



2020 Annual Report



RELATIONS PUBLIQUES
SANS FRONTIÈRES

Founded in 2007, in Montréal (Québec), Canada by a group of seasoned public relations professionals, Relations publiques sans frontières (Public Relations Without Borders) is a charitable organization recognized by the Canada Revenue Agency.

13 years

Through its work in a growing number of countries, RPSF has demonstrated that public relations can be used as a powerful lever for social and economic progress.

52 missions in French, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic

In concert with a number of partner organizations, we help in many areas of the world to sustainably improve the living conditions of people dealing with development challenges.

The audited financial statements are available upon request at direction@rpsansfrontieres.org

41 mission heads

RPSF carries out missions in cooperation with NGOs, non-profit organizations and public authorities. Its volunteer activities – consulting services, training and coaching – aim to help local organizations to become more efficient, find solutions to their problems and achieve their goals, for the benefit of the people.

22 countries

The volunteers of RPSF rally around the values of solidarity, integrity and professionalism.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE YEAR OF THE GIANT LEAP

It may seem surprising that, despite a global pandemic, 2020 was the year where RPSF made the leap into the “major leagues” of the world of international cooperation.

Being aware of the strategic and highly critical importance of communication to surviving a health crisis, we did everything we could, as of March 2020, to help our partner organizations via cybermentoring. That allowed us not only to experience one of our most productive years, but also to avoid compromising our very existence.

We saw the birth of new partnerships, increased media interest in our organization – as demonstrated by the background article published in September 2020 in *Le Grenier Magazine* – and the recognition of our standing by some large funding agencies.



The pandemic forced us to rethink our initial mandate – and to meet other even more pressing needs – in order to contribute to the improvement of living conditions of targeted populations in a context of crisis. Our determination is greater than ever to work with local organizations, while promoting their autonomous development through communications and public relations activities.

This year, there were more mission heads than in the past. For our cybermentoring missions, we innovated by pairing seasoned public relations professionals with younger colleagues. Their complementary skills made a difference in every case. They were all inspiring, generous and empathetic, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

In both our director general's message and our review of the year, you will find all the information on those cybermissions along with concrete examples of which we are extremely proud.

Transforming RPSF to ensure its future

Last year, I talked about our rigorous endeavours to take part in calls for proposals from large agencies. I also described our efforts to consolidate our governance via policies and procedures aiming to better structure our interventions and secure our financial future.

In terms of outreach, we were more active than ever before on social media, and we participated in numerous activities of partners and international cooperation organizations.

Our transformation on the road to professionalization was aimed at meeting the highest standards of funding organizations. We were obviously successful, seeing as how in 2021, we began programs duly funded by the Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie du Québec (MRIF).

**DESPITE THESE HIGHLY TRYING TIMES,
THE RPSF TEAM TOOK THE TIME TO REFLECT ON
AND REVIEW ITS ACTIVITIES MODEL AND EVEN
TO QUESTION ITS *RAISON D'ÊTRE***

That very healthy exercise led the Board of Directors to three major conclusions:

- The relevance of the support provided by RPSF to local organizations has never been so great;

- Some partnerships established between RPSF and key international cooperation players must be tightened, according to our mutual and complementary interests;
- Financial sustainability must be assured in a different way.

I will have the opportunity to get back to that.

An historic meeting of the Board of Directors

On January 21, 2020, we held our 100th meeting of the Board of Directors. To highlight that important step, we brought together our partners, associates, previous administrators, mission heads, volunteers and generous donors.



On that occasion, we also paid tribute to our founders who, at the outset, had a vision of public relations as vectors of change. They were on the right track.

What next?

Although our traditional fundraising activities could not be carried out in 2020, we received emergency support from the Government of Canada, which allowed us to continue to operate throughout the year. We are grateful for that support.

We also took advantage of the involuntary break to prepare the relaunch of our activities, including the organization of a fundraising activity in the spring of 2021.

Well-earned thanks

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank a number of people and companies for their generous support of RPSF over the past year:

- Two very loyal partners: Avenir Global and Vasco Design;
- A member of the Board of Directors whose mandate ended, Ms. Ludmilla Mirza. Ludmilla made an essential contribution, notably through her very active and relevant participation in the work of the audit committee;
- All the members of the Board of Directors, for their sustained efforts. They devoted countless hours and all the energy required to our committees and projects. They form a remarkable, effective and diversified group, and I would like to express my immense thanks to each and every one of them;
- All the committee volunteers;
- Isabelle Thibault, who acted as our director general for over a year. Prior to deciding to pursue new professional challenges, Isabelle shared with us the benefit of her very extensive experience – especially in setting up and managing international cooperation projects. She has been dynamic and creative throughout this year fraught with challenges, and will remain with RPSF as a volunteer, as her predecessor, Yvan Cliche, has done.

In closing, I would like to officially welcome our new director general, Bénédicte Bucio. He has been with RPSF since the end of May 2021, and her profile is quite remarkable: solid education, extensive experience in the field and essential skills in areas that are highly relevant for RPSF – notably justice for women, the environment, and citizen and community participation. Bénédicte will enjoy the unwavering support of the Board of Directors.



The challenges of the upcoming year will, undoubtedly, again be numerous and demanding. The RPSF team considers itself very fortunate to be able to count on you to face them.

Dominique Dionne, ICD.D, PRP, APR
Chair of the Board of Directors

DIRECTOR GENERAL'S MESSAGE

ADDED VALUE

I joined the wonderful dedicated team of Relations publiques sans frontières in January 2020, blissfully unaware that a worldwide pandemic was developing.

We quickly went into “solution mode” in March, convinced of the strategic importance of communication to minimize the impact of such a crisis. We therefore hastily adjusted our offering.

The program “communication cybermentoring in times of crisis” was created to raise awareness in the Ivory Coast, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali. We successfully completed five accompaniment missions in a row with new local partners, with whom we developed relationships of trust.

The initiative would not have been possible without the exceptional contribution of our network’s experts. They donated their time and were able to support

organizations in the field, according to their needs, with great sensitivity and an outstanding listening ability – a powerful demonstration of the network's great strength in public relations and communication, which RPSF has deployed for a number of years now in the area of international cooperation. I thank our experts from the bottom of my heart.

In 2020, we continued with the transition initiated in 2019, greatly increasing our learning base, with five projects submitted to the Government of Québec and concept notes submitted to the Government of Canada and to a private foundation. That was something new for RPSF, another step towards the realization of our own projects. Although some initiatives did not receive the hoped-for funding, we made great strides in terms of our methods of operation and are looking forward to more successful results in 2021. I would like to thank the members of the projects committee, who worked very hard to set up those projects, and let's keep our fingers crossed for what is to come.

I retain one fundamental belief from my passage within the organization:

**THANKS TO ITS UNIQUE ADDED VALUE,
RELATIONS PUBLIQUES SANS FRONTIÈRES
IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY RELEVANT IN
THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

This should be progressively more recognized and acknowledged. I know for a fact that the team will get there.

Again, a great big thank you to those who invest and freely give time to RPSF. Their team work gives promise to a brighter future.

Isabelle Thibeault
Director General in 2020-2021

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Fundraising activities

The health crisis prevented us from holding our regular fundraising activities in 2020. Only emergency help from the federal government allowed us to continue our operations.

Cybermentoring projects



Burkina Faso

Cybermission – Fighting the pandemic: benefiting from the community network

MISSION HEAD DUO:

Colette Schwartz and Jean-Frédéric Légaré-Tremblay

PARTNER :

Centre d'Information, de Conseils et de Documentation sur le Sida et la Tuberculose

(CICDoc) [Centre for Information, Advice and Documentation on AIDS and Tuberculosis]

From April to July 2020, the mission head duo accompanied representatives of the CICDoc, an organization that coordinates over 230 associations working for health in Burkina Faso. The CICDoc needed to organize its nation-wide interventions pertaining to the government response to Covid-19.

The goal was to support the CICDoc in identifying priority actions for the response plan and to create a specific and strong message to be communicated to associations in order to raise people's awareness while increasing its visibility. The team developed visual tools to explain the anti-Covid-19 measures to the population, an advocacy message presenting prevention measures, an evaluation guide for the communication activities, a press release, and other tools to be published on social networks of the Canadian Embassy in Burkina in order to promote the RPSF-CICDoc partnership in action.



Mali

Countering misinformation regarding COVID-19

MISSION HEAD DUO:

Donna Battista and Myriam Balian

PARTNER :

Accountability Lab Mali (ALM)

From May to July 2020, the mission head duo accompanied representatives of Accountability Lab Mali, an organization that is part of an NGO network in Africa and Asia receiving American funding. ALM supports healthy governance by promoting active citizens and responsible leaders and organizations.

The goal of the mandate was to develop the global communication strategy and the foundation for a communication plan aiming to raise the people's awareness, primarily in the city of Mopti. RPSF acted as a consultant to revise the plan and accompany the NGO in its endeavors – providing advice for the production of a weekly COVID-19 newsletter.



IVORY COAST

Raising the population's awareness regarding the coronavirus: implementation of a communication plan drawn up jointly with RPSF

MISSION HEAD DUO:

Christiane Beaulieu and Antoine Landry

PARTNER :

Action Cœur et Poumon (ACP) [Heart and Lung Action]

From March to June 2020, the mission head duo accompanied representatives of Action Cœur et Poumon, an organization founded by a pneumologist and a cardiologist a few years ago, to raise the population's awareness regarding the various diseases that can affect them. During the pandemic, ACP was given a mandate by the government to include the protection against Covid-19 in its awareness-raising activities.

The goal of the mandate was to strengthen ACP'S capabilities by preparing a communication plan and providing coaching for its implementation, using a WhatsApp platform, among other tools. The support of the Bureau du Québec in Abidjan and RPSF was crucial to the process. The collaboration allowed ACP representatives to identify a local communication resource from the University of Abidjan, with whom they were able to discuss the deployment of the campaign.

The challenge taken up by ACP involved an awareness-raising campaign to reach a large number of people quickly.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiUcOqn6xGg>



IVORY COAST

“Fighting the coronavirus together:” Training session on barrier measures in Port Bouët, Abidjan

MISSION HEAD DUO:

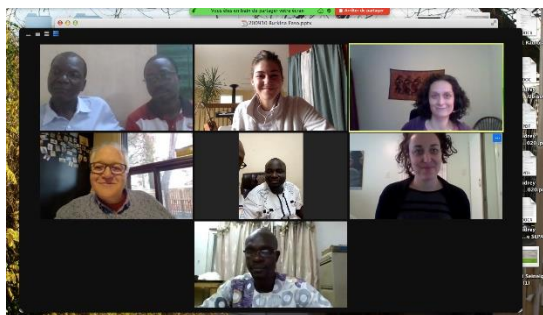
Christiane Beaulieu and Marilaine Bolduc-Jacob

PARTNER :

Institut National d’Hygiène Publique (INHP)
[National Public Health Institute]

From April to July 2020, the mission head duo accompanied representatives of the INHP, a national public health establishment of the Ivory Coast’s ministère de la Santé et de l’Hygiène publique [ministry of public health], working for the prevention and control of contagious diseases. It is a key player in the Ivorian government’s response against COVID-19. The institute must support the 13 communes of Abidjan in raising the population’s awareness.

The goal of the mandate was to strengthen the communications director’s capacity to support the communes and, more specifically, their leaders’ capacities. The topics addressed during the INHP sessions included communication techniques during a health crisis and the application of barrier measures, such as hand-washing, by underscoring key messages and the “why.” The training’s greatest challenge consisted in implementing real change and being in a position to observe its results. RPSF primarily supported the communications director in creating domino effects and enhancing social media use to broaden messages’ reach. The support of the Bureau du Québec in Abidjan was essential throughout the initiative.



Sénégal et Burkina Faso

Training: The radio, helping to change minds

MISSION HEAD DUO:

Pierre Gince and Audrey Beaumont

PARTNER :

EQUITAS

In September 2020, our mission heads developed and provided online media relations training for the partners of Equitas in Senegal (La Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme) [the African meeting for the defense of human rights] and in Burkina Faso (Mouvement Burkinabè des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples) [Berkinan Human Rights Movement] as part of a project funded by the Organisation internationale de la francophonie, which is complementary to the Equitas project Promouvoir l'égalité à travers l'éducation aux droits humains (PETEDH) [Promoting Equality through Human Rights Education].

The goal of the mandate was to strengthen the participants' capacities to develop radio messages by identifying key messages to be disseminated and the best way to disseminate them, and to negotiate the agreements required for their broadcasting. The online training was provided using a highly participatory approach, which included interview simulations and stimulating exercises, including the formulation of a 30 second radio message, which was greatly appreciated by all participants.

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