



# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INNOVATION EXCHANGE

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## ZanaAfrica’s Nia Program: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Life Skills Education through Comics and Magazines

Innovation presented by: ZanaAfrica

### Problem statement

For many adolescent girls around the world, puberty is the most vulnerable time with myriad pressures and challenges that derail their education, safety, and futures. The Nia Program offers a holistic three-part intervention to ensure that girls are equipped with the products, knowledge, and life skills they need to address these challenges and step boldly into the promise of their futures.

### Circle of Care stage

#### Before:

- Generates Demand
- Creates Enabling Environment
- Sets Supportive Norms

#### During:

- Builds Trust
- Improves Provider Behavior
- Empowers Clients

#### After:

- Reinforces Linkages
- Enhances Follow Up
- Supports Behavioral Maintenance

### Audience(s)

The Nia Program was co-created by girls and communities for youth between the ages of ten to 21, but we hope other community members will also benefit from our work.

### Country of implementation or design

Kenya

### Outcome(s) of interest

- Improved reproductive health knowledge, including pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and modern contraceptives
- Increased pride and comfort about managing menstruation, including reduced leakage and embarrassment
- Build self-efficacy, self-confidence, and general resilience to address challenges
- Shift to more equitable social and gender norms

### The innovation

ZanaAfrica equips adolescent girls with the tools they need to safely navigate puberty and unlock their potential. Working in Kenya, ZanaAfrica delivers a *proven intervention of rights-based reproductive health and life skills education* delivered through engaging social and behavior change content in the form of comics and magazines, paired with sanitary pads and underpants, *to adolescent girls and boys*. We uniquely recognize that this powerful combination is one of the smallest, yet most effective, hinges to unlock girls’ potential and break cycles of poverty.



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## Why you should consider adapting and scaling this innovation

In partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Plan International, and the Population Council, ZanaAfrica conducted a two-year randomized clinical trial to evaluate its program among 3,500 girls in 2017–2019. This pioneering study proved that our co-created intervention of story-and comic-based reproductive health and life skills education delivered with sanitary pads, has statistically significant improvements across the following outcomes:

- **Reproductive health knowledge**, including knowledge of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and contraceptives
- **Pride and comfort about managing menstruation**, including reduced leakage and embarrassment
- **Self-efficacy, self-confidence, and general resilience** to address life’s challenges
- Shifts to **equitable social and gender norms**, including reduced acceptance of spousal violence as a norm

All of these helps girls to have more control over their bodies, decisions, and futures. With a proven solution to address the challenges facing girls across Kenya, we are now scaling our program with a goal to reach over 200,000 beneficiaries through Kenyan schools and communities.

## Resources needed to adapt or scale this innovation

This is a 16–18-month innovation aligned with the Kenyan school calendar. It has 25 after-school health sessions which we recommend delivering over about a year and a half. Partners who wish to implement typically work with us to adapt the innovation to their context, undergo training, and receive delivery support from our team. Costs vary by the number of adolescents and youth being reached. A shorter version of the innovation is being developed to allow community groups to deliver seven to ten sessions outside the school context rather than the full 25 session program.

## Implementation recommendations

Validation to new contexts takes place through a design phase with ZanaAfrica where we work together with partners to ensure that contextual factors are understood and addressed. We apply our community-driven co-creation and social and behaviour change process to ensure that information gaps are identified by adolescents themselves, and materials are then adapted or created to reflect their lived experiences and meet their learning and support needs.

We conduct extensive, stakeholder engagement to overcome buy-in challenges. This is an important component of adaptation and delivery and must not be short-changed.

ZanaAfrica is currently focusing on working with the Kenyan government to scale through the public school system using teachers as the delivery mechanism. We continue to work with other partners as well, but we feel that broad scale can only be achieved by embedding the program into the regular school curriculum.

Considerations for scale include the burden on providers to learn and deliver the materials using rights-based approaches and developing solutions to address the discomfort or embarrassment that providers may face due to social norms or experiences related to sexual health.

## Have more questions? Contact the following people

- Alison Nakamura Netter ([alison@zanaafrica.org](mailto:alison@zanaafrica.org))

## Relevant links

Website: [www.zanaafrica.org](http://www.zanaafrica.org)

Video: [bit.ly/ZanaSBCC](https://bit.ly/ZanaSBCC)