Youth Design Challenge:
A series of HCD-inspired sessions to co-create a communications campaign in Francophone West Africa

Engaging youth in West Africa in a co-design process to steer their nations and people into an era of quality adolescent and reproductive health.

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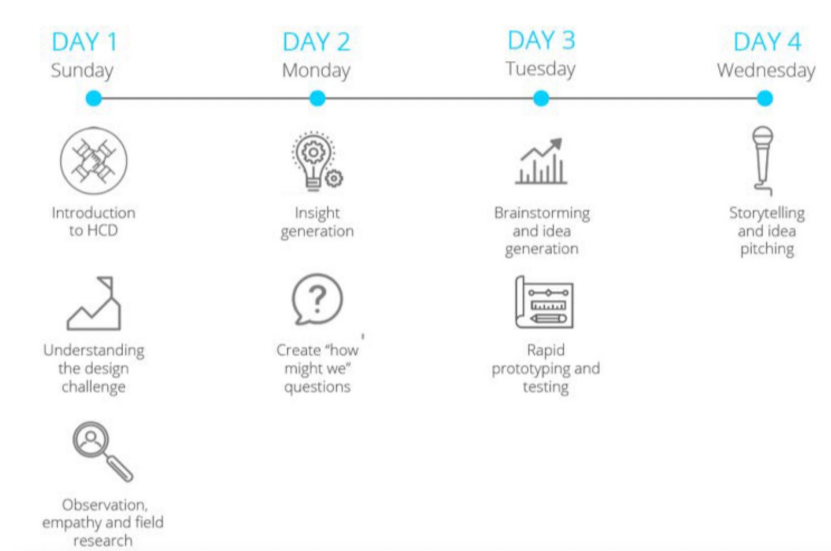
INTRODUCTION

Africa is home to the youngest population in the world, and it is expanding quickly. By 2055, the continent's population aged 15-24, is expected to double. One of the main challenges that Africa will have to face in the 21st century will be to turn its youth explosion into growth and prosperity that includes and benefits everyone, new leadership structures, institutions and policies. And much of that starts with tapping in the potential of the continent's youth.

ThinkPlace and Breakthrough ACTION brought together 40 young people from more than 10 countries across West Africa for a Youth Design Challenge. Over 13 hours spread across 4 days in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire youth leaders were assembled, given a challenge and provided with expert mentors to help them solve it using Human-Centered Design.

As part of the Francophone Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Summit in 2019, the Youth Design Challenge strengthened innovation skills among participants by ideating a regional campaign promoting the potential of youth to steer their nations and people into an era of quality adolescent and reproductive health.

METHODS

The participants of the Youth Design Challenge worked in small groups that were paired with a mentor who were part of the Summit donors, youth-focused organizations or Design Thinking consultancies to guide them through the innovation process.

DAY 1 Sunday	DAY 2 Monday	DAY 3 Tuesday	DAY 4 Wednesday
Introduction to HCD	Insight generation	Brainstorming and idea generation	Storytelling and idea pitching
Understanding the design challenge	Create "how might we" questions	Rapid prototyping and testing	
Observation, empathy and field research			

HOW IT WORKED

During the rapid design process, young participants learned about different research tools that could help them understand and empathize with their audiences in a deeper level.

• After gathering insights, each group chose the insight that they felt most passionate about. **Insights** included :**The importance of removing intergenerational taboos that may exist between young people and other stakeholders, acknowledging the role of social norms for the involvement of young people in decision-making, using alternative media, talking about menstrual hygiene in schools and adapting local health facilities to the needs of young people**, among others

• A rapid ideation session was facilitated in order to generate as many ideas for focused campaigns in as little time as possible.

• Teams developed basic prototypes such as story boards or comic strips to explain their idea in a simple and interactive way. They tested their prototypes and some managed to get feedback from their audiences and refine the idea further.

HIGHLIGHTS

The winning campaign was designed by a team with members from Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Mali and Togo. "Thank you, my hero" or **"Merci, mon héro!"** was a social media campaign focused on alternative channels such as YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp. The campaign planned to use opinion leaders from several West African countries and film episodes in relatable places for youth (universities, salons, etc.). The main purpose of the series is to help to liberate young people from social barriers that prevent them from freely using contraceptive methods by destigmatizing and rewarding adult's advices.

KEY LEARNINGS

Design capability brings empathy, exploration and iteration which is needed in complex and demanding innovation contexts.

Experimenting early and often helped improvise as opportunities emerged and youth's energy catalyzed the opportunities to rapidly move through prototypes to make ideas visible early.

Co-design needs to provide equity of access for people to participate, it needs to listen to a range of voices, and this doesn't always have to be the end user, experts' voices add critical value, but it's important to know the right time to bring them in.