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Our Rights, Our Lives, Our
Future Plus (O³ PLUS)
Programme



In 2021, UNESCO launched the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future PLUS (O³ PLUS) Programme with the aim to empower students in Higher and Tertiary Education Institutions (HTEIs) across six Eastern and Southern African countries to make informed decisions about their health and well-being . Working hand-in-hand with regional organizations, national ministries, HTEIs, and other key partners, O³ PLUS strives to make a lasting impact by reducing new HIV infections, preventing unintended pregnancies, and combating gender-based violence (GBV). This will be

achieved through the promotion of innovative approaches to accessing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in HTEIs.

O³ PLUS is more than just a project, it's an investment in the future of young people in Eastern and Southern Africa. By empowering students to make informed decisions about their health, education, and personal lives, we are laying the foundation for a healthier, safer, and more equitable future for all.

Vision and Goal

Higher and tertiary education students enjoy improved sexual and reproductive health, enabling them to reach their full educational potential and contribute more effectively to the development of their countries and region as graduates, professionals, and young leaders.

Impact

Increased student SRHR knowledge levels; Reduced new HIV infections; Reduced GBV rates; Reduced rates of unintended pregnancies.

Objectives:

Institutional strengthening for sustainability. Support the institutionalization of CSE and SRH services and address GBV across the higher and tertiary education sector.

Student health and well-being. Build and strengthen the capacity of campus health facilities to offer youth friendly health services for students, along with referral mechanisms to specialist care and support services as needed.

Safe and inclusive campus environments. Support the development, implementation, and effective enforcement of laws and policies to protect students from GBV and enhance campus safety and inclusivity.

Evidence-building and knowledge-sharing. Commission epidemiologic and operations research studies to generate a body of knowledge for a deeper understanding of the HIV, STI, and GBV burden in institutions and enhance the data management system for evidence-based programming.



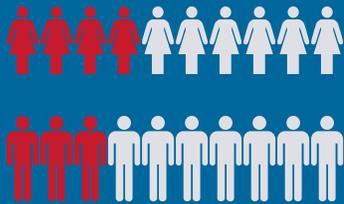
Why invest in Higher and Tertiary Education?



It is frequently assumed that because students have reached the tertiary level of education, they have already received the education that equips them to avoid adverse health outcomes as they move from childhood to adulthood, however, evidence has shown that this is often not the case. Young people in HTEIs are exposed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)-related concerns and risks such as unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and gender-based violence (GBV). UNESCO strongly believes in the power of education to transform the lives of young people, but increasingly recognizes that inclusive and transformative education cannot be achieved if students are not safe, well-nourished, healthy, and free from violence and discrimination.



1 in 4 young women aged 20-24 years old in sub-Saharan Africa has been physically, sexually or psychologically abused by a partner



Persistence of attitudes, norms and behaviours that perpetuate negative stereotypes and tolerance regarding violence. More than 40% of young women and 30% of young men in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife

4000

Nearly 4000 adolescent girls and women aged 15-24 in ESA acquire HIV every week

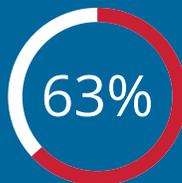
44.3%



41.9%



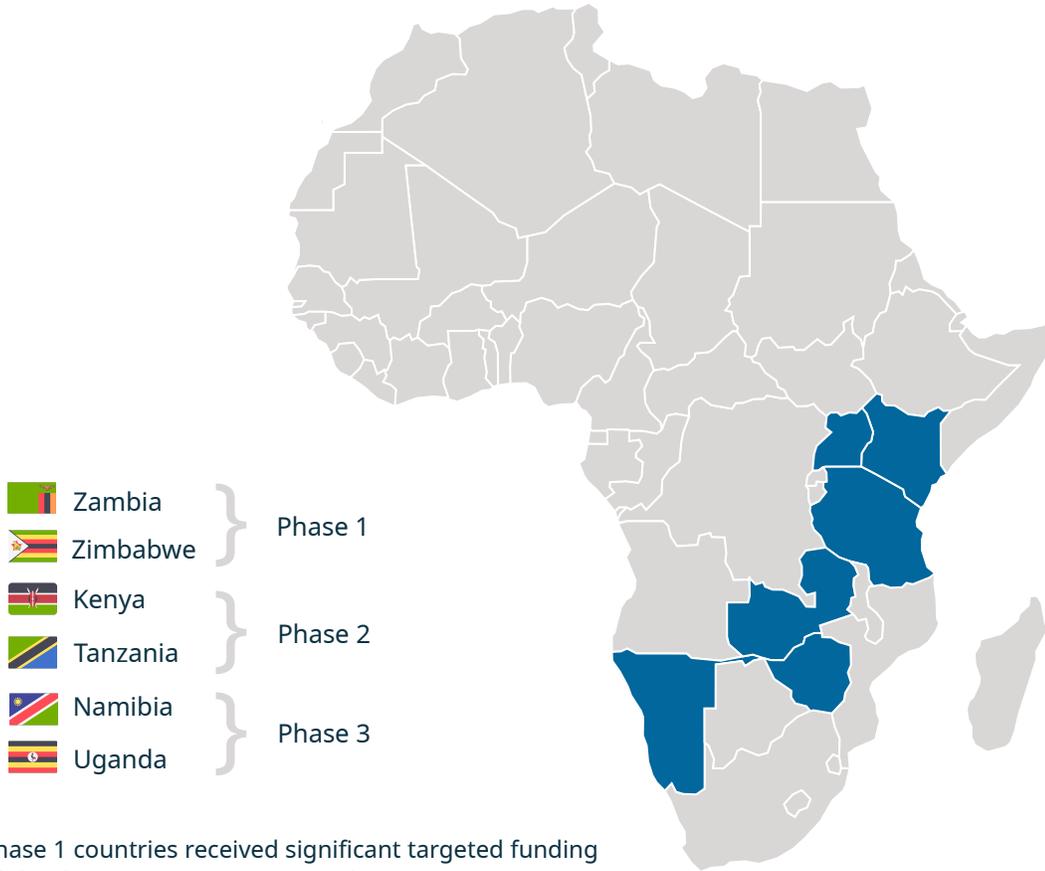
Only 41.9% of males and 44.3% of females aged 15-24 years old are able to identify ways of preventing sexual transmission of HIV



Rates of unintended pregnancies among students remains unacceptably high (e.g as high as 75% in Zambia and 63% in Zimbabwe)

PROJECT REACH

The programme is implemented in six countries as follows:



Phase 1 countries received significant targeted funding while Phase 2 countries received support to carry out specific activities and Phase 3 countries received seed funding and benefit from regional activities.



The implementation period for O3 Plus project is 2021 to 2025



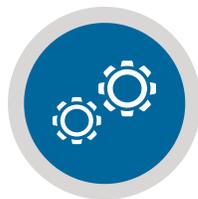
Project will be implemented in **38 Higher and Tertiary Education Institutions (HTEIs)**



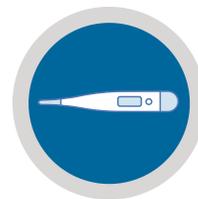
A compulsory **Sexuality Education (SE) module** will be institutionalized



250,000 students will receive accurate right-based SE



Project will support **mobile health services and 'in-reach' programs** to advance SRHR service uptake



Over **150,000 students** will be tested for HIV, through mobile and 'in-reach' programs.



Project will support strengthening of referral mechanisms to **specialist care and support services**



Through strengthened referral mechanisms **168,000 students** will be linked to appropriate sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)



Project will promote inclusiveness for **vulnerable and marginalized young people such as those with disabilities**



Project will promote inclusiveness for **those living with HIV, and other key populations**



Project will support development and or revision relevant **policies to guarantee tailored access to SE and SRH information and services.**



2,130 health care providers reached with training to provide quality and tailored SRHR information and services.



5,350 peer counsellors will be reached with training to provide quality and tailored SRHR information and services.

THEORY OF CHANGE

IMPACT

Higher and Tertiary education students enjoy improved sexual and reproductive health, enabling them to reach their full educational potential and contribute more effectively to the development of their countries and region as graduates, professionals and young leaders in line with Agenda 2030.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Assumptions: Uptake of SE & SRH services and improved campus environments enhance learning, leading to better education and health outcomes, thus contributing to higher rates of student retention in education

Increased student knowledge levels; Reduced new HIV infections; Increased ART adherence; Reduced GBV rates; Reduced rate of Early and Unintended Pregnancy; Reduced early marriage.

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Institutionalized SE and SRHR policies	Greater uptake by students of improved quality SE and SRHR services	Safer, more inclusive and more supportive campus environments for all students	Increased evidence base for SE/SRHR needs and effective approaches within HTEIs
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OUTPUT

Assumptions: Training and upgraded facilities lead to improved service quality; service improvements lead to increased uptake; knowledge plus support leads to positive health-seeking behaviors, awareness on sexual harassment and GBV leads to effective action; sharing of lessons and findings influences additional institutions and the wider sector

Institutional and national working groups and regional steering committee established	Score cards developed and utilized to improve delivery of health services	New/enhanced complaint pathways and whistle-blower mechanisms	Operations research implemented to inform advocacy to bridge the gap between research and practice
Compulsory SE module institutionalized in all HTEIs	Health care providers and peer counselors trained to provide quality and tailored SRHR information and services	Physical environment and facilities improved	Accurate and reliable student data available
Orientation week programme for all first year students institutionalized	Strengthened referral mechanisms to special care and support services	Campaign activities on sexual harassment and GBV implemented	M&E lessons documented and shared, midterm and end-term evaluations conducted.
Mobile application developed	SE messages delivered through radio/podcasts and other formats and platforms	Practices to prevent & manage sexual harassment and GBV adopted by staff and students	Learning and sharing of practices enhanced through annual reviews & regional conferences

ACTIVITIES

Assumptions: Sufficient political goodwill and an enabling environment for the project; interest and participation in project and in planned activities; no major delays or disruptions

Set up institutional and national working groups + regional steering committee	Develop student score cards to monitor and improve delivery of health services	Establish/strengthen complaint pathways and whistle blower mechanisms	Conduct operations research to assess different SE approaches in HTEIs
Conduct in-depth needs assessment	Train healthcare providers to provide quality, tailored SRHR information and services	Assess, make recommendations and upgrade physical environment for safety	Conduct advocacy meetings to bridge research and practice
Develop and institutionalize compulsory SE module for all first year students	Train students as peer counsellors to offer after-hours support, face to face or via sms.	Support campaigns against sexual harassment and GBV	Strengthen data collection and management re HTEI student populations to support development of targeted approaches.
Institutionalize orientation week programme	Establish or strengthen referral mechanisms to specialist care and support services	Train academic, support and security staff on sexual harassment and GBV	Carry out regular monitoring and evaluation and annual reviews and share lessons
Develop mobile application to strengthen link between information, peer-to-peer interaction and services	Support youth leadership to develop radio/podcasts and other info streams to deliver SE messages and promote SRHR services	Capacity building for students on sexual harassment, masculinities, consent	Mentor additional HTEIs and hold regional networking conferences to expand project approaches and reach.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

STUDENT HEALTH AND WELL BEING

SAFE AND INCLUSIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS

EVIDENCE - BUILDING & KNOWLEDGE - SHARING



The project will contribute directly to the health, education and gender Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the specific targets for these, while also contributing to the achievement of other key SDGs, especially those related to poverty, hunger, peaceful and just societies. The project will hopefully influence implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063, including the importance of synergies and linkages between SDG3 (Health and Well-Being), SDG4 (Quality Education) SDG5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 .(Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)



The O³ PLUS Programme will directly contribute to achieving the SDGs around education, health and gender, and their specific targets. It will also advance the attainment of other key SDGs, especially those related to poverty, hunger, and peaceful and just societies. The Programme is guided by UNESCO's strategy on education for health and well-being, which is designed to achieve the SDGs through:





The overall impact envisaged by the project is that higher and tertiary education students in target countries will enjoy improved sexual and reproductive health, enabling them to reach their full educational potential and contribute more effectively to the development of their countries and region as graduates, professionals and young leaders. More specifically, the project's outcomes will include institutionalized HTEI commitment to SE and SRHR through policies and curriculum; greater uptake by students of improved quality SRHR services and information; safer, more inclusive and more supportive campus environments for all students; and an increased evidence base for SE/SRHR needs and effective approaches within HTEIs.



UNESCO is a United Nations' specialized agency for education. It provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems, and responds to contemporary global challenges through education, with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.

Through the Global Strategy on Education for Health and Well-being; UNESCO envisions a world where all learners thrive. To achieve this vision, UNESCO pursues three strategic outcomes that seek to ensure that all learners:

- are supported by resilient school health systems that promote learners' physical and mental health and well-being.
- are empowered by good quality, gender-transformative CSE that includes HIV, life skills, family and rights.
- benefit from safe, inclusive learning environments free from all forms of violence, bullying, stigma and discrimination.



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Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



Sweden
Sverige



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DE L'EUROPE
ET DES AFFAIRES
ÉTRANGÈRES

*Liberté
Égalité
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Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



Irish Aid

Department of Foreign Affairs
An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha

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