

Exchange program

Young for Our Universe Use your Power (YOU UP)

November 2022 – November 2023

Benin - Germany

Biographies of the participants

Initiated by :

MeineWelt



Supported by:

**ENGAGEMENT
GLOBAL**
Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen



PROGRAM INFORMATIONS

Young for Our Universe - Use your Power (YOU UP) is an exchange program between young people from **Benin** and **Germany** on sustainable development issues and concrete action strategies against climate change.

Initiated by **MeineWelt e.V** in Germany in collaboration with the **NGO GLS** and **PLACE for Africa** in Benin, it is funded by **Engagement Global** through the **German-African Youth Office (DAJO)**.

The exchange program will take place online and in person over a period of one year between **November 2022 and November 2023** and will consist of several phases, including two **20-day exchange trips in each country (Benin - Germany)**.

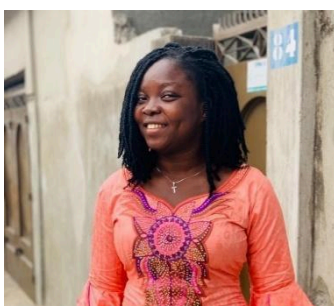
Benin

• Animators

Sèmèvo Zodo is an agricultural engineer by training and accompanies several organizations such as Amnesty International on climate justice issues and the development of advocacy for the involvement of global south perspectives in climate change policies. He is strongly involved in eco-citizenship initiatives and actions to localize and capitalize on experiences in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda with international and national organizations such as GIZ-Benin, NGO JEVEV, the World Youth Parliament for Water and the YALI Association, LOJIQ, the Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development of Benin, as well as with UNDP Benin. He believes that the solutions recommended in the fight against climate change are generally a transfer of the problems to the countries of the South and aim to ensure the well-being of the countries of the North. It is therefore important for me to change this narrative by highlighting the solutions of the global South in an effort to share knowledge and perspectives through this programme.



• Participants



Idoxine Ahoumenou became involved in training young people in green entrepreneurship and disseminating innovation in climate change adaptation practices after graduating in agricultural sciences. Her actions have earned her the title of Green Climate Ambassador for Africa. In March 2021, she received the first TOYP (Ten Outstanding Young Persons) award in the category of Environmental and Moral Leadership. She was recognized as Benin's Young Leader in 2021 by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. She represents Benin in the "50 young people committed to the climate" program initiated by the OIF, IFDD and LOJIQ. In 2021, she joined the PLACE for Africa team where she works to promote African perspectives. Convinced that global warming is a reality that young generations will be confronted with in the coming decades in a very brutal way, she wishes to contribute to reinvent the dialogue between science, politics and the general public in order to implement innovative solutions to the climate crisis and build more sustainable and resilient societies.

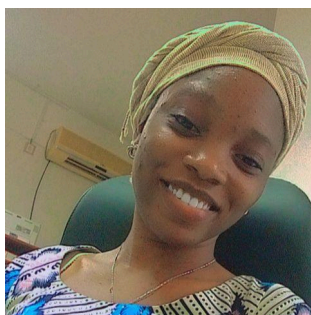
Ange Hinson is an agricultural engineer specializing in rural development and equipment. He is involved in the preservation of agricultural land in Benin and in the development of sustainable and ecological agricultural practices. He is currently engaged with PLACE for Africa on issues of deconstruction, decolonization and highlighting the perspectives of the global south. I joined PLACE for Africa to strengthen my language skills, to contribute to the creation of content, to learn about event organization, writing and project management. To improve my learning process on the topics of deconstruction and decolonization. He thinks that it is important to work on climate change issues in order to help different regions affected by this phenomenon. He would like to work on this topic to gain knowledge about climate change and work on how to preserve the environment. He wants to contribute to the development of new solutions and new approaches to fight against this phenomenon. Take part in peer-to-peer awareness raising sessions to educate and engage communities.





Amour Agon Djossou is studying modern literature at the University of Abomey Calavi. She is in her final year of study for her Bachelor's degree. She is the current Assistant Secretary of the Titigwéti English Club on the campus of Abomey-Calavi where she has been active for more than three years. She has contributed to the training of more than 20 young people in improving their English skills. She has mentored four young girls who won the Best Lady competition. Her ambition is to contribute to the valorization of African culture in general and Beninese culture in particular and to the promotion of youth. Since we all live on the same planet earth, it is important that we protect it together. If the

earth is degraded, it is the people who will suffer, and then there will be no more talk of race or discrimination. Rich or poor, short or tall, white or black, we will suffer. So it's important that we all know about it and get involved in the fight against climate change



Mariette Koublanou, studied political science at the Fadesp at the University of Abomey-Calavi. She did an academic internship of three (03) months at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, which allowed her to better adapt to teamwork. She also took part in a training on personal development and leadership at the end of which I received a training certificate. Working in an organization like Place can only be a dream come true because it is one of the organizations that deals with several issues but also on topics related to the environment and climate change, a theme that is very important to her because the planet is now threatened and it is up to us to take great care of it. And this duty comes

back in great part to us young people through awareness campaigns and especially through actions like waste reduction, the list against pollution and many other important actions.

Alvice Afanou Noutche, after obtaining his baccalaureate in economics in 2020, he continued his university studies at the University of Abomey Calavi in the faculty of economics. He is also very interested in all that touches the field of human rights, and he enrolls twice in the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the same university. His passion led him to join the Political Laboratory of Afro-descendants Communities for Everyone (PLACE for Africa). There he worked on the topics of deconstruction and decolonization perspectives of African history. For him, environmental and climate



change issues are of paramount importance for the survival of humanity and the earth. The impact of human activities on the environment is one of the causes of the climate change we experience every day. He wants to make his peers understand that he can not only contribute to improving the living conditions on earth but also participate in saving the environment. He wants to contribute to the protection and preservation of the environment to ensure a planet for the next generation.

Germany

● Animators



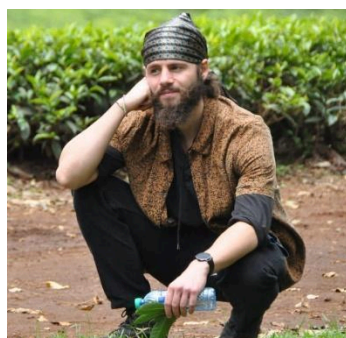
Sylvie Ngo Bigda is a specialist for political education work organizations at ASA Program and a consultant for development policies in municipalities in North Rhine-Westphalia. Co-founder of ADNA for Agreement & Empowerment e.V., a platform for promoting intergenerational cooperation, she is actively involved in intercultural issues in development policy and activist in the fight against racism and discrimination. With her organization ADNA for Agreement & Empowerment she works with young people from Germany and the diaspora on knowledge sharing, developing new perspectives. Since 2019, it initiates activities and projects in the field of migration, integration and intercultural awareness. Passionate about West African cuisine and landscape she is also an interpreter and moderator of events. As a black woman, racism is part of her daily life. She sees herself as a victim because of her migratory biography. For her, as a black woman, the visibility of the expertise of people from the global south is very important, but especially to pass on the example of multiculturalism for and with young people of African descent.

Marla Kaupmann has been seriously concerned since her teenage years with the current relationship between man and nature in crisis. Living her life can be understood as her personal research on how to foster change with the capacities given to her. Thus she studied geography, dealt with the climate crisis and global injustice during her studies. Since then she started and joined projects with peers to better understand the principles of structural change within institutions, local society and law. Her topics have always been (in)justice also in terms of climate change. Her actions have always been a mixture of formal and informal political activism. Lately she digged into the field of colonial continuities, racism and questions of critical whiteness.



Joining the Young of Our Universe Use Your Power (YOU UP) exchange program Marla aims to continue this path. She wants to learn intercultural competences, work on projects created together with global south perspectives and want to better understand her potential role as white woman in the field of global transformation for justice.

● Participants



Victor Cassagnes is studying a Master's degree in Political Theory and Sociology at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. He is currently working on a project about pre-colonial African knowledge and how it can help to work towards a better future and a healthier relationship between humans and nature without exploiting either. He participated in an international seminar on neo-colonialism in Nairobi. He worked in a hospital at the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN) and was involved in environmental and social organizations (JANUN Hannover, Seebrücke, SDS.Die Linke). He was looking for perspectives to find and work on solutions for the many problems in this world. He wants a world community where no human being's human rights are violated, and the basic reproductive needs of every person are met. He believes that this can only be achieved if humanity works together to end the exploitation of nature and society. The nature-human relationship is at the core of today's globalized problems and needs to be reformulated.

Marie Sprenger developed a strong sense of social justice and a desire to make a positive impact on her community. She completed her diploma in Comparative and International Studies at Sciences Po Toulouse, gaining a profound understanding of global social movements and the crucial role of intersectionality in addressing systemic inequalities. She is finishing her European Studies Bachelor in Passau. She is leading a student association that provides support and resources for students who experience discrimination and is also involved in the university's diversity audit. In addition to her commitment at the university, Marie works with a social welfare agency in integration and refugee aid. As a BIPOC woman, she is particularly passionate about educating others about the importance of intersectionality in understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities. She firmly believes that knowledge is the key to unlocking potential and is determined to use her own knowledge and abilities to create a more just and equitable society for all.



Martin Taylor is studying technical communication (B.A.) at the Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (RWTH Aachen University). After his graduation he wants to do his Masters in digital media communication (M.A.). Besides university he has been a volunteer at ADNA for Agreement & Empowerment e. V. since March 2022. Through different workshops he has learned more about sustainable methods and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations addressing climate change. These workshops have been very helpful and shocking at the same time as some of these goals seemed quite utopian considering the current political and economical power dynamics. The project Young of Our Universe,

Use Your Power (YOU UP) offers a great opportunity for young adults to get to know the conditions on site and gain the experience to accomplish the tasks. Of course, it is always good to get to know new people, discover new cultures and habits, expand one's horizons, and get a better understanding of people's different living conditions.



King Boateng, is a 21 year old student living in Germany. he would be very happy to participate in the You Up event in Benin. he spends a lot of time dealing with environmental issues and making sure that he lives as sustainably as possible. For this purpose, he maintains a vegetarian diet and makes sure he buys high-quality clothes that don't get broken so quickly and thus have to be thrown away. He also deals with the topic of anti-discrimination and has already produced two music songs about anti-discrimination as part of the ComYOU!nity project. In addition, he has participated in the commitment project, where he has dealt with empowerment in relation to racism as well as raising awareness of diversity. At the end of the meeting, he hopes to have a better understanding

of the issue of sustainable development in general and climate change in particular. Therefore, he wants to contribute to the drafting of contributions and recommendations for future global processes on youth engagement in the fight against climate change.

Johanna Zabel, is studying Environmental Science and Politics in Lüneburg./Germany. Besides university she is a member of the German Youth NGO Klimadelegation e.V. in which she actively engages in international and German climate politics. When she attended the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow (COP26) she recognized that to stop the climate crisis we need to have a much more inclusive way. That is why she dedicated her bachelor thesis, the effects of the Global North Dominance in the UN climate negotiation on the inclusion of racialized voices and how this can be improved. Because for her it's clear:



Especially the most vulnerable and marginalized people and communities must be at the center of the fight and share their knowledge and approaches. Particularly the inclusion of young people and an international exchange is important for her. That is why she would be thrilled to become part of the program YOU UP to exchange her experiences about international climate politics as well as climate protection projects with others and to learn a lot from like-minded youth.



Celina Bittger is a fourth-year environmental and political science student in Lüneburg, a small city near Hamburg. This summer she will graduate and is looking forward to gaining working experience in the field of international climate politics. She loves learning about other cultures and ways of living and therefore has had several more intensive experiences abroad. She participated in a student exchange in the United States for six months, did one year of volunteer service in India at a women's empowerment organization, and studied "International Development" for a semester in Prague, Czech Republic. Now, she is looking forward to the YOU UP exchange program, bringing together motivated young people from Germany and Benin to learn and work together on the topics she is really passionate about: climate justice and how young activists' demands can be brought into politics. She is interested in getting to know climate activists and projects in Benin and working together for the common goal of climate justice. Through this experience, she hopes to gain knowledge on how to advocate more effectively for climate justice in her future projects.