

# The Académie de l'Artisanat

A collaboration between IDEO.org, USAID, and ABMS Benin



## All about the Académie

The Académie de l'Artisanat is a new take on vocational learning that builds agency by inspiring girls to learn new skills, and leverages that agency to help them make smart reproductive health decisions for their future. At its core, it is a weekly workshop just for girls held at PSI centers in Benin.

Girls, especially those who are not in school, learn a new skill such as beading, and spend time mastering that skill while receiving information about sex, reproductive health and contraception, and getting linked to free services. A young program leader cultivates relationships with Académie participants and encourages them to visit a nurse to learn more about how they can protect themselves against unwanted pregnancy.



# 1

## Workshops: the heart of the Académie

Workshops are the core of the Académie. Each of them have three components

**SHE MAKES.** Every Académie starts with making. For the first two hours, girls learn how to make a craft, such as beading. Guided by an instructor, they also learn tools for selling it, such as how to calculate the cost of materials, or how to set a sale price. Whatever she makes during the workshop is hers to keep, sell, or give away.

**SHE LEARNS.** While girls work on their projects, a health educator delivers a health talk, making the connection between her new skills and the importance of protecting her body and her future. Health educators use scripts and talking points from the Académie to help them make these connections.

**SHE'S IN CONTROL.** She's recognized for her talents. At the close of each Académie, girls receive recognition for all the great progress they are making. As she progresses through levels of skill-building, she gains more and more recognition. At the close of each Académie, a nurse is on hand to offer counseling and free services to girls who want them.



# 2

## Teen Events

In addition to the core of the Académie, each location where this program rolls out has wrap-around activities to engage and inspire the local community to support and celebrate teens. One of these is teen events:

**TEEN EVENTS** are invite-only, and are held at the Centre Jeune Amour et Vie. Members of the Académie get to choose who they want to invite. By giving girls control over invitations, these events elevate girls' social status and offer her the opportunity to flip the power structure—she's in control!

During the event, boys and girls participate in activities such as singing, gombée dancing, model, theater and spoken word. Health educators also deliver health talks to attendees, offering to connect them to services during or after the event.

# 3

## Mom Talks

In addition to the core of the Académie, each location where this program rolls out has wrap-around activities to engage and inspire the local community to support and celebrate teens. This one engages her mom:

**MOM TALKS** engage mothers to learn about contraception, and build buy-in and support for the program. During mom talks, mothers are invited to the Centre Amour et Vie to tour the facilities, look at products their daughters have made, and have a conversation about reproductive health and contraception. Moms learn about the same methods their daughters are learning about, and are given the space to ask questions and discuss the role contraception can play in their lives.



# 4

## Seasonal Craft Faires

Seasonal craft fairs are opportunities for girls to participate in organizing an event, and selling their goods together with their peers. They help raise awareness about the Académie de l'Artisanat within the community, and they also spread the word about teen health and contraception.

Craft fairs are organized by the girls themselves. By giving girls the opportunity to facilitate and run a major community event, we build her confidence and help her see just how much she can contribute to her community.



# 5

# Insights from Benin

Insights are the core fieldwork learnings that present opportunities for design. Insights are not necessarily the most frequent observations we saw in the field, they don't last forever, and they are not necessarily representative of all of the boys, girls and families that we spoke with. Rather, they are patterns of observations that present us, as designers, with interesting tensions that enable us to see our design challenge from a different perspective. Here are the 6 insights from our work in Benin.

INSIGHT #1

## No one wants to talk about sex, but everyone wants a solution to teen pregnancy.

There is little information for everyone. Parents have never used modern contraception and can't speak to it. Traditional healers are providing methods that haven't proven to be effective, and healthcare professionals are withholding information. Adults will only talk to teens about sex after a girl falls pregnant.



*"If a girl becomes pregnant it's because she didn't master her cycle."*

*"Parents should tell their daughters to just stay away from boys."*



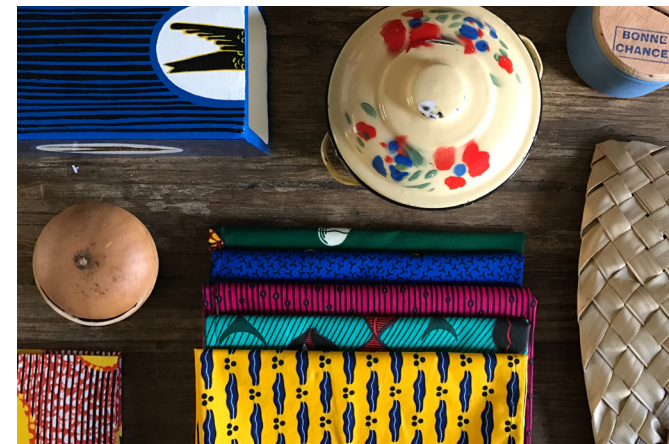
*"If she can't buy a book, and a man helps her, this would not be for free."*

INSIGHT #2

## Teenage sex is a currency with no exchange rate.

Sex among adolescents has an implicit value. It ranges from the cost of fulfilling the most basic of needs, such as food, a photocopy or school fees, to the aspirational, such as a new pair of underwear.

*"Girls want beautiful things. They have to ask us men for money. If we give something to them, we have to get something in return."*



INSIGHT #3

## Men are expected to be providers—transactional sex is a boys' version of this.

In a town with few economic opportunities, boys are expected to find ways to earn money and support their families. If a boy needs money, he goes to work; if a girl needs money, she goes to her family, then to boys. Girls get what they need, and boys get their sexual needs met.

*"A good teenage boy will give you money if you ask for it."*

*"A girl should try to marry well; she needs financial support."*



*"Teachers are champions at impregnating teenagers. They use money to entice them and girls are not courageous enough to say no."*

*"When the consequences of our behaviors arise, we don't always have to face them. The girl does."*

INSIGHT #4

## Being a teenage girl means running, heads down, through a perilous crossing.

Boys start chasing after girls at a young age. The other girls won't share secrets and can't be trusted. Parents expect girls to get good grades and spend the day on house chores. It can feel like everyone is out to get them, and they often navigate the new challenges of adulthood alone.



*"If you take care of your daughter, you will succeed."*

*"When a girl is learning a trade, she should wait to have a child until she is finished."*



INSIGHT #5

## Despite the challenges they face, girls have more equal opportunity than ever.

The community has progressive views of gender equality, and laments that pregnancies are taking teen girls out of school. Girls are encouraged to finish school, and to earn money after graduating.



INSIGHT #6

## Modern influences create a rift between generations, and mothers are at a loss.

Teens are interested in modern things: cell phones, jewelry, nice underwear. And, they are coming of age in a time when modern contraception is available. Lacking first-hand experience with these new things, moms want to guide their daughters, but don't know how.



*"The situation is the same everywhere—they no longer listen to us."*

*"This is a part of child rearing. A mother needs to explain things to her daughter."*

# Didier

A collaboration between IDEO.org, USAID and PSI Cote D'Ivoire



## All about Didier

In Cote D'Ivoire, our design challenge was to identify and test creative ways to engage men in positive conversations about sex, relationships and modern contraception.

While doing fieldwork in Abidjan, we learned that young men are excited about women and relationships, but they are less interested in sexual health or contraception. We knew that if we wanted to reach them, we needed to meet them where they were at. Our design question became: *How might we use dating advice to encourage young men in supporting contraception behaviors?*

Our solution was Didier, an SBCC program that engages youth in positive dialogue about sex and relationships. At its core, Didier is an ongoing interactive story delivered through Messaging, Facebook, and Events. Didier uses dating advice as an entry point to sensitize young men about the benefits of supporting their partners' needs and reproductive choices.



# 1

## The Didier Story

Here's a look at the Didier plot, and the twist!

Didier is a 17 year-old apprentice living in Abobo, Abidjan. He left his home town in Gbêké two years ago looking for his father who came to the city and never returned. Didier's dream is to make a living in the big city. His girlfriend Grace is a hardworking student. She wants to abstain until she finishes school and achieves her dream of becoming a lawyer. Didier respects his big brother Joel, who knew his father, is happily married and recently started a family. Joel advises Didier to support Grace and not pressure her.

Didier is influenced by his boss Yves, a bus driver famous for his sexual conquests. Sometimes they go out to the club together after work. Didier recently met Anna, a confident woman who is comfortable with her sexuality. She is known for enlightening men about women's sexual desires and making them drop at her feet. Didier loves Grace, and wants to wait for her, but he is intrigued by Anna and not sure what to do. If only Didier knew Anna is Yves' ex-girlfriend, whom he still loves...



# 2

## The Characters

Didier has 5 main characters, who were influenced by our fieldwork in Abidjan, and the stories we heard from talking to you boys and girls. Meet them all!

**YVES**  
THE BOSSY BOSS

**ANNA**  
THE CONFIDENT GIRL

**DIDIER**  
THE HERO

**GRACE**  
THE SWEET NEIGHBOR

**JOEL**  
THE GOOD HUSBAND



# 3

## The Power of Choice

Throughout the story, Didier engages in sex and relationship dialogues with two strong women: Grace and Anna. Their interactions present Didier with questions on contraception use and how women should be treated. Didier seeks advice from Joel and Yves, who give him contrasting opinions: one is gender aware, the other is gender blind.

Through SMS, Facebook, and events, the audience follows along with the story and can vote on how it progresses at key moments. When the story progresses toward gender-blind and irresponsible contraception choices, Didier experiences the serious consequences of his actions. When Didier makes good choices, he experiences success. By monitoring the audience's vote, we can observe change in gender sensitization and contraception choices over time.



# 4

# Insights from Cote D'Ivoire

Insights are the core fieldwork learnings that present opportunities for design. Insights are not necessarily the most frequent observations we saw in the field, they don't last forever, and they are not necessarily representative of all of the boys, girls and families that we spoke with. Rather, they are patterns of observations that present us, as designers, with interesting tensions that enable us to see our design challenge from a different perspective. Here are the 8 insights from our work in Cote D'Ivoire.



*"My mother is a nurse, but I would never talk about [sexual health] with her. I'm afraid of her!"*

*"We can't teach them about condoms. We would be incentivizing promiscuity."*

INSIGHT #2

## Growing up among unspoken expectations, no one is equipped to talk about sex.

A worried mother might quietly slip a condom in her son's backpack or ask questions about her daughter's stomach pains if she suspects unplanned pregnancy. But no one is talking. In a culture of silence, teenagers enter sexual life unequipped to have conversations about intimacy, needs, and sex health.



*"With others I use a condom, but not with the girl I love the most. If she gets pregnant, it's an act of God."*

INSIGHT #4

## HIV matters, but pregnancy is not a young man's problem.

Oblivious to long-term consequences and often uncommitted to a single partner, young men use condoms to protect against HIV when sleeping with women they don't trust or as a token to have sex with their girlfriends. But they don't see condoms as a contraceptive. In case of pregnancy, they may accept responsibility for the baby if it's with the girl they love, or simply walk away.



INSIGHT #3

## Young men emulate their bachelor bosses, but dream of a traditional future.

Many young men working in the informal sector come from rural families who are first generation in Abidjan. Unable to relate to their parents' traditions, young men's attitudes toward sex and relationship are being shaped by their bosses, older men who are hustling in the informal economy. But these role models don't reflect what they truly aspire in adulthood—a traditional family, just like their parents.

*"My boss was a drunk, and stole my watch. But I looked up to him. I would run his errands."*



*"We do think about STI's, but for pleasure's sake, we run the risk."*

*"It's up to the girls to demand condom use. My boyfriend has asked me many times to have sex without a condom. He says he only feels half the pleasure. I always refuse."*

INSIGHT #5

## Young women want condoms, but only men can carry them.

Oblivious to long-term consequences and often uncommitted to a single partner, young men use condoms to protect against HIV when sleeping with women they don't trust or as a token to have sex with their girlfriends. But they don't see condoms as a contraceptive. In case of pregnancy, they may accept responsibility for the baby if it's with the girl they love, or simply walk away.



CONDOM PACKAGING



*"Girls who use contraception are unfaithful. They have many boyfriends."*

*"When I am drunk, I might not want to use a condom because I am so excited, we go straight to the matter. It's not until later that I think: 'What have I done?'"*

INSIGHT #8

## Women are becoming aware of their desires, and young men are curious.

This is the first generation after the outlawing of female genital mutilation in 1998. Young men are completely oblivious to the female orgasm, and the boundaries of consensual sex are often blurry. But women are starting to talk about pleasure among themselves, and young men are reacting with curiosity.

*"If he finishes before me I say 'What's the problem?! Are you sick or what?!'"*

INSIGHT #6

## Contraceptive methods aren't relevant—and risks are an afterthought.

Apart from the day-after pill and condoms, young men rarely know about modern contraception, and mistrust unmarried women who use them. Young women may learn about the methods in school, but they don't find them relevant to their unmarried lives. As condoms are not used consistently, risky behavior is resolved with the day-after pill or by drinking coke with coffee after having sex (a widespread "alternative" to emergency contraception).



INSIGHT #7

## As relationships progress, young men's supportive behavior often turns coercive.

Young men are very accommodating at the beginning of a relationship. They give gifts, attention, and acquiesce to the use of condoms. But the power shifts as men's attention wanes. With time, young women may resort to unprotected sex to keep a boyfriend's attention, prove her fidelity, and maintain the relationship.



*"I saw her talking to a man on the streets. I beat her up. She begged for us to get back together, so we did."*



*"I like to listen to the older boys in my neighborhood talk about girls. They have a lot of experience."*

*"Boys have a lot of questions about girls. They want relationship advice—how to please their girlfriend, how to present their girlfriend to their parents."*

INSIGHT #1

## Having more sex is young men's number one goal.

Young men working in the informal sector spend a good part of their resources on women. Sex is a focal point in their lives, and bragging rights amongst friends are major motivators.