

## Delivering SRHR Education in a School in Mahajanga, Madagascar

*“Our body’s development used to be something we didn’t really understand since no one shed a light on it, but it’s clear now due to the explanation we had at school.” -*

*Student*



Project Safidy is rooted in the premise that young people have *a human right to choose*: to choose when to engage in sexual activities and with whom; to choose when to use contraception and which option to use; and to choose to safeguard their health through access to services. However, in Madagascar, this agency is a privilege that is unavailable to many young people. Exacerbated by under-resourced healthcare services, a lack of sexual health education prevents young people

from exercising their right to sexual and reproductive health. Project Safidy has addressed these gaps by delivering Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) education in schools across Madagascar. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Project Safidy has implemented an integrated SRHR curriculum in the first-year classes of 214 high schools across all 22 regions, reaching over 30,000 students.

Amongst these implementing schools, Lycée Philibert Tsiranana, in the northern city of Mahajanga, has shown substantial progress in equipping students with critical SRHR information. According to endline surveys, all but one of the 16 assigned teachers delivered SRHR topics to more than 199 students during the 2018 - 2019 academic year. With delivered topics ranging from menstrual hygiene management and early pregnancy to consent and gender-based violence, students were comprehensively prepared to exercise their SRHR beyond the classroom.

During Project Safidy's focus groups, students and teachers affirmed the positive impact of the integrated SRHR curriculum. Although students were initially embarrassed to discuss SRHR topics in class, they reported that they enjoyed learning this crucial information. Teachers also noticed that students were engaged and not afraid to ask questions for clarity. These discussions continued outside school, with students speaking to friends, neighbours, and family about SRHR.

*‘I feel now that there is no rush in having an intimate partner - I need to focus on my studies first’. - Student*

These experiences have reportedly taught students the importance of beginning SRHR education at a young age to prevent negative consequences, such as early pregnancy. Similarly, teachers believe SRHR education equips students with the knowledge they need to prioritise and protect their sexual health – information often inaccessible in the home – whilst encouraging students to think about their future. Since the curriculum delivery, students reportedly adopted a different outlook, demonstrating an *increased focus on their studies* and decreased interest in finding an intimate partner. Nearly all surveyed teachers reported a significant change in students' behaviours, with focus group participants noting that students *‘feel free’* since acquiring this new understanding. With this SRHR knowledge, students are prepared to become the next generation of SRHR champions in Mahajanga and across Madagascar.