



UNESCO - Government of Ghana

Sub-Saharan Countries and UNESCO Lead Largest Regional Initiative for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Since 2010, UNESCO and UN partners have been supporting the efforts of governments in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to change the narrative for adolescents and young people through Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). Following the successful implementation of the [ESA Commitment](#), UNESCO is partnering with governments and other UN agencies in the acclaimed Our Lives, Our Rights, Our Future (O³)* program. O³ is expected to reach over 30 million adolescents and young people from across 31 countries in SSA.

On January 30, 2019, the Ministry of Education in Ghana hosted UNESCO and other UN partners, Ministries of Education and Health from across 14 SSA countries to launch the O³ program. O³ supports the delivery of good quality CSE that empowers adolescents and young people by building skills, knowledge and attitudes to prevent HIV, reduce early and unintended pregnancies and eliminate gender-based violence.

“Africa’s youth are its future and most precious resource,” said Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO. “Defending young women’s right to education is crucial both as a goal in and of itself, and as a means to better health and development outcomes. Knowledge protects. Risks [are high] if we do not address barriers to young people’s health and education.”

This South-South dialogue was also a platform for Ministers and senior government officials from across Sub-Saharan Africa to engage with UNESCO representatives, UN senior officials, partners, youth, Civil Society Organizations, educators, parents and religious leaders. Discussions revolved around sustaining political commitment to accelerate the implementation of CSE programs in the region.

“Since the ESA Commitment, significant progress has been achieved by most countries in developing political and policy support for CSE and reaching out to young people, educators, parents and community leaders,” said Mr Hubert Gijzen, UNESCO Regional Director for Southern Africa. “Zambia, for example, has been able to attain an almost full-scale implementation of CSE.”

Speaking at the Launch ceremony, Ghana’s Minister for Education, Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh noted the timeliness of the program.

“Despite some strides in CSE in different countries, there is more crucial work to be done in order to ensure that our adolescents and young people learn in a safer environment that will contribute to quality and better educational outcomes,” said Dr. Matthew Opoku Prempeh.

Learning from ESA experiences, West and Central African countries are working towards securing a similar political commitment by 2020.

*Through the support of the governments of Sweden and Ireland, the O₃ Programme builds on current efforts by UNESCO to improve sexual and reproductive health, as well as gender and education outcomes for adolescents and young people.

For more information on UNESCO's work on health education, please visit <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-health-and-well-being>

For information on the O₃ program, please contact Amina Lahbabi a.lahbabi@unesco.org

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