

# Fast facts



## Invest in Adolescents

### Building Advocacy Capacity in East Africa

The five countries of the East African Community (EAC) – Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – are characterised by high poverty levels and low life expectancy. Key reproductive health indicators, such as maternal mortality, HIV infection rates, fertility rates and unmet need for contraception reveal a troubling situation in the region, particularly among young people. At the same time, these countries are undergoing demographic shifts, with rapid population growth and a burgeoning youth population.

### Invest in Adolescents: at a Glance

**Project Duration:** 2010 – 2013

**Donor:** European Union

**Budget:** EUR 1,497,959

**Location:**  
Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda

**Partners:**  
East African Community (EAC)  
Reproductive Health Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC)

Rather than viewing these growing numbers of young people as a liability, Invest in Adolescents recognises that youth represent an important resource and potential force for change and development in their countries and communities. The project empowers them to communicate their needs to decision-makers and supports adolescent-serving civil society organisations (CSOs) to ensure that programmes, policies and budgets reflect these needs.

This three-year, EU-funded project has an overall goal of improving adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the five EAC countries. Its specific objective is to build individual, organisational and collective capabilities of adolescent and youth serving CSOs to advocate effectively both with and on behalf of young people. The project works towards three key outcomes:

**Developing advocacy capacity and skills among adolescent-serving CSOs:** CSOs have great potential to ensure that SRHR policies, programmes and budgets better reflect adolescent SRHR needs; however, many lack the skills and empowerment to move beyond a service delivery role. After a rapid needs assessment, Invest in Adolescents activities will include training CSOs on adolescent and youth SRHR advocacy and funding, including the importance of SRH/HIV integration. The



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project will also support peer learning among CSOs and facilitate continued networking to ensure sharing and collaboration.

**Enhancing the capacity of youth organisations to contribute to local and national civic processes:** Youth organisations are an essential partner of CSOs when it comes to influencing decision makers and ensuring programs, budgets and policies reflect their needs and concerns. As individuals, the representatives of youth organisations also have an important role to play in influencing their peers and communities. Invest in Adolescents builds on existing peer education programmes, incorporating modules on advocacy and communication. Youth champions will be trained in each country and supported by a mentorship programme and national networks of champions allowing follow-up and continued collaboration and exchange.

**Supporting an enabling environment for participation, dialogue and substantive engagement:** Meaningful interaction between youth, CSOs, and decision-makers is crucial for ensuring that the SRHR needs of young people are met. Invest in Adolescents will promote joint action through country policy analysis forums for CSOs and representatives of youth organisations, and will link all three stakeholder groups through town hall meetings to share and gather views. The project will also facilitate learning and exchange of resources, experiences, and effective practices through a virtual collaborative network.

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