

# Holistic integration of ICT4D

in SOS Children's Villages Benin

## Good practice

SOS Children's Villages International  
December 2022



**SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES**

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# Introduction

The following good practice report explores how SOS Children's Villages Benin organizes and implements Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) projects on a holistic, national level. The paper provides an insight into past and present practices and future plans of implementing these ICT4D initiatives.

## Global relevance of ICT4D

ICT4D aims at bridging the digital divide and enabling economic development by ensuring equitable access to up-to-date communications technologies. ICT4D is a field of research and a practice that joins specialties from computer science, information systems and development studies.

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) encompass all technologies that enable access to information through communication. This includes communication devices such as radio, television, cellular phones, computers, network hardware and software, satellite systems as well as the various services and applications associated with them, like video conferencing and distance learning.<sup>1</sup>

The United Nations, through its UN Development Programme, and many international civil society organizations such as SOS Children's Villages, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and others, actively promote ICT4D as a powerful tool for economic and social development around the world.

## ICT4D relevance in West, Central and North Africa region

In the region of West, Central and North Africa (WCNA) SOS Children's Villages Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Morocco, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Tunisia run ICT4D activities.

The General Secretariat of SOS Children's Villages International has a clear vision for fostering ICT4D initiatives and thus, the development of such initiatives have been strongly supported. Skilled staff in regional ICT departments motivated National Associations to recruit IT managers as a first step. Thereafter, they conducted many training sessions empowering the ICT staff. With the support of the International Office of SOS Children's Villages International, regional ICT teams partnered with important stakeholders such as NetHope and Inmarsat to ensure that ICT4D is anchored on a regional level. A skilled team in the SOS Children's Villages regional office in WCNA is now enhancing ICT4D projects in Benin, strongly supported by both ICT and programme teams.

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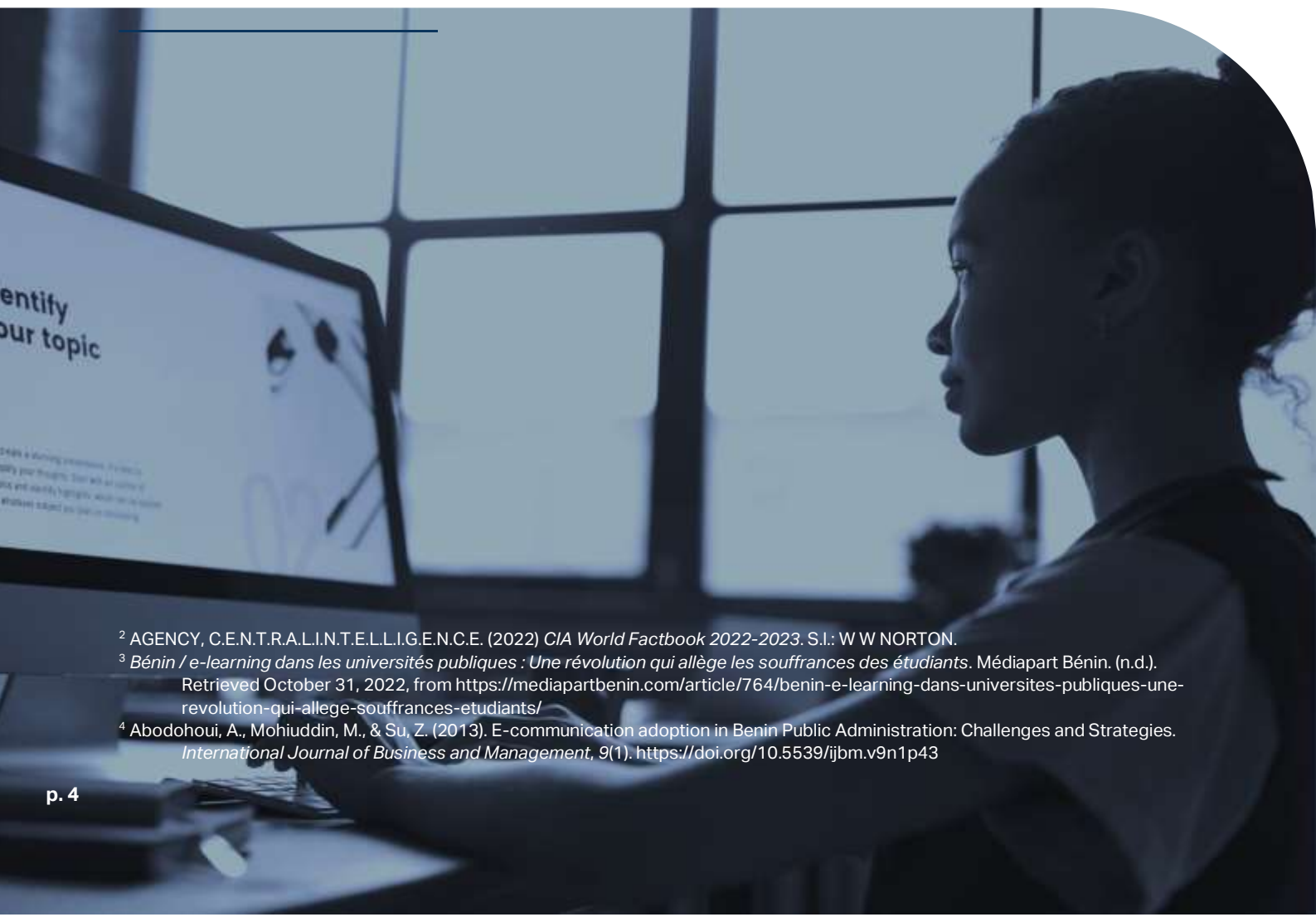
<sup>1</sup> Contributor, TechTarget. "What Is ICT4D (Information and Communications Technologies for Development)? - Definition from WhatIs.com." *WhatIs.com*, TechTarget, 24 Mar. 2011, <https://www.techtarget.com/whatis/definition/ICT4D-Information-and-Communications-Technologies-for-Development>.

## ICT4D in SOS Children's Villages Benin

The Republic of Benin has made major progress in the past ten years in terms of internet digital infrastructure and the dematerialization of its public administration services. According to the CIA Factbook<sup>2</sup>, Benin has 3,152,032 internet users – an increase of 200,100 users in 2009. This is also due to huge investments in digitalization taken by the country. More than 2,000 km of optical fiber have been deployed throughout the national territory, making high-speed Internet access possible. The government set up a unique service called Community Digital Points, allowing the Beninese citizens to quickly exploit the power of fiber and, in turn, enabling access to broadband.

**The e-learning platform** (<https://elearning.etudiant.bj/>) launched in the context of the Covid-19 health crisis displays more than 35,000 course videos and at least **2,500 other online teaching materials**. These **digital solutions** have made it possible to ensure the continuity of courses, despite the restrictions and – essential – to encourage students to validate their school year. The digitalization of training courses have made the lives of many students easier amidst the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, Benin is implementing the **"Digital Code"**: as a result, digital users can now rely on a legal basis when being connected to the digital world. Indeed, the provisions of the law (No 2017-20, dated 20th April 2018) offer a basis for an enhanced development of the country. Government bodies such as the Beninese Agency for the Universal Service of Electronic Communications and the Post Office (ABSUCEP Benin) that finance community-based ICT4D projects exist in the country, which is a huge opportunity for civil society organizations like SOS Children's Villages.

However, the government faces many hurdles in the digital transformation of the country. The challenges are, beside others, related to the lack of training to cope with changes and the extremely low rate of the adoption of ICT<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> AGENCY, C.E.N.T.R.A.L.I.N.T.E.L.L.I.G.E.N.C.E. (2022) *CIA World Factbook 2022-2023*. S.I.: W W NORTON.

<sup>3</sup> *Bénin / e-learning dans les universités publiques : Une révolution qui allège les souffrances des étudiants*. Médiapart Bénin. (n.d.). Retrieved October 31, 2022, from <https://mediapartbenin.com/article/764/benin-e-learning-dans-universites-publiques-une-revolution-qui-allege-souffrances-etudiants/>

<sup>4</sup> Abodohouï, A., Mohiuddin, M., & Su, Z. (2013). E-communication adoption in Benin Public Administration: Challenges and Strategies. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v9n1p43>



# Timeline of programme development in Benin

## 1987: Abomey Calavi



SOS Children's Villages started its activities in Benin in 1987 with the SOS Children's Village in Abomey-Calavi. The aim of the organization was to take care of children who lost parental care. A kindergarten and a primary school were set up near the SOS Children's Village.

## 1999: Natitingou



In addition, the agreement with the government signed in 1985 was extended to incorporate the setup of a second SOS Children's Village in Natitingou in the north of Benin in 1999. The second SOS programme was supplemented by a kindergarten and a primary school.

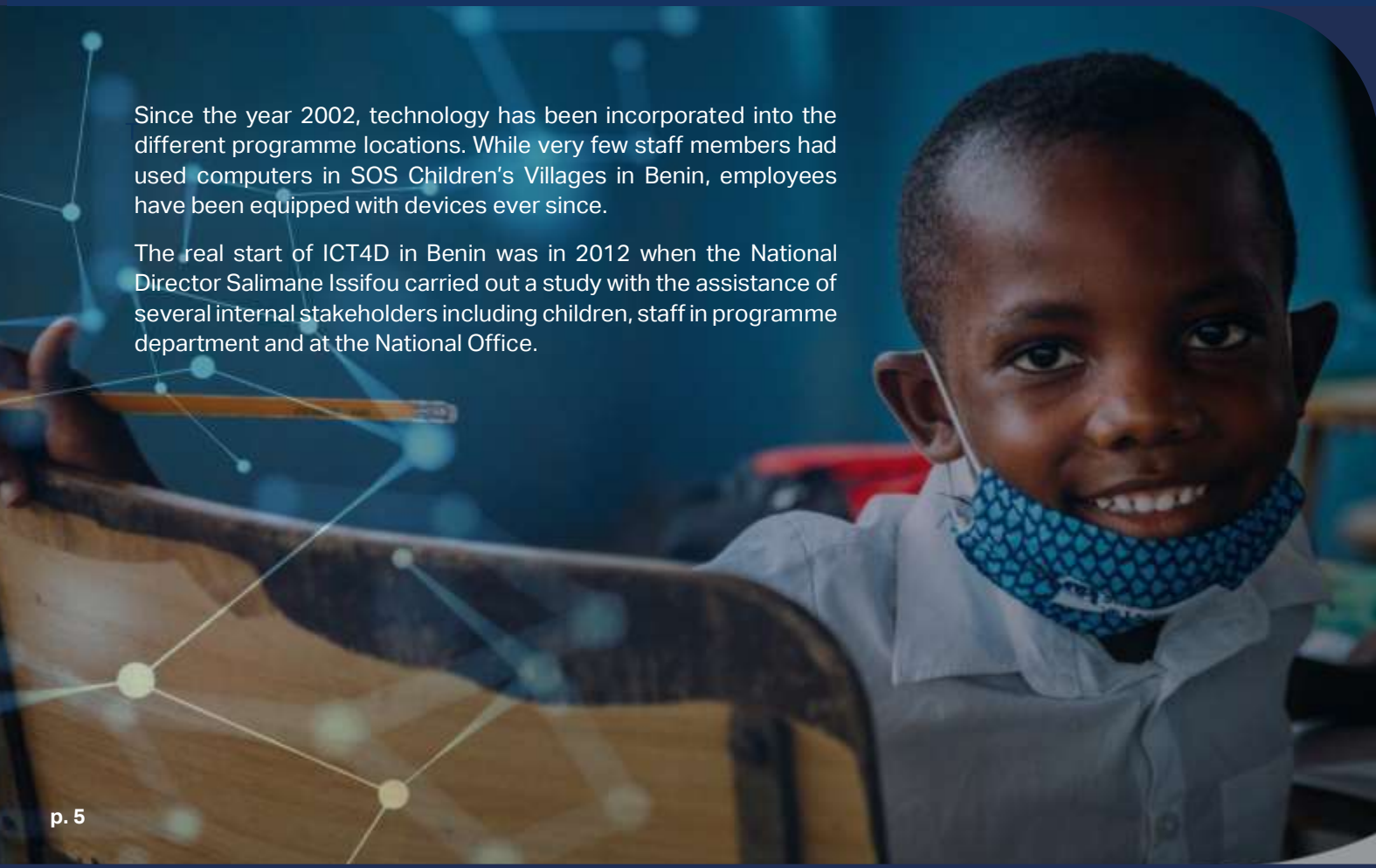
## 2005: Dassa-Zoumé



In 2004, Family Strengthening Programmes were established in the two existing SOS Children's Villages in 2004. In 2005, a third SOS Children's Village was created in Dassa-Zoumé in the center of the Republic of Benin.

Since the year 2002, technology has been incorporated into the different programme locations. While very few staff members had used computers in SOS Children's Villages in Benin, employees have been equipped with devices ever since.

The real start of ICT4D in Benin was in 2012 when the National Director Salimane Issifou carried out a study with the assistance of several internal stakeholders including children, staff in programme department and at the National Office.



The study on how technology has been integrated into programmes was possible thanks to the contribution of **266 people, including 188 children**, who participated in **individual interviews** or focus groups conducted in SOS Children's Villages programmes. The information collected suggested that certain components of Information and Communications Technologies for Development had been implemented at SOS Children's Villages in Benin since 2002. However, in 2012, due to the obsolescence of information technology, the weak integration of ICT in the subjects taught and lack of qualified human resources in this field, information and communications technologies struggled to fully play their role. ([Access report here](#))

At the end of this survey, **18 ICT4D solutions for development were selected and implemented**, aiming at making SOS Children's Villages Benin a leader in the field of ICT4D. Concrete indicators were selected to measure the qualitative contribution of information and communications technologies to the various participants in the SOS Children's Villages programmes.

## Co-designing innovation: youth participation structure

SOS Children's Villages places the highest importance on the decision making of young people - specifically on issues regarding the strategic directions on local, regional and also global levels. SOS Children's Villages Benin thereby has an advanced structure in place:

A Children's Executive Council (CEC) and additional Youth Councils (YCs) in each SOS Children's Villages programme location have been established. These councils represent all the participants supported through different programmes, including Alternative Care (in instances where children are not able to live with their biological families they are placed in Alternative Care until the family circumstances improve enough for them to return home) and Family Strengthening. In December 2020, SOS Children's Villages Benin set up a body called the National Children's Executive Council (NCEC), which is the extension and central representation of the CEC and YCs on national level.

The NCEC consists of 11 body members. They are consulted on all issues relevant to them. They are invited to propose actions that they feel are necessary to plan for the National Association of SOS Children's Villages Benin, to participate in national workshops and to give feedback in the process of recruiting SOS Children's Villages child and youth care professionals. The world is turning more and more digital – and in turn, the needs of children and young people correspondingly shift and adapt. In order to implement the right solutions, including young people in decision-making processes regarding digitalization of our programmes is crucial.

Under the influence of the Executive Councils of Children and child participation committees that were in place in SOS Children's Villages in Benin, the management of the organization had big dreams for children and young people under its care. Indeed, many ICT initiatives were developed with children and young people following this statement by Pitroda (1993).<sup>5</sup>

*"[As] a great social leveller, information technology (...) can raze cultural barriers, overwhelm economic inequalities, even compensate for intellectual disparities. In short, high technology can put unequal human beings on an equal footing, and that makes it the most potent democratizing tool ever devised."*

<sup>5</sup> Foster, E., & Reichgelt, H. (1997). Towards a Labour Market Information System. *Social and Economic Studies*, 46(4), 47–59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27866151>

Subsequently, one of the reasons for implementing ICT4D projects by SOS Children's Villages in Benin was related to the need of reducing the digital divide that was observed between children from the SOS Children's Villages target group and other children. Thanks to technology, these children and young people who live without adequate parental care could be put on equal footing.

The process started with teaching children and young people from the target group basic IT skills. Other needs quickly emerged.

## Implementation of digital initiatives in Benin

Information and Communications Technologies for Development (ICT4D) provide an authoritative account of the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in contemporary development practice<sup>6</sup>. ICT has been promoted as being able to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of work<sup>7</sup>. While bringing sustainable change in the life of vulnerable human beings.

In order to build on the potentials of ICT4D, SOS Children's Villages Benin is implemented the following initiatives.

### Digital Villages

The project provides ICT infrastructure for the SOS Children's Villages programme participants and helps them develop their digital literacy skills. Thanks to this initiative, computers have been made available to children, young people, as well as child and youth care professionals. The principal goal is to reduce the digital divide observed with other children and young people who were not part of SOS Children's Villages' target group.

### E-library: Digital Learning for Digital Generation

The overall objective of the project is to use information and communications technologies (ICT) to foster the education and personal development of 3,207 beneficiaries and the communities SOS Children's Villages is serving through the integration of digital resources.

### YouthLinks Community

The YouthLinks Community is a central online platform for young people accompanied by SOS Children's Villages worldwide to access opportunities while transitioning to self-reliance. Utilizing the power of technology, young people's skills are improved through training, mentorship and networking opportunities.

### Learnio

This initiative promotes the employability of some of the young participants in SOS Children's Villages programmes through digital entrepreneurship.

### ICDL

The International Certification in Digital Literacy (ICDL) is an international reference for the certification of digital skills. ICDL ensures that SOS Children's Villages programme participants improve their ICT skills for their future job roles and are equipped with such skills that are essential in the digitalized society.

### Telemedicine (closed)\*

The objective was to strengthen and monitor the health of family strengthening programme beneficiaries living in remote areas where access to quality health care was not possible. Thanks to this initiative, thousands of children and their families got access to quality health care in Benin and around the world. Learn more about the initiative [here](#).

*\*At the end of 2022, all above presented programmes beside Telemedicine are still active. Although Telemedicine had a huge positive impact on the health of SOS Children's Villages programme participants, it is currently suspended due to a lack of internal resources.*

<sup>6</sup> Schelenz, L. and Pawelec, M. (2021) "Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) critique", *Information Technology for Development*, 28(1), pp. 165–188. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2021.1937473>.

<sup>7</sup> Marais, M. (2011). An analysis of the factors affecting the sustainability of ICT4D initiatives.

## ICT4D programmes & ICT infrastructure

The first step in the development of ICT4D projects in Benin was to have a common vision and agreed objectives based on the input of children and young people to the qualitative and quantitative study conducted in 2012. This step was decisive for strategy implementation.

### 2006: Abomey-Calavi

From the beginning, SOS Children's Villages in Benin leveraged partnerships to foster ICT4D initiatives. The first ICT4D initiative was implemented in the SOS Children's Village Abomey-Calavi. At that time (in 2006), although the IT infrastructure was not fully in place, the organization benefitted from a donation of hundreds of recycled computers.

### 2011: Natitingou

SOS Children's Village Natitingou benefitted from another donation of 16 computers.



### 2019: Natitingou

... and in 2019, SOS Children's Village Natitingou was provided with 13 computers thanks to the funding by SOS-Kinderdorf e. V.



### 2011: Dassa-Zoumé

A few years later in 2011, SOS Children's Village Dassa-Zoumé received a donation of 19 computers. The devices were installed in the computer room where children and young people had access to learn basic computing.



### 2017: Abomey-Calavi

In order to foster ICT4D projects in Benin, new, adequate and robust equipment was needed. Fortunately, SOS-Kinderdorf e. V. invested heavily in Digital Village projects in SOS Children's Villages in Benin. 13 new computers were purchased for the families in Abomey-Calavi in 2017.

### 2020: Cross-country investments

Besides, the renovation of SOS Children's Village Abomey-Calavi offered an opportunity to foster youth employability thanks to ICT4D: SOS-Kinderdorf e. V. funded a computer room that can hold 50 workstations. The room was equipped with 21 computers that are currently being used for Digital Entrepreneurship classes implemented by partner Learnio.

Thanks to YouthCan!, 13 computers and 12 tablets were acquired for young people and 78 other computers were purchased for young people as part of another funding opportunity.



## Number of ICT4D equipment currently being operated at SOS Children's Villages in Benin

LOCATION	TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT - (ON PREMISE)		TOTAL
	Computer room	Family houses	
ABOMEY-CALAVI	21	12	33
DASSA-ZOUME	25	10	35
NATITINGOU	20	12	32
PROGRAMME	TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT - (OFF PREMISE)		
YOUTHCAN! & OTHERS	78	25	103
			<b>203</b>

*Each SOS Children's Village in Benin (Abomey-Calavi, Dassa-Zoumé and Natitingou) has a computer room connected to the internet that can accommodate ICT4D initiatives.*

## Stakeholder participation & partnerships

The rights-based approach and its principle of multi-stakeholders' participation has been a key variable that was taken into consideration while devising ICT4D initiatives. The process started with the consideration of the needs and the rights of the participants. The leadership of ICT4D was taken up by the National Director, because the domain is strategic in child care organizations. The technical aspects of the work are covered by both programme and ICT departments.

Partnerships are playing an important role in the ICT4D strategy of SOS Children's Villages in Benin. Whenever necessary, the organization resorts to partners to enhance the services to the young people:

SOS Children's Villages has been the third training organization accredited by global ICDL. Moreover, the partnership with Learnio (<https://academy.learnio.eu/>) in 2020 has helped SOS Children's Villages to move to another level. The organization was the third partner in Africa besides Uganda and Egypt to have similar Learnio programmes.

# Results & impact

*"We see the real difference that IT and connectivity make to children's lives, opening their eyes to a whole new world of information, and wonderful education opportunities."*

## ICT4D Projects and Outreach

### Programme participants:

ICDL

Learnio

**171 121**

Digital Villages

**601**

Digital Learning for Digital Generation

**3207**

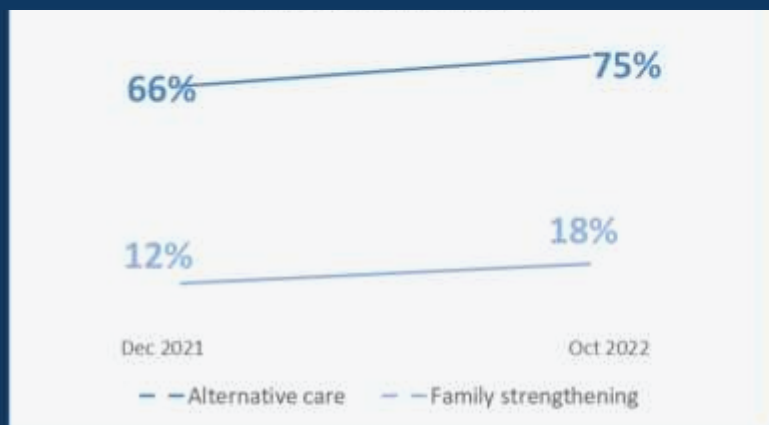
Telemedicine (stopped)

**1346**

# The impact of ICT4D initiatives – in graphs

## Advancement of digital skills of participants

10 years and older

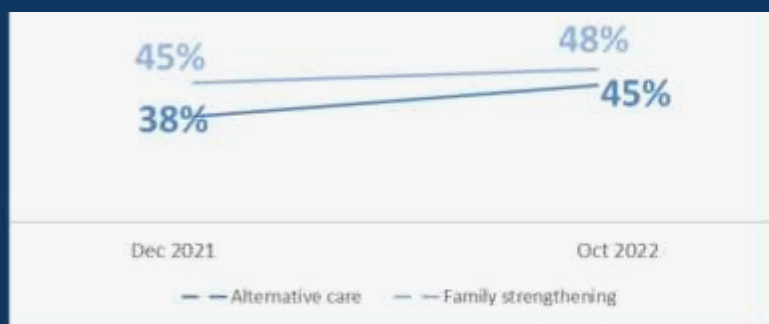


**+9% AC participants**  
**+6% FSP participants**

A clear increase is also visible in the level of ICT skills: in December 2021, 66% of children older than 10 years and young people in Alternative Care (AC) and 12% in Family Strengthening (FSP) have advanced, intermediate or basic digital and ICT skills. A strong increase is visible until October 2022, with 75% (AC) and 18% (FSP) participants reaching advanced, intermediate or basic digital and ICT skills.

## Participants enrolled or completed training

Children and young people

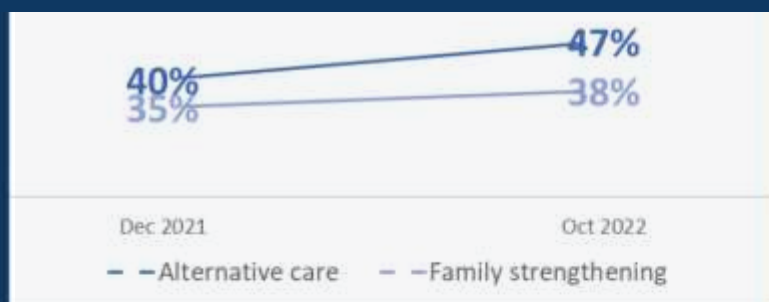


**+3% AC participants**  
**+7% FSP participants**

ICT4D initiatives have proven to be a skills and employment driver. In December 2021, 38% of children and young persons in Alternative Care (AC) and, as well as 45% of children and young people participating in Family Strengthening Programmes (FSP) were enrolled or completed a training, whereas this number strongly increased to 45% (AC) and 48% (FSP) in October 2022.

## Capacity to generate income

15 years and older

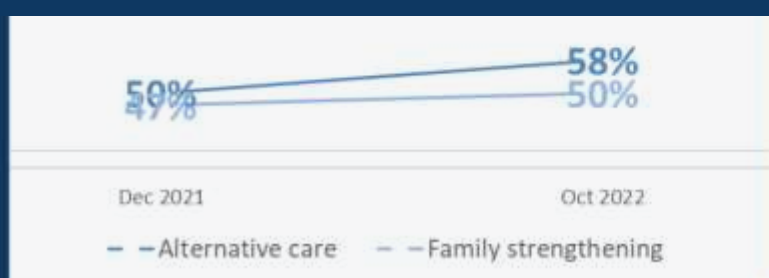


**+7% AC participants**  
**+3% FSP participants**

Additionally, a clear increase in terms of the ability to generate income (employability indicator) is visible: young people age 15 and older in Alternative Care have proven an employability rate of 40% and young people participating in Family Strengthening Programmes a rate of 35% in December 2021. By October 2022, this rate has increased up to 47% (AC) and 38% (FSP).

## Capacity to generate income

18 years and older



**+8% AC participants**  
**+3% FSP participants**

This outcome is even **stronger** in the group of young adults (18 years and older): in December 2021, 50% of young people from Alternative Care and 47% from Family Strengthening show high or medium employability or the ability to generate income. This rate increased to 58% (AC) and 50% (FSP) until October 2022.

*Interesting to note: participants of the Learnio digital entrepreneurship programme where thereby mainly 18 years and older and part of Alternative Care.*

## Digital Villages

The “Digital Village” project started in 2017. The main objective of the initiative was to provide access to ICT tools to children and their caregivers and to develop their digital literacy skills. Today, the content of the Digital Village at SOS Children's Villages in Benin has been upgraded with new solutions such as online English language learning and the implementation of a digital tool to detect child abuse.

The Digital Village project has enabled SOS Children's Villages to embed technology in programming. All SOS Children's Villages child and youth care practitioners as well as children and young people participating in the Alternative Care programme of SOS Children's Villages in Benin have received at least training and access to computers. As for children and young people from the age of 10, almost all have basic computer knowledge. The Digital Village project has also enabled some children and young people to do academic research, build their capacities through online courses, access entertainment content and also have a digital tool to report child abuses. A total of **601 beneficiaries of Alternative Care programmes** benefited from the project overall.



## E-library: Digital Learning for Digital Generation



The e-library that was created in 2021 is adding great value programme interventions for children. The library (available [here](#)) **offers a learning platform to more than 3,000 children and young people** under the care of SOS Children's Villages in Benin. They can improve their knowledge thanks to courses in mathematics, physics and other school subjects, based on the official government curriculum. As such, school results have improved in 2022. Additionally, children and young people can learn on child and youth participation, as well as on child rights, fostering participation overall and contributing to the creation of a pool of child rights defenders. The library also enables young people to learn on employability and entrepreneurship.

## YouthLinks Community Platform

Another initiative using technology for the development of participants in SOS Children's Villages programmes is the YouthLinks Community, a safe social media platform owned by SOS Children's Villages and currently integral component of the global employability and entrepreneurship project YouthCan!: The platform is a central digital space connecting young people with opportunities while transitioning into self-reliance. Through the YouthLinks Community, young people have access to mentoring, training and other development opportunities via one central virtual space, independent of their geographical location and therefore overcoming inequalities. **YouthCan! reached a total of 244 young people in Benin in 2021, while 32 of them connected online.** The YouthLinks Community platform has been implemented in the country in 2022 and first results are expected in early 2023.





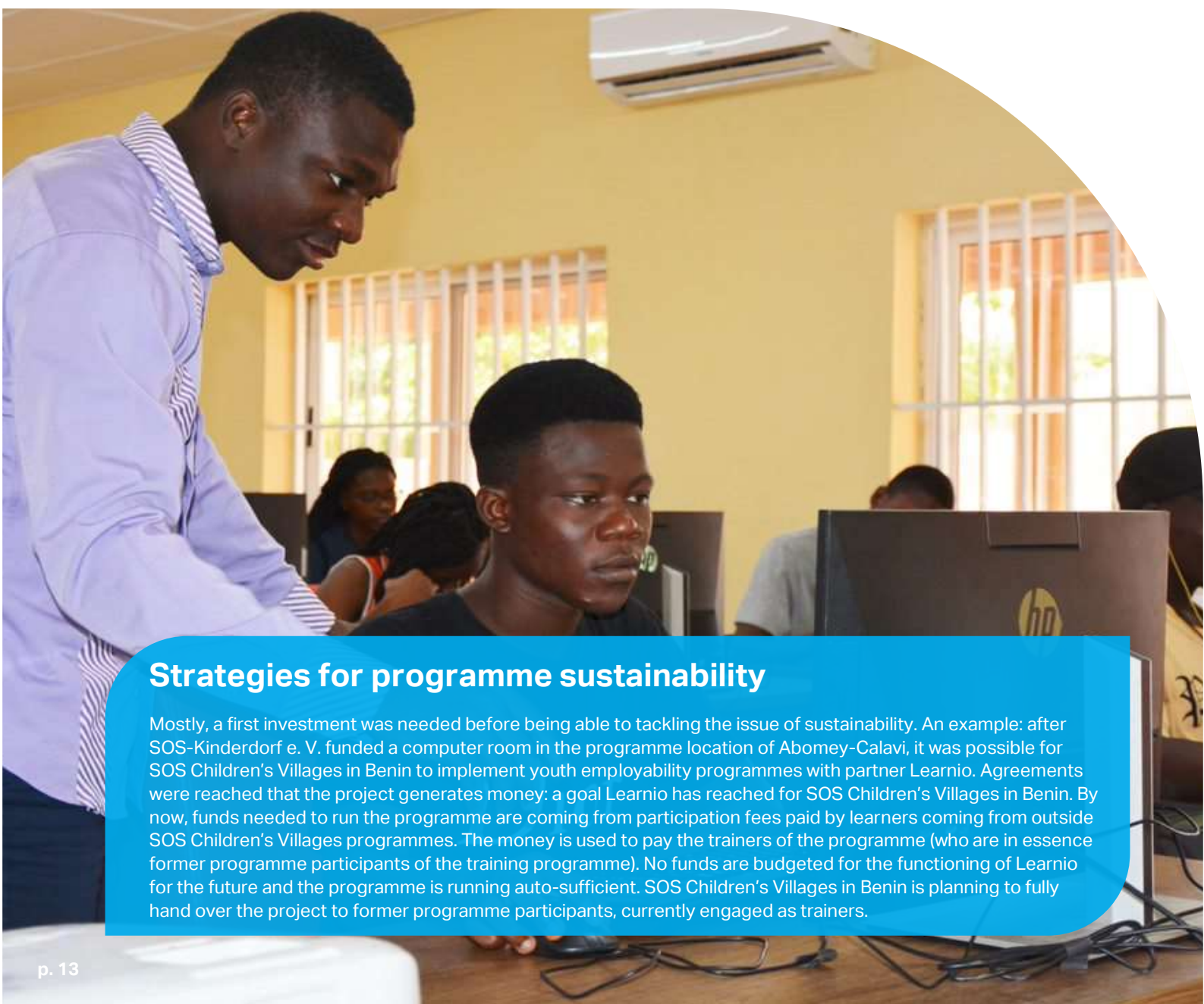


## ICDL initiatives

In total, the ICDL initiatives counted **171 young participants** over the years. These participants now have both the basic and digital skills that are necessary in the job market either for employment or for becoming digital entrepreneurs.

### Telemedicine (closed)

The aim of the project was to strengthen and monitor the health of vulnerable families supported by SOS Children's Villages Benin, living in remote areas where the conditions of access to medical care were not met. Thanks to the project that was managed by both the local IT coordinators and nurses, the children and young people from our target group had access to quality medical care provided by health care specialists in Benin and abroad. Several diseases were subsequently diagnosed and treated thanks to data that was collected in remote areas. **Every month, 1,346 remote consultations** were carried out to identify several diseases including diabetes, arterial hypertension, hyperthermia leading to malaria, etc. The project was closed due to staff reduction.



### Strategies for programme sustainability

Mostly, a first investment was needed before being able to tackling the issue of sustainability. An example: after SOS-Kinderdorf e. V. funded a computer room in the programme location of Abomey-Calavi, it was possible for SOS Children's Villages in Benin to implement youth employability programmes with partner Learnio. Agreements were reached that the project generates money: a goal Learnio has reached for SOS Children's Villages in Benin. By now, funds needed to run the programme are coming from participation fees paid by learners coming from outside SOS Children's Villages programmes. The money is used to pay the trainers of the programme (who are in essence former programme participants of the training programme). No funds are budgeted for the functioning of Learnio for the future and the programme is running auto-sufficient. SOS Children's Villages in Benin is planning to fully hand over the project to former programme participants, currently engaged as trainers.

# The impact of the partnership with Learnio

Faced with the scarcity of job opportunities in Benin, the idea of devising a programme that could transform young people into IT entrepreneurs emerged amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The quest for an adequate partner to deliver the course led SOS Children's Villages in Benin to CodersTrust that later on became Learnio:

Learnio is a social enterprise, founded in 2014, that provides both accessible and affordable education on digital skills. Until today, Learnio has trained and mentored over 16,000 students worldwide. Learnio offers a hybrid training (self-paced online and in-classroom format) in Graphic Design, Web Development and Digital Marketing. The course also offers additional classes in Business English and a training on how to successfully start in the freelancing market as well as a global community for learning and earning opportunities. The practical approach of the training is greatly appreciated by the participants. Learnio helps people become financially independent. Its certifications prepare participants for a career in digital freelancing. The cutting-edge digital learning programmes and personal mentoring support enable high chances for success as digital freelancers.

The potential and benefit of Learnio was quickly recognized by SOS Children's Villages Benin, and an agreement was signed in August 2020. 300 people registered and underwent the initial assessment, out of which 55 young participants from SOS Children's Villages programmes and 20 young people from the community were able to secure a seat to participate in the training.

By August 2022, SOS Children's Villages Benin counted in **total 121 young participants** in the programme. Specifically, **14 young people out of 69 who have finished their training obtained a job with a yearly income of \$8,594**. Many more young people have found work opportunities with smaller income. Moreover, Learnio has enabled young people in Alternative Care to strengthen their social integration by providing the opportunity to exchange and work with other young professionals from the community who are also participating in the training. Beside that, several young people who took part in this programme show greater self-confidence, especially in the professional environment. Finally, communication in English that is an integral part of the Learnio curriculum has tremendously helped participants from SOS Children's Villages programmes to improve their language skills.

Learnio has helped SOS Children's Villages to move to another level. The organization was the third partner in Africa besides Uganda and Egypt to have a similar Learnio programme. With the evident positive impact of Learnio, SOS Children's Villages Benin plans to launch new training programmes, allowing more young people to have access to the freelancing market.

More information on Learnio can be found in this article: [read here](#)

## Get to know Hack!

Hack Aboudou Yacoubou has been participating in the Learnio programme. Today, Hack himself is a trainer and mentor for other young programme participants. In addition, he is a successful freelancer, offering a variety of services in digital areas such as digital strategies for organizations and the set-up of websites.

For more information visit his webpage: [Hack A. YACOUBOU \(hackyacoubou.com\)](https://hackyacoubou.com)



# Challenges in implementing ICT4D in Benin

The main challenges in the implementation of ICT4D projects at SOS Children's Villages in Benin are:



More infrastructure (computers and tablets) and connectivity is needed to reach more vulnerable people from SOS Children's Villages target group (e.g. Family Strengthening Programme participants, young people in Alternative Care who do not live with SOS Children's Villages, and other vulnerable populations).



Lack of human resources: each SOS Children's Village needs a local IT coordinator to sustain the vision of good IT embedment in programmes.



Lack of access to substantial funding for the implementation of large-scale ICT4D projects in the community. More funding is needed to enable vulnerable people, in particular girls and women in the community – extending reach beyond Alternative Care programmes.



Mobilization of local partnerships for the implementation of ICT4D projects: institutional partnerships are not well developed in the national association, which hinders the development of ICT4D projects.



Poor understanding and low appreciation of the potential of ICT4D for child and youth development by some key staff, which implies the need to properly explain the usefulness of IT and to train all co-workers.



Donated materials quickly breaking down due to lack of adequate maintenance and personnel (human resources). Moreover, there is an average of 15 users for a single computer.

# Opportunities for the growth of ICT4D in Benin

The main opportunities for ICT4D projects at SOS Children's Villages in Benin are:



Local stakeholders may fund and support ICT4D projects in the country: the government wants to transform Benin into a regional IT hub. As a result, a good strategy must be developed to tap into government funding dedicated to IT initiatives.



SOS Children's Villages has more than 10 years experience in the implementation of meaningful ICT4D projects. This is helpful for future developments.



Existence of international partnerships, like with Learnio and ICDL in the implementation of ICT4D projects: SOS Children's Villages should build upon these partnerships to attract new partners, enabling to enhance ICT4D projects.



Commitment of the leadership of SOS Children's Villages in Benin for the development of children and young people, which ensures that a vision exists and is anchored in child programming.

**Leveraging  
technology  
to improve  
lives**



# Future outlook and conclusions

## Summary

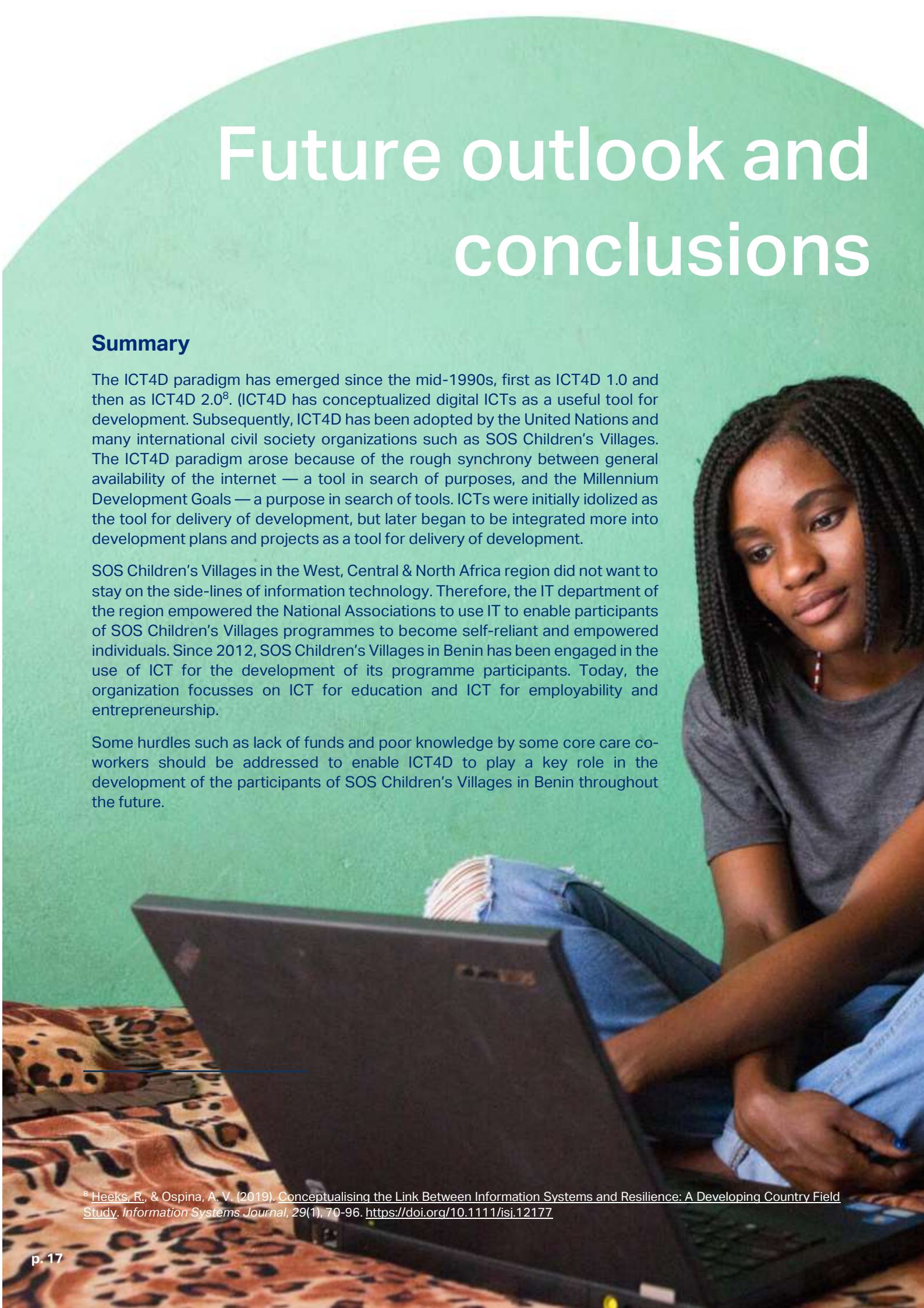
The ICT4D paradigm has emerged since the mid-1990s, first as ICT4D 1.0 and then as ICT4D 2.0<sup>8</sup>. (ICT4D has conceptualized digital ICTs as a useful tool for development. Subsequently, ICT4D has been adopted by the United Nations and many international civil society organizations such as SOS Children's Villages. The ICT4D paradigm arose because of the rough synchrony between general availability of the internet — a tool in search of purposes, and the Millennium Development Goals — a purpose in search of tools. ICTs were initially idolized as the tool for delivery of development, but later began to be integrated more into development plans and projects as a tool for delivery of development.

SOS Children's Villages in the West, Central & North Africa region did not want to stay on the side-lines of information technology. Therefore, the IT department of the region empowered the National Associations to use IT to enable participants of SOS Children's Villages programmes to become self-reliant and empowered individuals. Since 2012, SOS Children's Villages in Benin has been engaged in the use of ICT for the development of its programme participants. Today, the organization focusses on ICT for education and ICT for employability and entrepreneurship.

Some hurdles such as lack of funds and poor knowledge by some core care co-workers should be addressed to enable ICT4D to play a key role in the development of the participants of SOS Children's Villages in Benin throughout the future.

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<sup>8</sup> Heeks, R., & Ospina, A. V. (2019). Conceptualising the Link Between Information Systems and Resilience: A Developing Country Field Study. *Information Systems Journal*, 29(1), 70-96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isi.12177>





## Recommendations

**In order to foster ICT4D projects, SOS Children's Villages Benin will:**

- Properly train all core care co-workers in technology and the role of ICT in the development of SOS Children's Villages programme participants.
- Add ICT4D components in all proposals developed by SOS Children's Villages Benin, adding as minimum IT infrastructure and an IT coach in all locations.
- Enhance the results of Institutional Partnerships Development (IPD) in order to have additional resources for ICT4D projects.
- Cooperate proactively with government in ICT4D projects to get funding and support.
- Include young people in the setting of strategic directions for further ICT4D projects.
- Establish an action plan for each site (including immediate, mid-term, long-term actions and ideals).
- Identify ICT4D focal persons for each site; ICT4D responsibilities are included in job descriptions.
- Develop concrete indicators and targets for ICT4D.
- Consider ICT4D projects during national planning and budgeting; also, review strategy with a focus on reinforced understanding of ICT4D on national level.
- ICT4D/digital projects (ICT access, ICT skills/ICDL and advanced digital skills programmes/Learnio and others in the future) are integrated into Programme Location Agreements of SOS Children's Villages Benin; including targets.

**The same or similar recommendations can be adapted by other national organizations of SOS Children's Villages to further foster ICT4D across the SOS Children's Villages federation.**

## Plans for scaling ICT4D projects in Benin

SOS Children's Villages in Benin has the following outlook for the next years when it comes to ICT4D projects:

- Strengthening the capacity of the current Learnio/ICDL training centre in Abomey-Calavi: upgrade of the capacity of the training room from 20 to 40.
- Opening of ICDL trainings to the community (former SOS Children's Villages beneficiaries will be inserted as the ICDL trainers).
- Establishment of an English language learning laboratory open to the community in the computer rooms.
- Extension of the Learnio/ICDL project to the communities of the Family Strengthening programme (Pacope) in the city of Parakou.
- SOS Children's Villages Parakou Pacope: the aim is to build a new digital training centre and recruit mentors/trainers, acquire training equipment, and finance training fee for vulnerable young people.

## Digital Innovation for Communities– SOS Children's Villages global ICT4D perspective:

Extension of ICT4D programme offers to participants of Family Strengthening programmes within the communities is also what SOS Children's Villages envisions as the global strategic direction overall: the organization is working towards sustainable impact and change, based on a holistic digital programme strategy:



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