



**SAFEGUARD YOUNG  
PEOPLE PROGRAMME  
2021 ANNUAL REPORT**





Cover page image: © UNFPA Botswana.  
Boikango Monkgelababo is a 17-year-old teenage mother to a 3-month-old baby. She fell pregnant at the age of 16 years, while in form 3 of junior school. She benefited from the out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education sessions offered by Women Against Rape through UNFPA support and intends to go back and complete her studies once her baby has reached the stipulated return-to-school age of 6 months. Her parents are in full support of this and her mother has promised to help look after her child to give Boikango an opportunity to fulfill her dreams. Boikango's advice to other young girls is to abstain from sexual activities and focus on school or to always use protection if they cannot abstain from sex.

## **United Nations Population Fund**

Delivering a world where  
every pregnancy is wanted  
every childbirth is safe and  
every young person's  
potential is fulfilled

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACMH</b>	African Coalition for Menstrual Health
<b>ASRHR</b>	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>AYFHS</b>	Adolescent and Youth-friendly Health Services
<b>AYFSRH</b>	Adolescent and Youth-friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>BtS CSE</b>	'Breaking the Silence' Approach to Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>CSE</b>	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>ESA</b>	East and Southern Africa
<b>ESA Commitment</b>	ESA Commitment on the Health and Education for the Wellbeing of Adolescents and Young People
<b>ESARO</b>	East and Southern Africa Regional Office
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>ICASA</b>	International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa
<b>JIRO</b>	Responsible and Organized Informed Youth
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>SYP</b>	Safeguard Young People
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>YFHS</b>	Youth-friendly Health Services
<b>YPNSRHHA</b>	Young People's Network on Sexual Reproductive Health, HIV and AIDS
<b>YPS</b>	Youth, Peace and Security

# MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR: GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH IN 2021



For the Safeguard Young People (SYP) programme, 2021 was a year of consolidating gains, strengthening resilience, embracing innovation and expanding work. The programme stood firm and weathered the pandemic – we cannot allow young people’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to digress from the trajectory of progress. Today, in this environment of uncertainty, protecting rights, advancing healthy choices and empowering young people has never been so crucial.

In 2021, the world took steps towards learning to live with the ‘new normal’ brought about by the pandemic. Work, life and mobility blended into a hybrid environment, enabling resilience and flexibility in our pace and ways.

Back in 2020, the SYP programme demonstrated a remarkable ability to innovate and adapt to lockdowns and disruptions in all spheres. In 2021, the programme continued to be agile in its implementation mechanism, adjusting to the new normal, while at the same time ensuring sustainability and remaining focused on achieving results.

Unprecedented times called for innovative practices and opened new frontiers for tapping into creative solutions, such as online training, the intensive use of digital solutions and social media, door-to-door campaigns and mobile clinics, to reach communities left behind.

The number of young people reached by the programme last year is impressive. In total, 4.9 million learners received comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) at 38,300 schools across the SYP countries – making the programme unmatched in terms of coverage and speed of implementation.

In addition, we have exciting news. Four more countries – Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania – joined the programme in 2021, heralding the operation of the SYP programme in 12 countries. We are grateful to the Embassy of the Netherlands for joining the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to support and expand the regional programme.

The newcomers will benefit from the SYP programme’s eight years of experience and success. The programme has already turbocharged the preparation phase and programming in the new countries’ first year. Training of teachers, health-care

workers and activists has started, and will be rolled out extensively in 2022.

As part of the journey to the end of Phase 3 (2020–2022), the SYP programme is reinforcing the long-term viability of its interventions. We made a number of key achievements last year: we gained the endorsement of a renewed Eastern and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment on access to comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services (ESA Commitment), and the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Model Law on Gender-based Violence and the SADC Youth Empowerment Policy Framework were implemented. These and the other results achieved form the SYP programme’s legacy for the protection and promotion of adolescents’ and young people’s SRHR.

In addition to its core work, the SYP programme addresses critical emerging issues, such as menstrual health; the impact of climate change on sexual and reproductive health; youth, peace and security; and substance abuse among young people.

If we focus on work supported by the SYP programme on issues related to climate change and SRHR to build resilience among young people and systems, we can conclude that UNFPA is turning into an innovation powerhouse. Examples of such work include the newly developed module on CSE and climate change, the establishment of a youth working group on climate and SRHR, and the amazing results of the UNFPA/SYP programme’s 2021 Climate HackLab.

Our greatest assets and successes have been driven by the tireless mobilization of young people to secure and advance their rights, health and well-being. The peer educators cycling to deliver condoms and antiretroviral drugs. The young leaders advocating with ministers to renew the ESA Commitment. The adolescent girls set on finishing secondary school without becoming pregnant. The young people living with disabilities who will no longer be silent and ignored.

They are our greatest assets and at UNFPA we are committed to partnering with young people to ensure their own health and well-being are protected and for the benefit and growth of the region.

**Dr. Bannet Ndyabangi**  
**Regional Director ad interim,**  
**East and Southern Africa**



# THE SAFEGUARD YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMME: A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION OVER EIGHT YEARS

The regional Safeguard Young People (SYP) programme empowers adolescents and young people aged 10 to 24 years to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), early and unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, early marriage, gender-based violence (GBV) and other harmful cultural practices. In achieving this end, the SYP programme promotes gender-equitable norms, an enabling legal and policy environment, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and high-quality adolescent and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (AYFSRH) services.

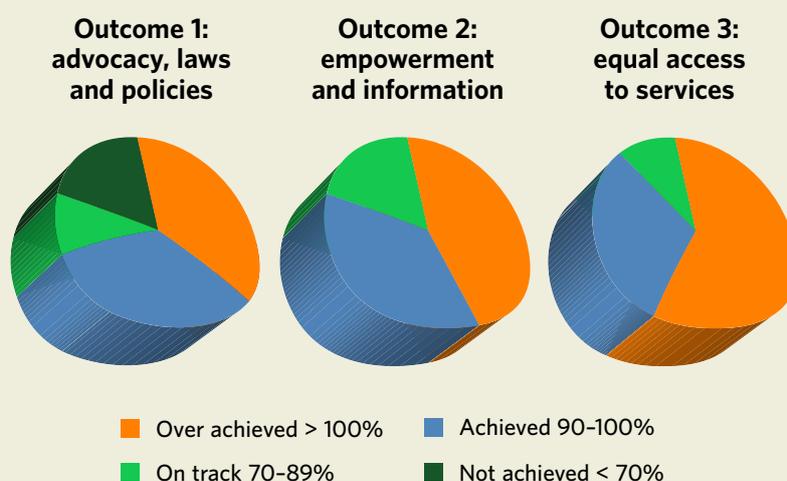
The SYP programme journey started in 2013. Over nearly a decade, its work has been structured into Phases 1 and 2 (2014–2016 and 2017–2019, respectively). It is currently in Phase 3 (2020–2022).

In Phase 3, in addition to the SYP programme's core areas – strengthening the enabling environment, strengthening demand through the empowerment of young people, and ensuring that high-quality AYFSRH services are provided – the programme deepened its work on certain critical emerging issues. These include mainstreaming sexual and

reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in existing economic empowerment programmes, climate change adaptation, menstrual health, universal health coverage, SRHR for young people with disabilities, and youth, peace and security (YPS).

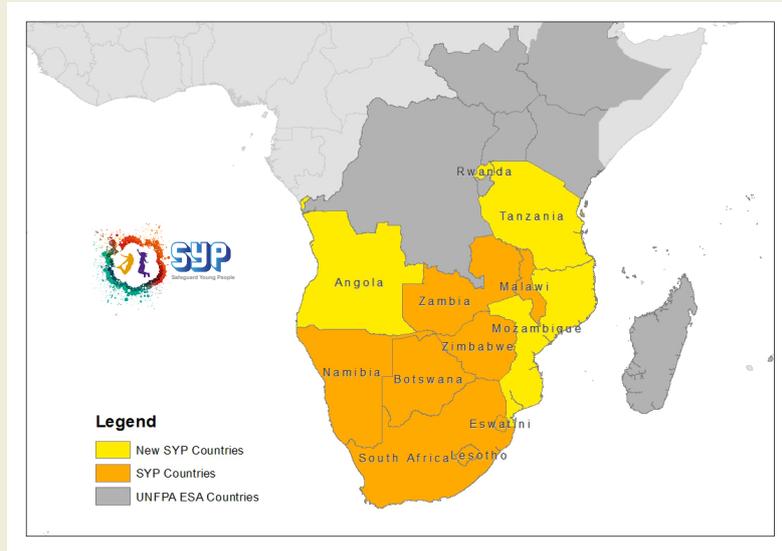
In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted plans, economies, lives and livelihoods, SYP's programmatic response adapted swiftly to the crisis and succeeded in keeping SRHR on national and regional agendas, as school closures and lockdowns had particularly detrimental effects on the health and well-being of young people in the East and Southern Africa (ESA) region and beyond.

In 2021, the SYP programme continued to adapt its implementation mechanisms to the 'new normal' of living with the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time ensuring sustainability and the achievement of results. In an exciting development, four more countries joined the programme in 2021 (see '[Expanded Footprint of the Safeguard Young People Programme: 12 Countries in East and Southern Africa](#)').



The SYP programme performed well in 2021. The programme met or exceeded the targets for 26 of its 32 indicators, and is on track with all but two indicators.

## Expanded Footprint of the Safeguard Young People Programme: 12 Countries in East and Southern Africa



In 2021, four new countries (**Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda** and **Tanzania**) joined the SYP programme, in addition to the initial eight (**Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**).

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is funding the programme expansion into Rwanda, Tanzania and Mozambique until 2023. The total funding provided by SDC for these expansions will be US\$9 million. The Embassy of the Netherlands will provide US\$11 million for the SYP programme in Angola and Mozambique until 2026.

These expansions reflect the positive impact that the SYP programme is having on young people's health and rights, and on their lives and livelihoods, through successful partnerships, creative strategies and dynamic programming within the region and in the implementing countries.



At the virtual launch of the expansion in November 2021, Swiss Ambassador and Head of the South Cooperation Department of SDC **Mr. Thomas Gass** said:

"As a long-standing partner of SYP, Switzerland has been able to witness first-hand the impact that the programme has on the lives of adolescents and young people in the region: more than 21 million adolescents and young people reached with CSE in and out-of-school, as well as social behavioural change communication, and more than 8 million adolescents and young people accessed integrated HIV and SRH (sexual and reproductive health) services."

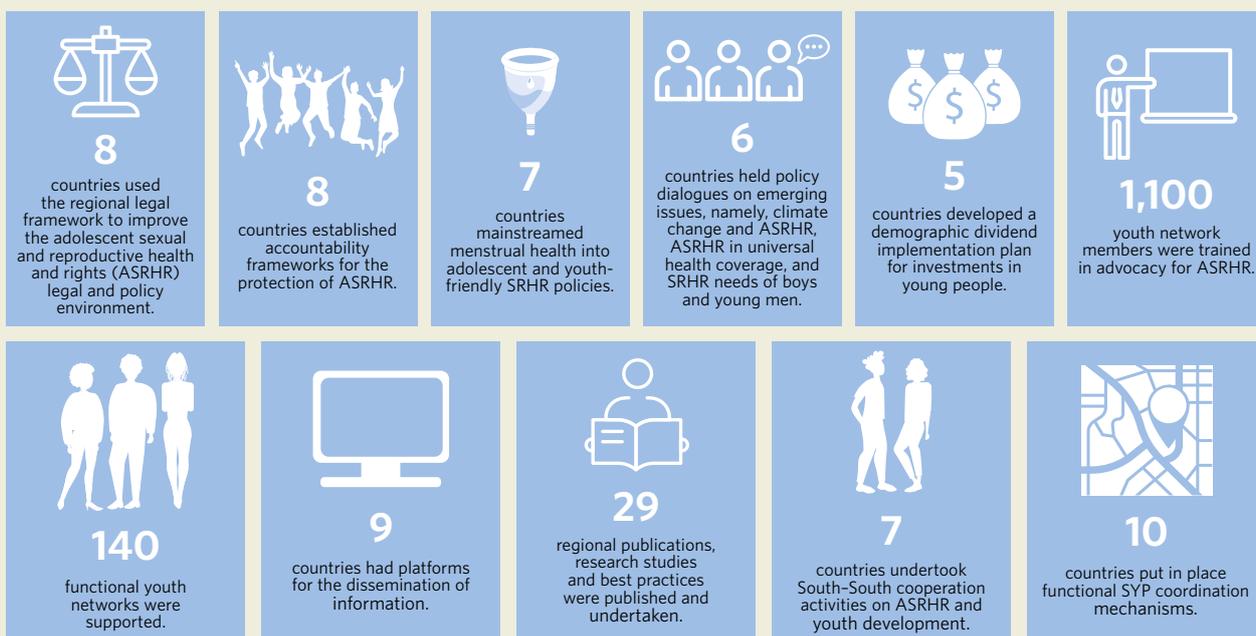
Dutch Ambassador in Mozambique, **Ms. Henny de Vries**, said:



"Together and under the leadership of the regional economic communities and in partnership with young people, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/SYP have a real chance to help Africa's youth to lead and participate in the economic growth and development of the region and to make smart SRH choices for their own well-being and for the region as a whole."

# OUTCOME 1: ADVOCACY, LAWS AND POLICIES TO PROTECT ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

## THE SAFEGUARD YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMME IN 2021 – A SNAPSHOT



The realization of adolescents' and young people's (AYP) SRHR requires a conducive legal and policy environment. Since 2013, the SYP programme has worked to update and strengthen the relevant national and regional (Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East African Community) policies, national legislation and accountability mechanisms to promote and protect the rights of adolescents and young people through technical assistance and the generation of evidence-based technical briefs and guidance notes.

In 2021, the overall rate of SYP countries attaining their targets and indicators for this outcome was **95 per cent**.



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## REGIONAL RESULTS AT A GLANCE

The SYP programme supported the development of the **African Union Accountability Framework to Eliminate Harmful Practices**, particularly female genital mutilation and child marriage. The framework's process and platform will facilitate regular reporting and assessment of State Parties' action and progress towards the elimination of harmful practices, in harmony with the legal charters relevant to the African Union.

In 2021, the SYP programme supported the drafting of terms of reference for the **African Union Strategy for the Education for Health and Well-being of Adolescents and Young People**. Since 2019, UNFPA/the SYP programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) have technically and financially supported this initiative. The original intention was to develop a consultative, home-grown and pan-African strategy for CSE that would address the notions that CSE is 'un-African' and imposed by the Global North. After the pandemic, stakeholders agreed by consensus to broaden the strategy to include education for health and well-being. The strategy will be finalized and validated by the African Union by the end of 2022. **The SADC Model Law on GBV** was adopted during the 50th SADC Parliamentary Forum Plenary Assembly. The UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and the SYP programme have technically and financially supported this process since 2020. Consultations with stakeholders took place in 2021. The Model Law will facilitate the amendment of outdated national laws among the 16 SADC members.

The SYP programme facilitated the validation of the **SADC Youth Empowerment Policy Framework** to be endorsed by the Ministers of Youth in 2022. The framework's rights-based multisectoral perspective is predicated on sustained economic growth, education, skills, employment, entrepreneurship development, and peace and security. In 2022, beyond the formal adoption of the framework, the SYP programme will support the development of the accountability framework and the SADC Youth Protocol.

## The Journey to a Renewed Eastern and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment on Health and Education for the Well-being of Adolescents and Young People<sup>2</sup>

In December 2021, at a **high-level meeting** at the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA), ministers of health, education, youth and gender from the ESA region reaffirmed and expanded the ESA Commitment, which was first endorsed in 2013 and has now been aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The SYP programme actively led the [road map](#) for the endorsement of a renewed ESA Commitment. Key milestones on this road map in 2021 include the following:

- ✓ An **evaluation** of the ESA Commitment from 2013 to 2020 assessed the process, achievements and shortcomings, to draw on lessons learned for extending the commitment to 2030.
- ✓ **National consultations and a regional consultation** explored the evaluation and designed the road map up to December 2021.
- ✓ A **regional accountability framework** was drafted to monitor and track national and regional progress in implementation up to 2030.
- ✓ Suggestions from a meeting of the **Principal Secretaries** of relevant ministries were incorporated into the commitment. This included linking with other ministries (of sports, information, culture, economic empowerment, etc.); engaging marginalized groups, especially young people living with disabilities; and taking a strong stance on poverty, livelihoods, economic empowerment and social safety nets.

## Turn it On: Sexual Health in a Digital Age

On World Sexual Health Day (4 September 2021), the African Union Commission led the **Egumeni Session: Tea and Talk**. This online conversation sparked discussions among African youth and policymakers on the importance of young people's sexual health and sexuality education, and led to the endorsement of the renewed ESA Commitment in December 2021. The session, led by the African Union Commission's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate, was undertaken in collaboration with UNFPA/the SYP programme, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative.

2 The ESA Commitment: in 2013, ministers of health and education from 20 countries in the ESA region committed to scaling up CSE and related health information and services for adolescents and young people.

## Time to Act! Period!

While the pandemic brought setbacks for menstrual health, it also instilled a sense of urgency to address menstrual health needs across Africa.

Within this context, UNFPA ESARO and the African Coalition for Menstrual Health (ACMH), with support from the SYP programme, convened the **Second African Symposium on Menstrual Health** (May 2021). The virtual symposium, attended by **717 participants from 75 countries**, took stock of progress and gaps since the first symposium in 2018, reinforced partnerships and facilitated shared learning and innovation.

The symposium suggested ways to bolster the mandate, functionality and membership base of the ACMH. Suggestions included convening a community of practitioners for menstrual health in Africa, facilitating the scale-up of evidence-based solutions, and reinforcing global and regional collaboration. It was agreed that the multifaceted nature of menstrual health requires coordination among many sectors, such as health; education; water, sanitation and hygiene; labour and employment; social development; social protection; and gender equality.

UNFPA/the SYP programme launched two key documents at the symposium: [a paper taking stock of and reviewing menstrual health in the ESA region](#) and [a technical brief on the integration of menstrual health into SRHR programmes and policies](#) (the latter is available in French and Portuguese, as well as English).

After the symposium, the following call to action was issued: [Africa Coalition Call to Action for Menstrual Health](#)

### Call to Action

"We acknowledge that the concept of 'menstrual health' has evolved from focusing on hygiene management to a broader concept of health, wellbeing, dignity, awareness and gender equality across the reproductive life cycle of menstruators ....

We are cognizant of the detrimental effects that the global COVID-19 pandemic has had on access to and availability of menstrual health information, services, products, funding and programming. We underscore that periods don't pause for pandemics. While we applaud the efforts and innovations introduced to address the barriers exacerbated by the global pandemic, we are aware that a lot more remains to be done." [Africa Coalition Call to Action for Menstrual Health - Time to Act! Period!](#) (p. 2).



**Voluntary national review** (VNR) is a process that helps countries to assess and present their progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNFPA, with technical and financial support from the SYP programme, commissioned a report on youth involvement in the VNR process in four SYP countries (Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The report was finalized in 2021 and will be validated by the targeted countries in 2022. The best practices identified in the report will be disseminated broadly to promote the increased engagement of young people in VNR processes.

The regional interactive website **#YOUTHPowerHub** hosts profiles of 168 youth-led organizations in the ESA region, features an interactive chatbot and was visited over 2,500 times in 2021. The multilingual website, launched in 2020, was created by a partnership between the SYP programme, the African Youth and Adolescents Network on Population and Development (AfriYAN), and Youth in Action (Y-Act). Its purpose was to campaign for ASRHR and the achievement of the SDGs, and to track progress towards the commitments made in 2019 during the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) in Nairobi by governments and other stakeholders.

The SYP programme commissioned **Y+**, the network of young people living with HIV, to lead a youth movement to champion the renewal of the ESA Commitment. Activities included regional advocacy, participation in strategic meetings and ministerial sessions, satellite sessions at ICASA 2021 and active social media engagement in the run-up to December 2021.

The SYP programme developed the **Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Value Proposition**, to incorporate YPS principles into its programming. In collaboration with UNFPA headquarters and ESARO, the SYP programme supported the training of its youth focal points on YPS skills and knowledge, with two out of four training modules being taught in 2021.

## Daniela's Story

### ANGOLA

Daniela Isabel Raimundo Ngunza, an activist with JIRO (Responsible and Organized Informed Youth), shows young women how to use a female condom in Luanda, Angola's capital.

"My daily life as an activist is being in the field and talking to young people so that they can change their behaviour," she says. From an early age, she wanted to train as a doctor to take care of people, yet that path was riddled with difficulties. She started studying to be a nurse and when she was unable to complete her training, became

an entrepreneur instead. As one of the many young activists with JIRO, she continues to care for and support other women in her community, imparting knowledge about topics related to youth and women in particular. Between January and April 2021, JIRO reached 56,800 young people nationwide. Of these, 17,370 participated in events related to SRH, HIV and family planning. JIRO, led by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and supported by UNFPA, has become a new SYP partner since the programme expanded to Angola in 2021.



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## SYP in 2021: Country Highlights



### ANGOLA

In the preparation phase (for 2021–2026), activities included producing a concept note with a budget, plan and chronogram to equip boys and girls with trauma-resiliency skills; training of peer educators in four provinces; and contracting Be Girl Inc. to conduct training on menstrual health, and supply 15,000 items of period underwear and 5,000 SmartCycles mechanical menstrual trackers for workshops with adolescent girls and boys. The SYP programme ensured full buy-in from all critical stakeholders in Angola, including government line ministries, and the establishment of a national coordination mechanism for the programme.



### BOTSWANA

The SYP programme and its partners advocated for the review of the Education Act of 1967 and its unfavourable readmission policy for pregnant adolescents, married students and young mothers. In 2019, the Committees on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Rights of the Child noted the legal and policy gaps for preventing and managing pregnancies at school, coupled with high rates of teenage pregnancies and school dropout. The revised Act will protect pregnant adolescent girls, allow readmission and remove barriers, to allow girls to continue their education.



### ESWATINI

The first **National Menstrual Health Guidelines** were developed to guide programming and service delivery in menstrual health. The guidelines were jointly developed by the government and United Nations agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and development and technical partners.



### LESOTHO

The Ministry of Education and Training, with support from the SYP programme and in collaboration with UNESCO and UNAIDS, developed the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy Policy. Its ultimate goal is to guarantee the right to education for all. The policy has been validated and is awaiting government approval.



### MOZAMBIQUE

In the preparation phase (for 2021–2026), the SYP programme set off the ownership process through consultations with government, implementing partners and CSOs at national, provincial and district levels in the Nampula province. Consultations on the Tete and Cabo Delgado provinces are scheduled for 2022. Planning started for a baseline survey of households, health facilities and mapping in the Nampula province in the first quarter of 2022.



### MALAWI

The SYP programme supported the drafting of the costed **Youth Investment Plan (YIP)**, which is based on Malawi’s Vision 2063 and the revised National Youth Policy. YIP will mobilize resources for youth programming and for the realization of the demographic dividend. This is a joint effort of the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Youth Team.



### NAMIBIA

In partnership with UNESCO and the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the SYP programme supported capacity building for 75 members of parliament, CSOs and government ministries, in advocacy for SRHR and life skills-based HIV and health education.

#### Caring for the Environment in Malawi

The SYP programme supported youth networks in the Dedza district active on issues of climate change and a safe environment. Through radio programmes, community events and group training, young people learned about the proper disposal of protective waste, such as used condoms and face masks. They also organized clean-ups and planted 23,600 trees.

### RWANDA



A **rapid assessment of menstrual health**, conducted in collaboration with the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, recorded gaps, progress and good practices in reducing period poverty among vulnerable girls and ensuring access to affordable menstrual pads. The findings, to be validated in 2022, will inform the development of a policy advocacy brief on menstrual health. A teacher training plan for the effective delivery of **school-based CSE** was completed; training will start in 2022.



## SOUTH AFRICA

At the launch of the **National Youth Policy 2020-2030** in March 2021, the SYP programme was acknowledged for the technical support and investment made in the policy development process. The policy was translated into all 11 official languages and into Braille. Further support is planned for capacity building of national youth focal persons on policy implementation plans.



## ZAMBIA

With support from the SYP programme, the Ministry of Health held a series of stakeholder dialogues on the age of consent for SRHR services. The dialogues were attended by staff of the Ministry of Health, parliamentarians, CSO representatives, traditional and religious leaders, and youth-led organizations. The consensus will inform the development of the policy on the age of consent. The SYP programme also supported two orientation sessions on the age of consent for new members of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.



## TANZANIA

The SYP programme supported the dissemination of the HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act (HAPCA), which allows adolescents and young people to access HIV care and treatment services. Twenty-five activists and duty-bearers from 10 SYP districts were trained on the implementation of HAPCA. Thirty female leaders of the Zanzibar National Youth Council were trained in leadership skills and advocacy.



## ZIMBABWE

The **National Youth Policy (NYP)** was launched with support from the SYP programme at the official opening of the 29th Junior Parliament Session. With the twin goals of development and the empowerment of young people, the NYP's pillars are education and skills development, employment and entrepreneurship, governance and participation, and health and well-being, with cross-cutting issues such as gender, the environment, and information and communications technology (ICT) reaching vulnerable groups and harnessing the demographic dividend.

## Zambia: Why CSE is Important to Us

“At home, many of us don’t get the chance to learn about the important topics of menstruation, pregnancy, love and relationships. Through CSE lessons at our school, we can discuss with our teachers a lot of issues that concern us, such as puberty, sexual and gender-based violence, values, human rights, health and well-being, and sexual and reproductive health, to mention a few” – a learner at Sefula Secondary School, in Mongu, Western Zambia.



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# OUTCOME 2: AGENCY THROUGH EMPOWERMENT AND INFORMATION

The SYP programme has a two-pronged strategy to empower youth with the knowledge, skills and agency that they need to make informed decisions and healthy choices in their lives. The programme builds the capacity of institutions in two areas:

1. Designing and implementing **high-quality CSE** linked with integrated HIV/SRH and GBV services for in-school and out-of-school youth
2. Delivering high-quality **social behaviour change communication** interventions geared to generating demand for SRHR, GBV and HIV information and services, with a focus on HIV and substance abuse prevention, including innovations using digital technology.



# THE SAFEGUARD YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMME IN 2021 - A SNAPSHOT



6

countries had institutionalized inclusive and high-quality CSE in pre-service teacher training.



5

countries had institutionalized inclusive and high-quality CSE modules institutionalized in tertiary education institutions.



38,301

primary and secondary schools provided life skills-based HIV and sexuality education.



4,900,000

learners received inclusive and good quality CSE in school.



103

project administrative units had functional referral mechanisms between health, education and social services.



3,134

out-of-school boys and girls were educated on the effects of climate change, the environment and disaster risks related to SRHR, HIV, GBV and well-being.



5,100,000

young people were reached with social and behaviour change communication/CSE programmes including TuneMe and the Music Project, initiation rites and sports clubs.



8

countries had incorporated the prevention of substance abuse into social and behaviour change communication/CSE programmes.



6

countries had established parent-to-child communication programmes.



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## REGIONAL RESULTS AT A GLANCE

UNFPA ESARO launched the first **International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education**. The production of this guidance was technically supported by the SYP regional team and co-published with UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF and UNAIDS. It draws on global evidence to inform the kind of design and implementation of CSE out-of-school programmes that will engage marginalized cohorts of young people. In the context of pandemic-related school closures and mobility restrictions, delivering CSE beyond the classroom is imperative, given that about half of the young people in the ESA region are out of school.

### A Global Snapshot and a Plan for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

**The Journey Towards Comprehensive Sexuality Education – Global Status Report** provides a global snapshot of the progress that countries have made towards the provision of CSE in schools. The report was published in November 2021 by UNESCO/Education 2030, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and WHO. The SYP programme contributed its experience and technical support to the conceptualization of, coordination of, data collection for and writing of the report.

Of the 155 countries surveyed, 85 per cent were found to have policies or laws relating to CSE, mostly at the secondary education level. Policies and laws alone, however, do not guarantee the adequate implementation and quality of the education. Research shows that curricula often have gaps and that many teachers lack the confidence to deliver CSE.

Evidence of opposition to CSE across a range of settings often reflects misinformation about its content, purpose or impact. However, in many countries, the involvement of parents, school officials, religious leaders, media and young people has created a favourable environment for CSE.

Advocacy approaches to advancing the quality of CSE in schools include:

- ✓ Delivering CSE content as a stand-alone subject
- ✓ Making CSE a mandatory and examinable topic
- ✓ Establishing strong links between CSE and SRHR services, through school health programmes
- ✓ Building the capacity of pre-service and in-service teachers
- ✓ Ensuring high-level advocacy to counteract opposition to CSE.



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The SYP programme partnered with the South African Medical Research Council, Partners in Sexual Health and the Western Cape Disability Forum to develop a holistic, evidence-based curriculum responsive to the **CSE and SRHR needs of young people with disabilities**, both in and out of school. The 'Breaking the Silence' approach to CSE (BtS CSE) represents a ground-breaking resource for educators. The BtS CSE package was first piloted in South Africa, in Cape Town and Durban, and was subsequently used in Malawi and Zimbabwe to train 100 teachers, out-of-school facilitators, caretakers and persons with disabilities. The BtS CSE guide, lesson plans and training guide will be rolled out in 2022.

In addition, the SYP programme provided technical support for two related studies:

- A policy analysis identified the disconnect between the SRHR and disability sectors, with

the former minimally engaging with disability issues and the latter focusing on economic vulnerabilities. This disconnect hinders both proper data collection and multisectoral national action.

- A feasibility study on BtS CSE during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa collected data during pilot training sessions. Participants reported that lockdowns have increased the sexual abuse of young people with disabilities.

In total, 645 youth-serving professionals from all SYP countries completed the **UNFPA/UNESCO online course on CSE** in 2021. During the pandemic, this 40-hour course helped teachers and peer educators to acquire youth-friendly CSE skills online. To date, 8,513 people from 27 countries have taken the course. For many, this was their first time using e-learning or even computers.

## Stephano's Story

### MALAWI: Coming out on top

At school, Stephano Mkeka, a wheelchair user, was bullied, mocked and mistreated, to the extent that he dropped out before completing secondary school. People in his village in the Nkhatabay district, in Northern Malawi, did not consider a teenager with a disability to be worthy of education and respect.

This changed in 2020, when the district started a UNFPA/SYP programme to train young people to be facilitators of the CSE programme for out-of-school youth. The training uses iCAN, an SYP-supported CSE package designed for young people living with HIV. Priority for the selection of facilitators was given to youth living with HIV or disabilities. The idea was to empower them with skills, work and a sense of purpose, and to improve their self-respect and self-esteem, all derived from becoming a CSE trainer who helps young people to make better health choices.

Mr. Mkeka regained confidence and decided to further his education. He finished secondary school and was accepted at a teacher training college. Today, he is seen as a role model for young people in the district. He went from being mocked to being respected.

Young people with disabilities face many barriers – lack of accessibility, discrimination and social isolation – to accessing SRH health, education and equality. The SYP programme promotes disability-inclusive, gender-equitable and youth-friendly interventions to help young people with disabilities to realize their rights.



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## The Impact of Climate Change on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

UNFPA/the SYP programme deepened its work on SRHR and climate change in 2021, in terms of both building evidence and knowledge, and supporting strategic advocacy. For example, the recently established Joint Youth Working Group on SRHR and Climate Change advocates for the integration of SRHR into national climate policies.

At the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, United Kingdom, in November 2021, UNFPA organized six side events that put SRHR on the climate agenda. In October, UNFPA, together with the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development, Family Planning 2030 (FP2030), Women Deliver, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), co-convened a high-level session on climate change adaptation and SRHR. More than 800 participants attended the session. UNFPA presented its Climate Value Proposition, which is based on four pillars:

1. Investing in healthy, empowered populations with a focus on women, girls and young people
2. Creating climate-resilient health, protection and education systems
3. Reducing risk by enhancing preparedness and strengthening emergency responses
4. Building strong data systems for climate vulnerability and adaptive capacity.

The production of teaching and learning materials on the impact of climate change on SRHR is a novel area of work, both globally and for UNFPA. UNFPA/the SYP programme, in collaboration with Queen Mary University in London, United Kingdom, has developed a pioneering, stand-alone **module on the intersection of climate change and SRHR**, which was piloted online with facilitators and in person with young people in Namibia in 2021. Forty-seven CSE educators from seven Southern African countries were trained in its use. This module will form part of CSE lessons for young people in and outside school settings. An animated [video](#) geared towards adolescents was produced, the first in a series of videos on this topic.

The UNFPA/SYP programme **2021 Climate HackLab** requested that young innovators in the ESA region propose solutions to the climate-based challenges that disproportionately affect women and children in marginalized communities. Out of 111 applications received, 11 were selected. These were from 40 innovators, who then underwent a two-week course on design thinking, business development and leadership. Of the 11 selected applications, nine ideas finished the course and were pitched to a panel of judges in December 2021; of these, two were selected as winners. The winning innovators will attend a six-month incubation programme with one of the UNFPA regional partners, AfriLabs. During incubation, the innovators will work with AfriLabs to develop their innovative solutions and bring their ideas to market.

The winners, Agripa Maposa from Zambia and Agnes Kimweri from Tanzania, will each receive incubation support to kickstart their social enterprise projects. Kimweri plans to use solar-powered motorcycles to deliver health supplies to remote areas of Tanzania, while Maposa's innovation uses solar irrigation pumps to improve women farmers' livelihoods in Zambia.

The Climate Hacklab generated more than 21,000 impressions across various social media channels, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.



## LET'S TALK!

**Let's Talk!** is a multimedia campaign aimed at reducing early and unintended pregnancy (EUP); it has been active in 21 countries in the ESA region since 2019. The campaign is the result of a partnership between UNFPA/the SYP programme, UNESCO, SAfAIDS and Save the Children. In 2021, the SYP programme supported the production of the 'Let's Talk about EUP' radio drama to be broadcast on national, regional and Internet-based

radio programmes. Each of the 14 episodes has interactive elements to engage listeners through social media. To increase listenership, the SYP programme has supplied solar-powered radios to poor families in some countries. During the COVID-19 pandemic, radio has re-emerged as a popular medium for reaching young people and marginalized communities.



## LEVERAGING AFRICA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO PROMOTE ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

The SYP programme has consistently embraced innovation and technology to reach adolescents and young people. Its two most popular edutainment products, the **TuneMe mobile website (mobsite)** and **AMAZE videos**, continued to grow in 2021.

- ✓ TuneMe was developed into an app available on Google Play. A promotional video and a marketing road map will popularize the app in 2022.
- ✓ The TuneMe mobsite was selected among 10 solutions globally recommended to scale up a USAID-funded study. The WHO Youth-

centred Digital Health Intervention Framework recognized TuneMe as a global best practice. In December 2021, UNFPA/SYP programme representatives were invited to present TuneMe at the Global Forum on Digital Health.

- ✓ The popular series of animated videos for young adolescents AMAZE added three titles in 2021. The videos address female genital mutilation, HIV treatment adherence, alcohol use and sexual decision-making. Eighteen videos were subtitled in French, Portuguese, Swahili, Amharic and Chichewa. Links to AMAZE videos are embedded in the new range of CSE manuals.

# Integrating Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights into Economic Empowerment Initiatives

The **technical guidance on the integration of ASRHR into economic empowerment initiatives for youth**, developed by UNFPA in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, was published in 2021.

Its approach aligns with that of the **1 million by 2021** initiative of the African Union Council aimed at creating economic opportunities for a million young people. Its key areas of intervention are **the 4Es** – employment, entrepreneurship, education and engagement. These converge with UNFPA advocacy for investment in **the 3Es** – empowerment, education and employment – as part of its demographic dividend policy framework for young people.

A discussion of the guidance with UNFPA staff in the ESA region at a webinar made it clear that many SYP countries are ready to establish strategic partnerships to integrate SRHR into larger economic empowerment initiatives. With nearly one third of Africa's population between the ages of 10 and 24 years, the continent must make the most of this unique demographic opportunity for development.

## SYP in 2021: Country Highlights



### ANGOLA

A mobile application, **Oi Kambas**, developed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, with technical support from UNFPA Angola, will connect Angolan youth and adolescents to SRH/HIV/GBV youth-friendly health services (YFHS). The app, currently at the prototype stage, is an adaptation of the TuneMe app.



### ESWATINI

The branding of TuneMe on public buses on the Nhlangano–Manzini route drove traffic to the app and increased the number of newly registered users from the area.



### BOTSWANA

More than 400 young people with disabilities attended weekly CSE sessions delivered by 30 CSE-trained educators; 3,224 out-of-school young people in two districts also received CSE lessons.



### LESOTHO

455 teachers from 357 schools were trained to deliver high-quality life skills-based sexuality education, and community engagement reached 10 school governing boards and 605 parents.



### MALAWI

446,117 young people were reached with CSE information through face-to-face sessions conducted by youth lead facilitators. The Ministry of Education assessed the delivery of CSE, from both teachers' and learners' perspectives, in 16 schools in 4 SYP districts.



### MOZAMBIQUE

Community health workers and activists provided door-to-door SRH and family planning services to 23,100 young people in the northern provinces. Community radio stations also engaged adolescent boys and girls with SRHR information.



### TANZANIA

Some 40 representatives from government, development partners, CSOs and youth-led organizations participated in stakeholders' validation and technical committee meetings for the **Standard Guide and Manual for Life Skills Education for Out-of-School Youth**.



### NAMIBIA

Over 1,200 young people were reached through the **#BreakFree** sexual and GBV dialogues on social media and TV and during in-person meetings.



### ZAMBIA

The **CONDOMIZE!** and **YoungSmartFree** campaigns distributed 582,350 condoms and reached 228,795 young people with SRHR information, especially in border areas where teenage pregnancies rose during the pandemic.



### RWANDA

1,387,000 young people aged 10 to 24 years were reached with SRHR, menstrual health and GBV messages through communication campaigns held on international days.



### ZIMBABWE

In a major step towards sustainability and government ownership, the **Sista2Sista** (S2S) programme was handed over from non-governmental organization partners to the National Aids Council. The community-based CSE programme for out-of-school young people was also handed over to the National Aids Council.



### SOUTH AFRICA

More than 1,000 young girls and boys attended six **Baby Not Now** advocacy workshops conducted by the Department of Education and SYP programme partner loveLife in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Participants were referred to local clinics for services.

## Luckmore's Story

### ZIMBABWE: The Indefatigable Luckmore Pamhidzai

As a peer educator with the Young People's Network on Sexual Reproductive Health, HIV and AIDS (YPNSRHHA) in Zimbabwe, Luckmore Benson Pamhidzai has never stopped working in his hometown of Mount Darwin, in the Mashonaland Central province, even during the lockdown months of the pandemic.



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On his bike, Mr. Pamhidzai, 24, distributed condoms and HIV self-testing kits. He collected antiretroviral drugs for young people living with HIV and counselled them about treatment at home.



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With data bundles provided by UNFPA, Mr. Pamhidzai started a social media campaign, #IAmStillStanding, to promote treatment adherence, HIV disclosure and positive living. His podcast [Youth Health Matters](#) is available on Facebook, WordPress, Twitter and YouTube.



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Aware of a rise in the use of crystal meth, Mr. Pamhidzai and his team embarked on an edutainment campaign, sponsoring local artists to record songs and videos against drug abuse.



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The SRHR informative posters produced by YPNSRHHA with UNFPA support helped reach young people with limited access to Internet and data in mining areas, local markets, farms and resettlement areas.

# OUTCOME 3: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO YOUTH-FRIENDLY INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Knowledge, agency and demand together represent only one side of the empowering equation for young people. Equitable access to youth-friendly high-quality integrated SRH services is the other side.

The SYP programme, since its inception in 2013, has bolstered both national and local capacity to deliver and expand such services within universal health coverage, education and social protection frameworks. The programme has also promoted innovative ways of delivering services through self-care approaches.

This work did not stop during the worst of the pandemic in 2020 and efforts redoubled in 2021.

Nearly 3,000 pre-service and in-service health providers were capacitated to provide adolescent and

youth-friendly health services (AYFHS) in 2021, just short of the 3,085 target.

An additional 119 SYP programme-supported health delivery points were added, taking the total to 920, or 80 per cent of the target of 1,160 across the 12 implementing countries.

The programme's success in building the capacity of AYFHS providers and supporting functional integrated health services translated into nearly 2 million young people using such services in 2021, exceeding the target of 1.1 million.

For protection against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and unplanned pregnancies, 30.2 million condoms were distributed to young people in 2021, exceeding the target of 27.2 million.

## REGIONAL RESULTS AT A GLANCE

The SYP programme contracted KPMG International Development Advisory Services (IDAS) to assess **the impact of COVID-19 on the SRHR among adolescents**, particularly among out-of-school young people and young people with intersecting vulnerabilities, in the 12 SYP countries. The research will prioritize HIV testing and counselling, and adolescent pregnancies, which are said to have spiked during periods of school closure.

The **accreditation of YFHS** initiative sets optimal standards in its aim to foster a culture of improvement. In many countries, accreditation is a voluntary recognition programme administered separately from the licensing authority, which is usually the ministry of health. In response to interest from SYP programme partners and staff, UNFPA and WHO hosted a webinar to clarify issues, share the experiences of Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and explore the possible legal and governance structure for accreditation in the ESA region.

The **21st International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa** (ICASA)

was held virtually from 6 to 11 December, under the theme '**Africa's AIDS Response: The Race to 2030 - Evidence, Scale Up, Accelerate**'. As co-sponsor of the conference, UNFPA/the SYP programme played a lead role throughout. Highlights of the conference included:

- The ministerial meeting to endorse the ESA Commitment and discuss its draft accountability framework
- A satellite session on innovation and technology as a catalyst for HIV prevention among young people, featuring TuneMe, AMAZE videos and the BtS CSE package
- SYP disability and youth-related work displayed in the conference's 'Community Village'
- An SYP programme-supported youth pre-conference attended by about 200 young people from throughout Africa
- A Y+ side event to support the popularization of the new ESA Commitment.

# THE SAFEGUARD YOUNG PEOPLE PROGRAMME IN 2021 - A SNAPSHOT



8

countries had included an ASRHR package within universal health coverage.



8

countries were implementing the SADC SRHR Strategy.



2,981

pre-service and in-service providers were trained in high-quality AYFHS delivery.



1,923,000

million adolescents and young people were reached with SRHR and HIV services.



920

health service delivery points offered a standard package of AYFHS in project sites.



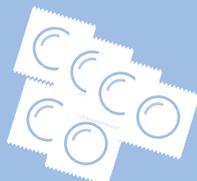
7

countries had strengthened condom programming for young people through evidence generation and knowledge management.



559,371

young people accessed HIV services.



30.2 million

condoms were distributed.



8

countries routinely reported on the SADC SRHR Score Card.



6

countries had implemented monitoring and evaluation systems with gender- and age-disaggregated indicators.

## SYP in 2021: Country Highlights



### ANGOLA

The programme and partners approved a concept note for mapping health facilities in the implementing provinces to better understand their profiles and functioning status. A capacity-building programme for health providers was designed in 2021 and will be rolled out in early 2022.



### BOTSWANA

40 health-care providers were trained on YFHS in the Ngami and Okavango districts. In partnership with the United Nations 2gether 4 SRHR programme, 11 monitoring and evaluation officers were trained on the reporting of ASRHR indicators.



### ESWATINI

23 health facilities in all four regions provided on-site training using the AYFHS quality improvement package for 603 health-care workers.



### LESOTHO

Almost 175,000 young people aged 15-24 years were reached with HIV testing services.



### MALAWI

More than 1 million adolescents and young people were reached through static and outreach (door-to-door) YFHS.



### MOZAMBIQUE

60 community health workers were trained on COVID-19 community surveillance.



### NAMIBIA

A forecasting and quantification workshop to ensure security and accurate stocking of reproductive health commodities was held in November in Swakopmund. Regional pharmacists and family planning programme officers attended the workshop.



### RWANDA

Almost 1,100 community health workers in the Karongi and Rusizi districts were given AYSRH orientation.



### SOUTH AFRICA

In the KwaZulu-Natal province, almost 28,000 adolescents and young people were reached through the SYP-supported AYFS clinics and activations (5,704 males and 21,957 females).

More than 90,000 adolescents and young people accessed integrated health services in facilities supported by SYP in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.



### TANZANIA

In the Simiyu, Dodoma and Kigoma regions, 50,370 adolescents and young people accessed SRH services (53 per cent females) and 124,930 adolescents and young people were reached with SRH information (53 per cent females).



### ZAMBIA

511 health-care workers were trained to deliver integrated ASRHR services.

Outreach services reached almost 269,000 adolescents and young people through mobile clinics and peer-to-peer sensitization in remote communities.



### ZIMBABWE

More than 289,000 young people accessed HIV services (target of 240,000).

Almost 193,000 adolescents accessed contraceptives for the first time (target of 160,000).

More than 17 million condoms were distributed (target of 15,000,000)

# LOOKING FORWARD

In 2021, the SYP programme faced a number of protracted challenges, from the continuous impact of the pandemic and civil unrest in some implementing countries to the widespread opposition to CSE and SRHR in general. Despite this, the programme has proven once more that its foundations are solid, that the ownership by the governments is clear and that the partnership with Southern African Development Community, the East African Community and civil society is strong.

The challenges meant that some results were not achieved, but the constant consultations, reviews and assessments of the programme and

its implementation strategies have paid off (see [infographics on page 5](#)). Most target achievement rates hovered between 80 and 100 per cent.

In 2021, we welcomed four new countries to the SYP regional programme. They will benefit immensely from the experience of and evidence collected and lessons learned by the eight original countries.

The SYP programme regional team continues to mobilize resources to reach more adolescents and young people in the region than before, using proven models and strategies that have been fine-tuned over the first eight years of successful implementation.



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