

Introduction / Background

The "Capacitating One Health Approach in Eastern and Southern Africa (COHESA)" project, in collaboration with the Young and Older Persons Integrated Development Program in Africa (YOLIDA), conducted community outreach activities in selected schools within the Bunyangabu District of Western Uganda from October 2023 to August 2024. The aim was to engage children (13-18 years old) and youth in understanding and practicing One-Health approaches.

Objectives:

- 1) To educate and involve students in activities that foster environmental conservation and health awareness.
- 2) To promote the One-Health ideology within school communities.
- 3) To inspire mindset and behavior change among children regarding health and environmental conservation.

Results

The project engaged a significant number of students across three schools: Nyakigumba Parents Secondary School, Busiita Primary School, and Kimbugu Primary School. Key outcomes included:

- Enhanced awareness and understanding of One-Health concepts among teachers – (15 One Health Mentors trained)
- Active participation of children in environmental conservation activities. (600 One Health Ambassadors)
- Formation of school-based One-Health clubs to sustain the initiative
- Production of culturally relevant information, education and communication content for broader community awareness

Methods

YOLIDA's Art-for-Nature and Heritage Conservation program utilized creative and participatory approaches tailored for young audiences. Activities included: Drawing and painting sessions - children illustrated their immediate environment and its impact on health. Practical sessions and mentorship focusing on the relationships between human health, animal health, and environmental health. Establishment of One-Health gardens and small animal farms in schools. Students planted flowers, vegetables, and trees and reared small animals like goats, poultry and rabbits. Production and dissemination of One-Health campaign messages through drama skits and songs in local languages.



A collage of community and school activities used to promote awareness of the One Health approach

Conclusion

- Engaging children in One-Health activities through art and practical involvement proved an effective strategy in fostering awareness of the One Health approach.
- The initiative demonstrated the potential for children to become ambassadors of change, influencing their peers, families, and communities.
- Continued support and expansion of such programs could significantly contribute to disease prevention and environmental conservation efforts.

