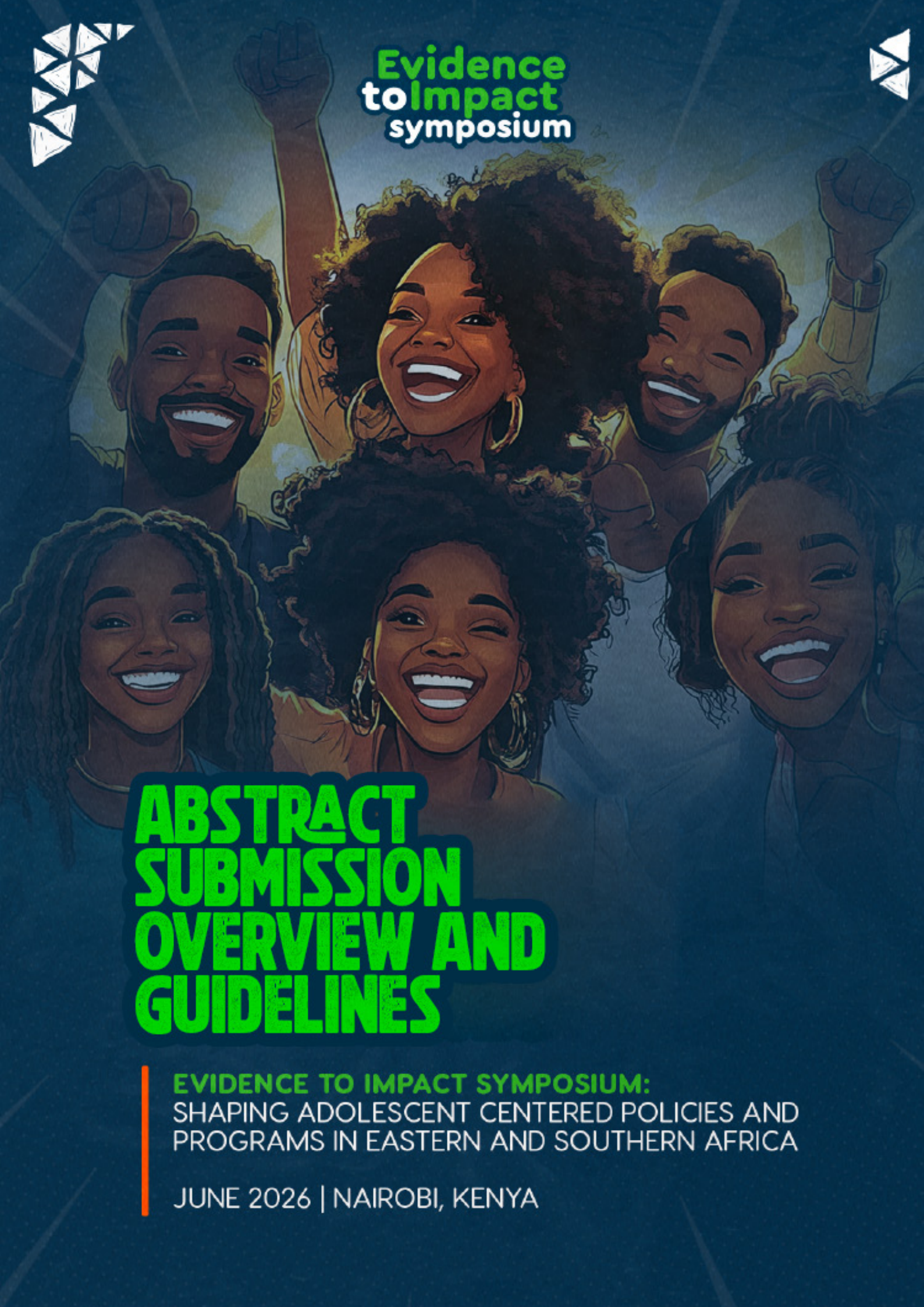




**Evidence
toImpact**
symposium

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION OVERVIEW AND GUIDELINES

EVIDENCE TO IMPACT SYMPOSIUM:
SHAPING ADOLESCENT CENTERED POLICIES AND
PROGRAMS IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

JUNE 2026 | NAIROBI, KENYA

SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

Investing in adolescents is critical for sustainable development, yet policies and programs often fail to reflect the wealth of available research evidence. Investments in areas like education, sexual and reproductive health, and empowerment, have shown high return on investment, strengthened human capital and long-term economic growth. The cost of inaction on adolescent well-being could reach \$110 trillion globally between 2024 and 2050, equivalent to 7.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) across countries representing 80% of the world's population.

Despite available evidence on approaches to improving adolescents' health and wellbeing, policy and program implementation remains slow and fragmented, underscoring the need for targeted efforts to translate research findings into action.

The 'Evidence to Impact Symposium: Shaping Adolescent-Centered Policies and Programs in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA)' aims to bridge the gap between evidence and policy and program implementation to improve the wellbeing of adolescents, particularly girls, in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The symposium will bring together researchers, policymakers, civil society, including youth and adolescent focused organizations, and funders, to review the latest research on adolescents, especially girls, and discuss policy and program implications of research.

The symposium is co-hosted by the Population Council's GIRL Center, the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and National Council For Population & Development (NCPD).

SYMPOSIUM THEMES FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

1. Navigating Wellness: Holistic adolescent health in a changing world

Adolescents' health and wellbeing are shaped by a diverse set of factors that interact across physical, emotional, and social dimensions. Many adolescents, especially girls, face overlapping risks such as mental health challenges, gender and sexual based violence, harmful practices such as early and forced child marriage, limited access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, among others. These challenges are often intensified by social stigma, inadequate services, and insufficient support systems in communities and health systems.

Abstracts under this theme could include work on:

- Mental health (including anxiety and depression)
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Ending child marriage
- Ending sexual and gender-based violence
- Access to quality health services

2. Empowered Futures: Skills and educational pathways for adolescents

Adolescents' opportunities to thrive are strongly shaped by access to quality education, life skills, and economic opportunities. Many of them face compounded barriers to quality of life due to gender-driven inequalities, poverty, disability, discriminatory practices, among other factors. When given equal access to quality education, life skills, and supportive systems, adolescents, especially girls, can pursue their aspirations, contribute to stronger local economies, and redefine pathways to equity and opportunity in their education and economic spheres.

This theme will explore a range of topics that are a critical part of building the necessary human capital to set up adolescents on the pathway to prosperity. This theme will encompass topics such as:

- Education access and equity
- Life and vocational skills
- Social protection, safety nets and economic empowerment
- Girls in the care economy

3. Resilience in the 21st Century: Adolescents thriving in digital, environmental, and social changes

The rapidly evolving digital, climate, and socio-political landscapes at global, regional and country levels present both opportunities and risks for adolescents. For instance, the glaring digital exclusion affects access to education, health information, and civic participation. The effects of climate change, such as drought, flooding, and displacement, are disrupting livelihoods and increasing school dropouts and early marriages. When supported by inclusive policies and programs, adolescents can be agents of change, leveraging digital tools and community networks to build climate resilience, and advocating for rights and life-saving opportunities in humanitarian contexts. This theme welcomes abstracts that explore current trends, factors in adolescents' environment and social spheres which shape their transition to adulthood, and topics which are adaptive and provide gender-responsive solutions. Focus areas could include:

- Digital inclusion and safety
- Climate change and humanitarian contexts
- Emerging technologies and innovation
- Adolescents' and youth centered civic and social engagement

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

The symposium welcomes submissions in the following categories.

- Research studies
- Pre-formed panels
- Policy dialogues
- Program and policy best practices
- Reflection dialogues: learning from setbacks

We encourage submissions from research and programs in and from countries in East and Southern Africa. Submissions from early career researchers and implementers, or research done in partnership with youth-led and/or community-based organizations, are strongly encouraged.

Submissions should be aligned with one or more of the symposium tracks, demonstrate rigor, with clear documentation of approach, evidence generation, and policy implications.

Submitters will be asked to indicate their preferred presentation format for the submission: oral presentation only, poster presentation only, or either oral or poster presentation.

1. RESEARCH STUDIES

Language: English

Presentation length: 10 minutes

Length: Maximum 500 words

Format: Structured abstract including the following sections:

- o Background: Brief context of the issue and relevance to adolescents in any part of Eastern and Southern Africa
- o Objective: Aim of the research
- o Methodology: Description of study design, population/sample, data collection methods, and analysis
- o Key Findings: Summary of core results (quantitative or qualitative)
- o Policy/Programmatic implications: How findings have or can inform practice, policy, further research, or led to proven innovative approaches that have been tested.

2. PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

These may include policies, best practices, or advocacy activities focusing on the wellbeing of adolescents.

Language: English

Presentation length: 10 minutes

Abstract length: Maximum 400 words

Format:

- o Background: Describe the context and rationale for the activity(ies). Why were they undertaken? What were they trying to achieve?
- o Activities: Describe the activities undertaken in this initiative. What was done? Who was involved? What was the timeline and location?
- o Results: Describe the results or outcomes achieved by this initiative. What impact has been measured?
- o Implications: Explain the significance of the initiative on adolescent wellbeing policies. What do these results mean for countries trying to address similar issues? What should be taken forward in other settings or future activities?

3. PRE-FORMED PANELS

These sessions bring together multiple speakers to explore a shared topic or challenge, with each presentation contributing to a cohesive, coordinated theme. They allow for deeper exploration of

a theme from multiple perspectives, sectors, or geographies.

Language: English

Session length: 60 minutes

Length: Proposal should not exceed 1000 words

Submissions should include:

- o Panel topic and rationale: Briefly explain the focus of the panel, why it matters for adolescent-centered policy and programming, and its relevance to the symposium themes.
- o Objectives: Clearly outline what the panel will aim to achieve or the key questions it will address.
- o Session structure: Describe how the session will be organized (e.g., individual presentations, moderated discussion, Q&A).
- o Speakers and content: Provide names, affiliations, and a description of each speaker's content that will be presented on the panel (this should make up the majority of the submission).
- o Expected outcomes: Explain how the discussion will advance research uptake, policy development, or program implementation in Eastern and Southern Africa.

4. COLLABORATIVE PLENARIES

Collaborative plenaries will be interactive, solutions-oriented sessions that bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and young people around a specific policy or program issue affecting adolescents. Unlike traditional panels, these sessions will be dynamic and participatory, focusing more on co-creation of actionable solutions and pathways forward.

Language: English

Session length: 40 minutes

Proposal length: Maximum 400 words

Submissions should include:

- Policy or program context: Describe the issue being addressed, its relevance to adolescent wellbeing, and why it is timely for discussion.
- Objectives: Clearly state the intended outcomes (e.g., consensus on next

steps, policy or program recommendations, identification of advocacy priorities).

- **Format and facilitation:** Outline how the plenary will be structured, including who will present, facilitate, and how audience engagement will be incorporated to ensure diverse perspectives are heard.
- **Stakeholder participation:** Explain how you will ensure meaningful contributions from both decision-makers and adolescents/youth.
- **Potential impact:** Describe how the plenary's outcomes can be documented and shared to influence ongoing or future policy and program actions post-symposium

5. REFLECTION DIALOGUES: LEARNING FROM SETBACKS

These sessions create space for honest, reflective, and engaging conversations where presenters share lessons from research, or policy initiatives that did not go as planned or have the intended impact. Rather than focusing on failure, the emphasis is on what was learned, and how those lessons can strengthen future efforts, for better evidence-informed approaches in adolescent programming and policy.

- **Language:** English
- **Time:** 10 minutes
- **Length:** Proposal should not exceed 400 words.
- **Submissions should include:**
 - o **Initiative background:** Briefly describe the initiative, including goals, location, and stakeholders involved.
 - o **Challenges faced:** Explain what didn't work or what unexpected barriers emerged.
 - o **Lessons learned:** Share the key takeaways from the experience and how these could strengthen future programming and policy efforts.
 - o **Relevance:** Highlight the value of these lessons to broader adolescent wellbeing issues in Eastern and Southern Africa.
 - o **Presentation style:** Indicate how you will use storytelling, openness, or creativity to make the session engaging while offering meaningful insights.



SUBMISSION CATEGORIES

Abstracts should demonstrate methodological rigor and relevance to at least one (or more) of the symposium themes described above.

Select symposium track/theme (select in order of preference tracks that apply to your submission)

- ☐ Navigating Wellness: Holistic adolescent health in a changing world
- ☐ Empowered Futures: Skills and educational pathways for adolescents
- ☐ Resilience in the 21st Century: Adolescents thriving in digital, environmental, and social changes

Select your preferred presentation format:

- ☐ Oral presentation only
- ☐ Poster presentation only (note: most participants are not sponsored for poster presentations)
- ☐ Either oral or poster presentation

ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Submissions from research and programs in and from countries in East and Southern Africa.
2. Alignment with symposium themes
3. Quality and clarity of evidence presented
4. Policy and programmatic relevance
5. A limited number of travel scholarships will be available for young researchers and practitioners will be available (submissions will be considered after successful abstract submission).

IMPORTANT DATES

Abstract Submission Opens: 1st October 2025

Deadline for Submission: 30th November 2025

Notification of Acceptance: 31st January 2026

Symposium Dates: 9th – 11th June 2026

HOW TO SUBMIT

Abstracts must be submitted via the symposium's online platform

For inquiries, contact
adolescentsymposium@popcouncil.org