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For immediate release

Civil society takes aim at poor access to SRH information, education and services for the Great Lakes Region's Adolescents

NAIROBI — A new project, launched this week in Nairobi, sets out to improve the health and wellbeing of adolescents in the Great Lakes Region (Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia), and address religious and cultural barriers young people face in accessing quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and family planning services.

The [Solutions for Supporting Healthy Adolescents and Rights Protection](#) (SHARP) programme brings together a unique group of organisations that include adolescent, commodity, gender, SRH and faith experts with a track record in research and advocacy for policy change that has a positive impact. Utilising these skills and experiences, SHARP works with policymakers, the private sector, faith leaders, influencers and adolescents themselves to improve access to SRH services and commodities and, ultimately, bring lasting improvements to health and wellbeing, particularly for adolescent girls.

Explaining why action was needed to address the issue, SHARP Coordinator at [Health Action International](#), Ange Moray, said:

“Our research has shown availability of contraceptives and other essential SRH commodities in the Great Lakes Region is poor, for example less than 50% in Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya. The COVID-19 pandemic only made things worse in many areas. Meanwhile, inequitable access to SRH commodities and family planning services hits adolescents, especially girls, particularly hard and leads to a range of issues that have an impact on individuals and society, including early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. By working with a wide range of stakeholders, together we can turn the tide and improve the lives of young people.”

Speaking about the positive role faith leaders in particular can have, Peter Munene, the CEO of the [Faith to Action Network](#) which is a part of the consortium added that:

“Faith leaders require and can also provide a safe space to discuss issues of adolescent sexual reproductive health to achieve consensus on how to approach the issues. We have to always remember and respect that Faith Leaders are guided by Holy Scriptures and values. From our work at Faith to Action Network, we have put Faith Leaders at the centre of our advocacy in terms of advancing SRH as they bring with them influence and convening authority in our advocacy. It is very important to recognise that as we work with Faith Leaders, they need a safe space which gives them the opportunity to deeply reflect and reach consensus, even on contentious issues.”

The SHARP project will run from now until April 2026.

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Notes for Editors

- Solutions for Supporting Healthy Adolescents and Rights Protection (SHARP) is funded by the European Union.
- The project is active in Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia.
- The project partners who are headquartered in various countries are:
 - [Alliance Burundaise de Lutte Contre le SIDA](#) (ABS) – Burundi
 - [Cadre Permanent de Concertation de la Femme Congolaise](#) (CAFCO) - DRC
 - [Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS & Health Service Organizations](#) (EANNASO) – Tanzania
 - [Faith to Action Network](#) – Kenya
 - [Health Action International](#) (HAI) – The Netherlands
 - [Medicines Research and Access Platform](#) (MedRAP) – Zambia
 - [Network of African National Human Rights Institutions](#) (NANHRI) - Kenya
 - [Rwanda NGOs Forum](#) (RNGOF) – Rwanda
- The partnership kick-off meeting took place in Nairobi, Kenya from 29 June to 1 July 2022.

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