

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Comprehensive sexuality education reimagined



**PROJET
JEUNE
LEADER**



Message from our Founder and Executive Director

BY MAIA (FREUDENBERGER) RAMAROSANDRATANA

In January 2020, one of our long-time donors from the UK visited us in Madagascar. After many years of support, it was the first time he experienced one of our Projet Jeune Leader's courses in person. Sitting amongst 40 or so middle school students, he witnessed our educator's fun, energetic teaching and students' candid enthusiasm for their PJL course.

Afterwards, he told me,

"I wish my kids had Projet Jeune Leader in their schools... and that my kids could grow up and be PJL Educators, too."

We were heartened by his remark. And, as 2020 wore on and the world found itself grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that he was on to something that others were just beginning to realize:

We all need a new education model for our children. One that prepares them for real-life, global challenges.

The COVID-19 crisis is not the first time that aggregate health and financial shocks have reverberated throughout Madagascar. As a youth-led, values-driven civil society organization, we have been able to step in when and where the government cannot, and in the process provide adolescents with essential sexual and reproductive health information and life skills.

This past year, its challenges aside, was incredibly special. We tested a new, cheaper, and equity-driven version of our model with great success. We documented incredible levels of support among parents and teachers for our work in their schools. And we grew into our third program region – gaining increasing momentum to scale for transformational impact in the coming years.

In this annual report we hope to convey just how much Projet Jeune Leader has learned and evolved during the past year (even in the face of a global pandemic). As always, we are so grateful for your support in helping us achieve our vision of delivering high-quality, youth-led, comprehensive sexuality education across Madagascar.



The future depends on young people's access to high-quality health services and education.

At the intersection of both, **comprehensive sexuality education** is one of the most important forms of education a young person can receive to:

- equip themselves with an understanding of their sexual and reproductive health and rights,
- strengthen the attitudes and skills they need for healthy relationships, promote their engagement in society, and
- help them achieve their potential, now and in the future.

WHAT WE DO

Projet Jeune Leader recruits, trains, equips, manages, and pays young adults (ages 18-25) as specialized Educators to deliver a gender-transformative comprehensive sexuality education program in public middle schools.

We partner with Madagascar's Ministry of Education at all levels to integrate these PJJ Educators into existing school systems and structures.

Most importantly, our Educators work across individual, intrapersonal, and community levels to improve the systems in which young adolescents live and learn.





2019-2020 BY THE NUMBERS*

20

partner schools

7,527

students received weekly comprehensive
sexuality education courses

1,468

students participated in extracurricular clubs

209

parents were trained in how to effectively communicate
with their adolescent children about sexual health

1,381

one-on-one counseling cases were requested by students

15,816

adolescents gained enhanced access to sexual and
reproductive health information and resources

**The school year ran from November 2019 through February 2020 (cut short in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic).*

"We fully appreciate your love and contributions to the education sector, especially for the Malagasy youth that are the future of this country.

Indeed, one of the most important aspects of education involves exposing youth to different paths they can take... especially for those young men and women who are most vulnerable. They are still children under our care, and it is our responsibility to show them the way, advise them, give them the tools with which they can face the present and prepare for the future.

The national Ministry of Education is completely ready and enthused to work hand-in-hand with you all!"

- NATIONAL MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Speech to Projet Jeune Leader, December 2020



Meaningful engagement matters, especially in comprehensive sexuality education.



Comprehensive sexuality education is an inherently complex, sensitive, and morally-imbued intervention. Top-down approaches to sexuality education have incited resistance and backlash across time and place for this very reason.

At Projet Jeune Leader, our approach to building awareness, acceptance, and support for sexuality education is radically different.

Working from the grassroots – from the school-level, up – we engage in continuous dialogue and relationship-building with all stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, community leaders, and school officials.

We use innovative accountability mechanisms to enhance our transparency, responsiveness, and legitimacy as a youth-led organization delivering sexuality education in public schools, such as:



**PAPER-BASED
CONSTITUENT VOICE
MAGAZINES**



**STUDENT-LED
RATING AND
VOTING SYSTEMS**



**PARTNER
SYMPOSIA**



Constituent Voice Magazines

Based on principles of dynamic accountability and constituent feedback, **these magazines contain curated pictures, stories, and testimonies to give a voice to students, parents, and school directors.** Not only do the magazines help us reach stakeholders with clear, accessible, and locally relevant information on Projet Jeune Leader, they also enable us to collect, synthesize, and respond to feedback from tens of thousands rural constituents.

Whether it was from teachers, parents, or students, the most common suggestion we received was to teach PJL courses to more grades. So during the lockdown period in Madagascar, we developed a new 27-module, scripted curriculum for grade 7 ('5eme') students to be taught alongside our grade 6 ('6eme') and grade 8 ('4eme') curricula across all partner schools.

In their feedback, parents and students also wished that more students could participate in PJL afterschool activities. In response, we overhauled our Educators' extracurricular programming ('périscolaire') to offer activities that are available to more students and allow for differing interests. The new extracurricular program protocol also encourages PJL Educators to partner with other teachers (facilitating their integration into the school personnel), and gives them more flexibility to take on classes when other teachers do not show up (helping boost students' motivation and connectedness to school).



We received 1,980 suggestions, comments, and questions from across 20 partner schools during the first four months of the 2019-2020 school year.



Thousands of our middle school students across three regions of Madagascar have sent in feedback with their emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, behaviors, and accomplishments – providing incredible insight into Projet Jeune Leader's influence.

EMPOWERING KNOWLEDGE SELF-ESTEEM AMBITIONS

ENHANCED AGENCY

"I've seen a difference in myself since having PJJ and I wish that one day I can be a PJJ Educator, too."

"I really feel prepared for my future thanks to the PJJ Educator's lessons. I hope that they continue because since I've been with those PJJ Educators, I've started to believe in myself and started to have better relationships."

"I have benefited from PJJ courses because I have learned about puberty. I learned what to expect and I was not afraid when I got my period because I knew beforehand."

CHANGED RELATIONS

HARMONY
TRUST
ADVICE

"The PJJ Educator solves your problems, and even encourages me to continue my education."

"When I have a problem I prefer to talk to the PJJ Educators because they are mature and they don't judge, even if it is about something embarrassing."

"PJJ has taught us students and our parents well, so our household is much more pleasant."

MOTIVATION CREATIVITY INCLUSION

TRANSFORMED SCHOOLS

"It's awesome to attend PJJ courses and they make you motivated."

"Ever since [the PJJ Educator] arrived it has been really fun here at school because we can do new activities and hobbies with him."

"School feels much more comfortable since the PJJ Educator arrived."



Student-Led Rating Systems

At regular intervals, **middle school students provide us with feedback on their experiences with PJL by "voting" with beans.** Through these results, we have been able to assess different dimensions of our accountability, such as students' trust in their PJL educator, students' opinions on the quality of PJL courses, and if students feel PJL is relevant to their lived experiences.



Students' ratings helped us strengthen one of the most critical components of our program: our school-based curriculum.

In 2018, they revealed disparities in students' understanding of PJL courses between schools – ranging from 0% to 35% of students reporting poor comprehension. **From this, we decided to introduce scripted lesson plans.**

In the past, PJL Educators taught with an outline-based curriculum; however, they report that these new scripted lessons help them focus on their energy, tone, and learner-centered teaching. Our revamped lessons further ensure that educators are always providing students with clear, non-biased, and evidence-based information.

Of thousands of students who submitted votes during the 2019-2020 school year,

85% said that what they learned in their PJL course that day would help them in their lives.

96% said they would trust their PJL Educator to help them if they had a problem.

During the 2019-2020 school year, we saw students' reported comprehension improve across all schools.

On average, only **1%** of students reported that they found their PJL lesson that day unclear; **99%** said they understood what had been taught by their PJL Educator.



Partner Symposium

Implementing comprehensive sexuality education in a decentralized context like Madagascar requires partnership-building at multiple levels, especially local. In fact, building consensus and gaining trust with local school directors is particularly important in a context where educational decision-making is decentralized down to the school level. This is the basis of our annual partner symposium: **an in-person gathering to share, learn, and collaborate with all directors from across our partner schools.**

During the 2020 symposium, we strategized new ways to create support for PJL in local communities. PJL staff and directors collectively decided that:

- School Directors are best placed to respond to potential backlash against PJL in their schools and communities,
- Projet Jeune Leader can provide more tools and information to strengthen Directors' advocacy efforts and help them prepare for common misconceptions that may arise, and
- School Directors are able and willing to take on more responsibility to ensure PJL Educators are fully integrated into their school systems and supported in their work with students.





“As a school director, I feel it is important to teach students about sexual and reproductive health at school, because it tremendously helps them with their behavior. As a Christian, I feel even more strongly that teaching sexual and reproductive health in school is a really good thing. I would like to point out that the things taught to kids are neither dirty nor inappropriate. The curriculum discusses only things that will help them get a better life; things meant to help them throughout their youth, things that will help them become well-rounded individuals.”



The impacts of our collaboration with Projet Jeune Leader are tangible. For instance, this year, none of the students got pregnant, when we used to have 8 or 6 – at least 4 – pregnancies per year... Also, the kids act more mature in everyday school life because they now know what they are supposed to do. Kids are no longer teasing each other or being violent or bullying others, or breaking equipment. They have learned to live together in harmony, they are like little adults in their behavior and it is safe to say they are well on their way to becoming well-rounded individuals.”

- MR. TIDSON, School Director and Pastor, Mahatsinjony Middle School

We have seen that after partnering with Projet Jeune Leader, communities come to support and demand sexuality education in their schools.

Our partner school directors are proving to be among the most important thought leaders, driving this shift in mental models.



Adding Up the Evidence Towards a More Cost-Effective, More Equitable Model

2019-2020 was a breakthrough school year for Projet Jeune Leader: We successfully adapted our model to boost cost-effectiveness and affordability without sacrificing quality and impact.

During the 2018-2019 school year we collected our first evidence that the Youth Space, although an undeniable draw for students, is not a critical component of our comprehensive sexuality education model. It is the daily presence of Educators' and our comprehensive, participatory curriculum that have the most influence on promoting positive and healthy knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions among our young adolescent target population.

We know this because students in grades that had weekly comprehensive sexuality education courses with PJJ's Educators showed improved outcomes after one full school year. However, students in a different grade at these same PJJ partner schools who had access to the Youth Space benefits but who did NOT have weekly courses did not improve. In fact, they showed the same lack in changes as students at comparison schools without PJJ.

Furthermore, during that same time we had a new, rural partner school where construction of the Youth Space was delayed the entire year. PJJ Educators instead held their courses and extracurricular activities in existing school infrastructure. Using accountability feedback mechanisms, we documented the same, high levels of support and demand for our program from students, parents, and teachers at this school as other partner schools with Youth Spaces.

With this data, we had reason to test a new, leaner version of our model, meant for adolescents in rural communities where few other services exist and where the need is highest.

Adolescents in rural areas of Madagascar experience some of the worst health and educational outcomes in the world. Only 1 in 5 will complete middle school. Nearly half are married as children. And one in three girls will become a mother before she is 18.

IBOAKA INNOVATION HUB

In 2017, after hearing about us from another school in her district, the School Director at Iboaka middle school sent us a three page letter requesting that Projet Jeune Leader be implemented at her school. She was distraught by the high numbers of teenage pregnancies and the even higher incidence of school dropouts. Unfortunately, for nearly 3 years we had trouble securing funding to work at this small, rural school. Iboaka middle school has 370 students and is in a rural community more than 20 kilometers on bad roads from the city of Fianarantsoa; it was much more cost-effective to work in larger, urban schools.

However, in late 2019 we were at a turning point. We were determined to focus on affordability so that we could respond to the need and demand for Projet Jeune Leader, especially in rural areas. We had just enough flexible funding to run an “innovation hub” – testing a no-Youth Space variant of our model.

With their Director still as enthusiastic as ever, we relocated a male, 3rd year Educator named Ranjah to the community in time to start the 2019 school year and secured hours in the school's timetable for him to teach weekly comprehensive sexuality education to every student in the school.

“Ranjah was on his way to the market during the week when he crossed paths with a woman who exclaimed that she was so happy to finally run into him! She said she had been meaning to find him and thank him because since her son had started PJJL their relationship at home had improved. Before, he would hide if something was wrong, or lash out when his mother tried to talk to him. Now, she said, he has opened up and will talk to her if he has problems. She thanked Ranjah saying he had led to this change. She then said her cow had just given birth, and to show her appreciation she was sending her son to give Ranjah one liter of milk.”

- SUPERVISING STAFF REPORT, FEBRUARY 2020



Without the Youth Space construction and equipment, we had cut activity-based costs by well over 85%.

The school and community were incredibly supportive of Projet Jeune Leader - even without the upfront, tangible benefit of a Youth Space for their children.

When Ranjah presented PJJ and the program's objectives at the first parent-teacher meeting of the year he was met with enthusiastic questions and thanks. The School District's Superintendent, who was also in attendance, gave public praise to PJJ and thanked us for choosing to work in Iboaka. Throughout the next five months we collected more evidence of support through our program's feedback mechanisms.

We also found that for rural students at Iboaka, Ranjah served as much more than just a sexuality education educator, but also as a coach, mentor, and counselor - especially in informal settings in this small rural community.

Ranjah didn't need a classroom to counsel students; he provided them with advice and mentoring while fetching water, or walking together to and from school. This is indeed the first time we have truly explored the power of our Educators' informal interactions with students outside of the classroom. We are now starting to understand how Educators in these hardest-to-reach communities fill a critical gap in adolescent students' lives.



"We've already seen a big change in the students here since Projet Jeune Leader started. If we were to quantify it, I would say it's a 85% change. The kids have become much more comfortable and feel 'at-home' here at school. The most important thing is there has been an effect on students' grades; their grades have really improved. We feel that the PJJ Educator's presence has opened their minds."

- SCHOOL DIRECTOR, Iboaka Middle School during an interview for PJJ's constituent voice magazines

"The school is improved, the students are under control, and the workload is lightened when there a PJJ Educator to help with organization. They are easy to talk to and get along well with us teachers."

- TEACHER, Iboaka middle school, comment submitted through PJJ's constituent voice magazines



Replicable, scalable, high-quality sexuality education programs are few and far between.

At Projet Jeune Leader, we have gotten closer to building a model that can scale for lasting, transformational impact in Madagascar.

Our vision is ambitious, but we believe that we can bring the highest-quality comprehensive sexuality education to an entire country of youth who need it most, enabling an entire generation to achieve their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you to our partners and supporters for being there with us on this journey.



2020 centered around an exciting **expansion** for our small, but mighty team. As a winner of Grand Challenge Canada's Stars in Global Health program, we began working in the Vakinankaratra region of Madagascar (our third region) – reaching an additional 3,000 students.

In December 2020 we secured an unprecedented **partnership agreement with the national Ministry of Education**, clearing a path to deliver our program in any public school across the island.



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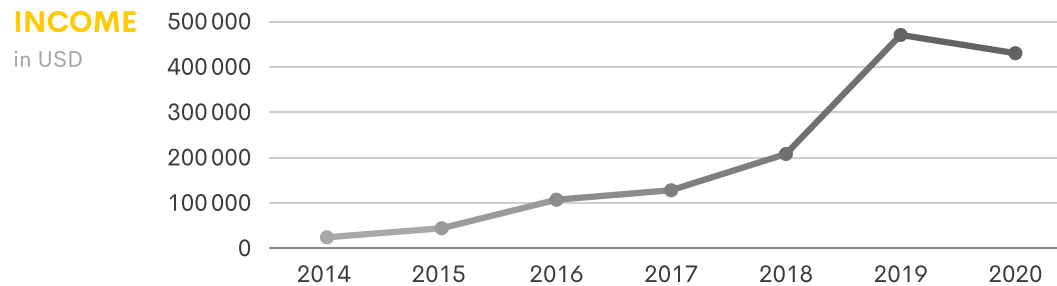
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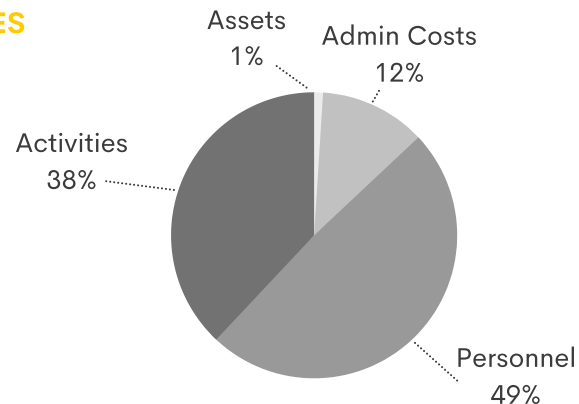
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FANAINGA

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“You are leading the charge in the Vakinankaratra, Amoron'i Mania, and Haute Matsiatra regions – and that is already important. Our hope is that you expand throughout Madagascar and we welcome your initiative to do so because it is really needed.

We are happy to see youth and women take responsibility in [the field of] education. We hope that each of you will have a long life, that Projet Jeune Leader will have strength and vigor and be implemented long into the future, that it will continue to grow and develop, and that cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Projet Jeune Leader will also last.”

- NATIONAL MINISTER OF EDUCATION
Speech at partnership convention, December 2020

