youth and children. It helps raise their own and public awareness of their human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, and it provides them with a range of services and mechanisms that allow them to take advantage of those rights. PROSAD focuses on two of the country's thirteen regions, Est and Sud-Ouest. It is scheduled to last until the end of 2015 and has three components:

**Component One** focuses on youth and their needs for information and services in the areas of family planning, sexual and reproductive health, and prevention, care and treatment for HIV infection.

**Component Two** focuses on women and girls and their needs for information about their basic rights and for mechanisms they can turn to when their rights are violated. It pays particular attention to stopping female genital mutilation (FGM) and to enrolling and retaining girls in school.

**Component Three** focuses on children and their needs for protection from child trafficking and the worst forms of child labour.



Grade five and six students look at an illustration while their teacher explains how excision can do serious harm.

## Methods

**Strategic information:** PROSAD is committed to “managing for results.” It strives to provide all the timely and accurate information needed for effective planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Its outputs include monthly, quarterly and annual statistical reports and it also pays close attention to needs for qualitative information, collected through interviews, focus groups discussions and community meetings. This information is enriched by its strong commitment to action at the local level, where a range of people contribute their own knowledge and experience of community traditions, customs, attitudes and practices.

**Capacity development:** PROSAD works with eight ministries (for health, welfare, education, women's rights, labour, etc.), the National Committee against Excision and the National Council against AIDS to build the capacity of their regional, provincial and local branches and to forge partnerships with and build the capacity of NGOs, village councils and others. Results include teams of trained professionals and volunteers in health and social services plus provincial and village committees that share responsibility for raising people's awareness and intervening when, for example, a woman's rights are violated or a child is trafficked.

**Behaviour change communications:** PROSAD places heavy emphasis on developing and supporting the use of a range of highly interactive approaches to behaviour change communications (BCC). Some (e.g., peer education, lay and professional counselling) will be familiar to most readers. Two (forum theatre presentations, animations using the GRAAP method) were developed in Burkina Faso and have been used by many other programmes but adapted to PROSAD's purposes. Two (school courses on FGM, *Approche Famille*) have been developed with the support of PROSAD and other German partners. The four less familiar BCC approaches are described in the following sections.

### Forum theatre presentations

Forum theatre was pioneered by a professional theatre company, Atelier Théâtre Burkinabè, and the Fédération Nationale Théâtre Forum, an association consisting largely of local groups of amateur actors. PROSAD supports them as they produce plays designed to address the issues covered by all three of its components. Sometimes there are opportunities for audience participation in the plays and, always, there are opportunities

for discussion and debate immediately afterwards. The plays are often performed in schools, with school children playing some of the roles and with issue-oriented games and discussions afterwards. In Sud-Ouest, PROSAD supports annual cultural festivals that provide additional opportunities for forum theatre presentations and other events. School children are among the many enthusiastic organizers and participants.

### Animations using the GRAAP method

For decades, the Burkina-based Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui pour l'Autopromotion Paysanne (GRAAP) has been developing and refining the "GRAAP method" of animations to support community self-development. GRAAP and the Centres d'Etudes Economiques et Sociales d'Afrique Occidentale (CESAO) collaborate on providing training to local animators. PROSAD has collaborated with both to develop material and provide training for animations that engage people in thinking about child trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. The method makes use of cartoons encased in plastic that adhere to a "flannel," a special cloth that can be pinned to a wall or hung over a board. An animator asks questions and, as the audience answers, the animator pins cartoons illustrating the answers to the flannel until the whole story is told of the causes, consequences and solutions. The idea is to take participants through three steps: to see, to reflect and to act. These animations are now conducted in a wide range of venues, from schools to gold mining camps, and help to promote a code of conduct for employers developed with PROSAD's support.

### School courses against FGM

PROSAD's point of departure for addressing FGM has been a school-based approach launched by an earlier German-supported programme in 2000. Developed in collaboration with the ministries of primary and secondary education, the approach uses two sets of age-appropriate course material. In primary schools, for example, teachers ask children questions about FGM and write the answers in columns on the black-board, being careful not to let their own opinions be known. When the children have run out of answers, the teachers ask them to divide into two groups according to whether they are or against FGM. The two groups formulate their arguments for or against and then engage in debate. After the debate, the teachers provide the students with accurate information about FGM and then ask them to divide into two groups again so everyone can see how many have been persuaded to change their minds and those who have not changed their minds can explain why.

### Approche Famille

A Burkinabe family is the primary vehicle for socializing its members and it is their first and last refuge in times of trouble. PROSAD has worked with the ministries responsible for women and social action to develop a BCC model that uses the family unit as the setting for education and dialogue aimed at promoting women's rights and putting an end to FGM and violence against women. PROSAD is currently supporting collaboration between the two ministries and two community-based organizations to test and refine this model. This involves training community members as animators capable of introducing one of three topics (women's rights, violence against women and FGM) at a particular family session, playing a 15-minute tape on that topic and then animating discussion. The aim is to help family members of both genders and all ages identify where there is conflict in the family now or potential for conflict in the future and to find ways of calming or avoiding the conflict. PROSAD also supports referral systems and mechanisms for resolving problems that cannot be resolved by families themselves.



A cartoon posted during an animation shows a PROSAD-supported village committee meeting to consider what to do about a reported case of child trafficking.





An Approche Famille session with a family in Batie.

## The results so far

The main lesson this programme conveys is that, even in difficult circumstances, a sustained and comprehensive rights-based approach to promoting human rights and sexual and reproductive health can yield impressive results. PROSAD was officially launched in 2004 but its predecessor programmes reach back to 1995 in the Sud-Ouest region and these are just a few indicators of its achievements in that one region:

- From 1999 to 2003, the percentage of couples using modern family planning methods rose from 2.6 to 5.3 percent in all the countries' rural areas but, in Sud-Ouest, rose from 3.9 percent to 7.7 percent (then to 12.6 percent in 2007). From 1999 to 2007, the rate of HIV prevalence among women (15 to 49) dropped from 6.0 percent to 2.1 percent in Sud-Ouest, far surpassing drops in any of the country's other regions.
- From the 2002/03 to the 2007/08 school year, school enrolment rose by 64 percent countrywide but by 79 percent in Sud-Ouest. As a percentage of boy's enrolment, girls enrolment rose from 75 percent to 88 percent countrywide but from 73 percent to 92 percent in Sud-Ouest.
- A 2005 study found that there were already sharp year-over-year declines in FGM in the Sud-Ouest. Fifty-two percent of girls born in 1991 had been excised but fewer than 10 percent of girls born in 2003 or later had been circumcised and only 2.2 percent of girls born in 2005 were being excised that year.

## Peer Review

The editorial board of the German HIV Practice Collection and two international reviewers have found that the Programme on Sexual Health and Human Rights (PROSAD) meets the eight criteria for 'good practice' in the following ways. On **effectiveness**, it scores high based on the OECD/DAC's primary measure of effectiveness: results achieved. On **transferability**, its methods and lessons could easily be adapted to other regions and countries but achieving commitment to similarly comprehensive and sustained action would be a challenge. On a **participatory and empowering approach**, it gives high priority to local knowledge and needs and interaction with local stakeholders. On **gender awareness**, it recognizes and addresses the needs to raise the awareness and change that attitudes and behaviour of people of both genders and all ages. The **quality of monitoring and evaluation** in this project is impressive and some of its outputs (annual statistical reports) are used by other programmes in Burkina Faso. On **innovation**, its greatest innovation is to be as comprehensive and sustained as it is. On **comparative cost-effectiveness**, while the lack of data on which to base comparisons is chronic problem in development cooperation, PROSAD's costs appear to be reasonable. On **sustainability**, beyond 2015 when PROSAD is scheduled to end, the sustainability of its activities will depend on the efforts it is continuing to make to build the capacity of its many partners in government and civil society. Meanwhile, it is making important contributions to the public dialogue needed to bring about lasting socio-cultural change in Burkina Faso.

## Contacts and credits

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