

INVESTING IN AFRICA'S YOUTH

How the EU can better support adolescent SRHR

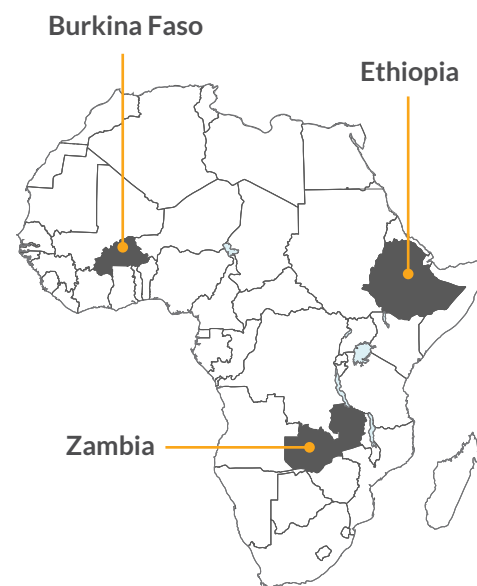


In many African countries, young people are a majority, often accounting for more than 60 percent of the population. Africa's youth population is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the 21st century, and to more than double its current levels by 2055. **In this context, there is no development without youth.**

Young people can be key agents for development and change today and tomorrow in any national context. In order for them to realise their full potential, special attention needs to be given to youth policies and programmes.

In particular, the start of adolescence brings many challenges that prevent young people from exercising some of their most basic human rights. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Programme of Action (PoA) (Cairo, 1994), which set the basis for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), recognised a comprehensive range of needs of adolescents and young people. Following their reaffirmation by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (in 1995), adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR) have, unsurprisingly, received attention from policy makers at various levels. At the EU level, the new Consensus on Development has reconfirmed EU commitments towards the SRHR agenda.

CASE STUDY COUNTRIES



ABOUT THE REPORT

This report presents the findings and recommendations of research commissioned by Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) that assesses how European Union (EU) development cooperation programmes have supported young people's access to SRHR, with a focus on a number of African countries. The research was undertaken by Andreia Oliveira, Elena Zacharenko and Sibylle Koenig.

Read the full report at: <http://www.dsw.org/en/publications/investing-in-africas-youth>



This report is looking at EU support to SRHR through multiple channels and modalities and is based on three case studies (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Zambia). The analysis is based on 3 questions:

1. Have EU-funded programmes been supporting equitable, accessible, acceptable, appropriate and effective youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services (YFS)?

For each criterion (equity, accessibility, acceptance, appropriateness and effectiveness), the report uses a specific methodology to test EU-funded health programmes against characteristics developed based on expert interviews and literature review. The study also looked at whether programmes included measures for long-term effect. The report however does not aim to confirm if the programmes are impactful, but rather to evaluate if they offer the right conditions to deliver broader agency to youth.

General and sector budget support can in theory be conducive to key YFS components. If well-designed, it can include feedback mechanisms and indirectly support community mobilisation. In practice, budget support indicators used are neither youth-friendly, nor age-disaggregated. This reduces the EU's steering capacity for ensuring the quality and youth friendliness of services.

Sector-specific/thematic project-type funding provides the EU with the ability to ensure that key components for YFS are included in the programme design and implementation. Projects can also promote innovative piloting approaches with a potential for scaling-up, if governments are adequately involved or consulted.

EU-supported pooled funding mechanisms can help scale up YFS, if these are earmarked, and enable elements for YFS. However, many of these mechanisms are still implementing siloed approaches.

2. Do EU programmes include pre-conditions for youth empowerment and sustainability of services?

General and sector budget support can promote government ownership and improve national resource allocation capacities. This process does not tend to be very inclusive of stakeholders other than the national government. To date there is little evidence about efforts towards mainstreaming youth friendliness and empowerment.



Sector-specific/ thematic project-type funding can contribute to inclusive, country ownership and raise civic awareness, while including feedback mechanisms. Some EU-funded projects have also demonstrably helped strengthening youth leadership, informing national guidelines and integrating youth friendliness beyond a single sector. However, despite their potential, many projects still lack structured approaches on how to involve youth-led organisations in particular. For sustainability, projects need to be designed in consultation with the government, youth and local communities.

EU-supported pooled funding mechanisms can help harmonise donor funding in line with the government's needs and provide for increased accountability and inclusiveness through dedicated mechanisms. However, these mechanisms' decision-making processes are not always inclusive; possible duplication of related coordination mechanisms might imply increased transaction costs.

3. How do EU programmes meet the development policy objectives?

The EU funds targeting SRHR are usually expected to follow both the ICPD PoA and the Beijing agenda, even if these are not explicitly mentioned in the decision documents.

However, **sexual rights**, notably Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) rights, remain a sensitive area for EU funding, with EU political dialogue and/or funding for targeted Civil Society Organisations (CSO) projects continuing to be the most common ways of addressing these issues.

Most of the remaining aspects that are key for ensuring "free and responsible decision on matters related to **sexuality and sexual and reproductive health**" as stated in the Consensus on development tend to receive EU support through different modalities and channels. The EU has been a supporter of ensuring universal access of young people to SRH information and services. The exception is **comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)**, which tends to be supported by other donors, including EU Member States. The "universal" nature of this access to SRH information and services has nonetheless been challenged by some of the evidence from this research, which has shown that the lack of comprehensive approaches, including with different government bodies and other stakeholders, limits the outreach of EU support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The future EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027 offers opportunities, but also bears some threats to the possibility of upscaling EU support for young people's access to SRHR.

Within the new MFF

- Make youth friendliness a standard criterion for delivering health and social services
- Continuous consultation with youth should inform policy development, project design, implementation and monitoring
- Ensure a balanced mix of aid modalities and channels when supporting the health sector and ASRHR
- Assess the impact of financing instruments on social sectors and youth and ensure all aid modalities are youth friendly
- Continue to prioritise traditional grants as a demonstrably effective way of making services youth friendly, equitable, accessible, acceptable, appropriate and effective
- Adopt an integrated approach to health, whereby all relevant national policies that affect the chosen cooperation sector, notably ASRHR, are considered
- Ensure an enabling environment for CSOs, as development and governance actors, paying special attention to targeting youth and youth-led organisations.

With regards to the specific modalities

General and sector budget support

- Attach indicators to the variable tranche of budget support that reinforce YFS components and are gender and age disaggregated
- Include social accountability mechanisms by reinforcing linkages with relevant initiatives supporting civil society's oversight role
- Ensure that new funding includes provisions to verify if the rights of women, youth and children, in areas such as SRHR, are "recognised and effectively protected" by the candidate country.

Sector-specific or thematic project-type funding

- In order to scale-up innovative solutions, projects should support monitoring and documenting health system practices related to YFS standards
- Provide more targeted and sustainable support to youth leadership
- Work with government structures to ensure ownership and sustainability and align projects with relevant national policies and plans and use national indicators where possible
- Support cross-sector approaches and innovative initiatives using new tools (e.g. social media, ICT) for reaching out to young people in and out of school youth.

Pooled funding mechanism

- Promote the integration of ASRHR services into the initiatives of vertical mechanisms such as the Global Fund against Tuberculosis, Aids and Malaria
- Adopt a holistic, non-siloed approach towards addressing young people's needs and engage with different national ministries
- Allow for more participation of partner countries and local stakeholders in the decision-making especially in the EC-established trust funds.

With regards to EU political and policy dialogue

- Ensure the participation of youth organisations in the structured dialogue with EU Delegations
- Continue tackling sensitive issues, such as LGBTI rights or CSE, which cannot always be addressed at programme level, by using political or policy dialogue.

Impact of EU coordination on young peoples' health and well-being

- Consider demography and population growth as a strategic objective within the Joint Programming processes
- Where health is chosen as a priority sector for donor coordination, ensure a comprehensive approach is taken, including the consideration of ASRHR.