

Delivering Comprehensive Sexuality
Education for Out-of-school Young People

COUNTRY CASE STUDIES ON UNFPA'S GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL CSE

Malawi

The Country Case studies series is developed by UNFPA based on outcomes of the Global Programme on Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

UNFPA has since 2019 led the programme “Comprehensive Sexuality Education for Out-of-school Young People: Reaching Those Most Left Behind”, with the aim of empowering adolescents and youth from specific groups left behind with the information and skills they need to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The programme is funded by the governments of Norway and Spain, and started its second phase in 2022. The programme implementation takes place in a total of 12 countries – Colombia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Malawi, Moldova, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestine, Philippines and Tunisia.

Out-of-school CSE holds the promise of reaching those left behind. In each of the countries, locally adapted interventions consider the needs, life experiences and vulnerabilities of left-behind groups of young people. This includes young people who are vulnerable either because they cannot attend school, or because the sexuality education curriculum offered in school does not adequately address their identity, whether that be as a girl, a young person with a disability, a young person living with HIV, an LGBTQ+ young person, or a migrant or young person displaced by conflict or humanitarian crisis. The initiative reaches out to young people from left-behind populations using the specially developed *UN International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-school Comprehensive Sexuality Education*. Youth engagement is an integral part of the programme, and young people are themselves meaningfully included and engaged in the design and implementation of the activities.

In this Country Case studies series we present the experiences and lessons learned from UNFPA's work at the country level implementing CSE to meet the needs of young people most left behind.



Malawi

MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND CSE



TARGET GROUP:

Marginalized groups of adolescents and young people, primarily young people living with HIV and young people with disabilities



GOVERNMENT PARTNERS:

Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health, District Youth Offices, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; District Councils; Malawi Girl Guides Association



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:

Safeguard Young People (SYP) programme

Nkhatabay district is situated on the shores of Lake Malawi, where the majority of the population rely on fishing or farming for their livelihoods. The area is susceptible to extreme weather events, including frequent floods and droughts, leading to a loss of household income and an increase in poverty, as well as physical displacement and interrupted access to education and health services.

This has negative impacts on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of children and young people. There are increases in early, forced and child marriages as families seek to alleviate the economic pressure of raising their children. The incidence of gender-based violence, including sexual assault, tends to increase when families are relocated to shelters where women and girls must use inadequately lit communal toilet facilities at night, or walk longer distances to fetch water or firewood. Those in school miss classes when their school buildings are used as shelters; and with unstructured free time resulting from the disrupted educational routine, they may engage in behaviours with negative health consequences. At the same time, access to health services – including for sexually transmitted infections, HIV prevention and treatment, and family planning – is disrupted when flooding damages roads and health facilities.

In Nkhatabay, as in the five other districts of Malawi where this programme is being implemented, UNFPA's out-of-school CSE programme supports youth network activities to help young people link and address issues of sexual and reproductive health and climate change. Activities are structured to involve some of the most vulnerable young people, such as those with disabilities and those living with HIV.

Successes

Catherine's leadership and outreach has changed the lives of many of the young people she has talked to about CSE, climate change and sustainable livelihoods. The culture of silence around sexuality and gender-based violence is gradually dying as girls and parents are able to talk about sexuality issues, and incidents of gender-based violence are being reported to the authorities. Catherine has been able to train and convince a total of 20 girls who had dropped out of school to return to school. Two of these girls have gone on to university, and one now works as a nurse and the other as an accountant. Other girls in the area are economically empowered and able to pay for their own school fees and help their families. Young people from marginalized

With support from the Safeguard Young People (SYP) project, Catherine Mkandawire, chairperson of Nkhatabay Youth Network and a CSE lead facilitator, encourages young people to address issues of climate change as well as sexual and reproductive health. Every Saturday she holds "climate talks" about environmental conservation and climate change, as an entry point to engage young people on sexual and reproductive health issues. Around 40 young people attend each session. Some come from schools in the area, while others, who may not be in school, are engaged via youth clubs. Follow-up meetings organized quarterly by the District Youth Officer and Traditional Authority-based youth network leaders provide further momentum and encouragement.

Catherine leads by example on environmental issues: she earns her living from sustainable management of her family's land, and inspires her peers to do the same. Many of the young people she has inspired and trained can now pay their own school fees by working climate-related jobs, which are important in the face of extreme weather events like Tropical Storm Ana in January 2022.

Similar outreach to link climate change and CSE exists in other districts in Malawi with the support of UNFPA and its partners. In Dedza district, for example, the programme has supported youth network activities to plant tree seedlings. Network members sell some of the seedlings to generate income for their activities. The young people also encourage community members and fellow youth to use contraception in order to plan their families.

communities are taking up leadership positions in youth network groups. For example, a young person living with HIV is chairperson of the youth network group. A young person with a disability is a secretary in another youth group, and another has gone on to further education and is now in his second year of teacher training.

Challenges

The primary challenge is to expand the programme so that it reaches more young people in more areas. Catherine works in only one traditional authority (TA), and there is a need to build the capacity of many more CSE facilitators in the district's 12 other TAs. Some of the challenges are logistical: the terrain in Nkhatabay district is mountainous, making transport a challenge. In addition, there is a lack of support

from other stakeholders for youth interventions. Young people's efforts are undervalued, and some people ask for a fee from young people to provide technical support. With limited capital to start up their own business, young people sometimes look for greener pastures and move on, which makes it even more important to keep offering training to those who are in the district.



Context

Malawi has a diversity of cultural groups. A taboo around discussing sexuality with one's children guides people's perceptions of sexuality education, and increases the risk that young people may receive misinformation from their peers or other unreliable sources. Ceremonies at initiation camps pass on social norms and beliefs about sexuality to young people.

Malawi has been developing its national CSE implementation for the past three decades. Implementation of the current framework began in 2018, with CSE taught in all schools through the life skills curriculum, which is

age- and context-based. Approximately 7.3 million learners are reached with life skills in primary schools, and 230,000 in secondary schools. However, the comprehensiveness and quality of in-school CSE vary, due to the limitations of education policy and a lack of trained teachers. For these reasons, and moreover since around a quarter of junior and senior secondary pupils do not attend school, out-of-school CSE is especially relevant. In UNFPA focus districts, 546,000 pupils are reached with life skills, and 55,000 out-of-school young people are reached with CSE via networks, youth clubs and in communities.





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