

GLOBAL TOURISM RESILIENCE AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT CENTRE - EASTERN AFRICA (GTRCMC- EA) - KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

Report

Bridging Borders, Building Futures: The 3is Legacy in Eastern Africa

***Impactful, Inclusive, Integrated Higher Education in Eastern Africa
(3is) Project (2024-2025)***

1. Introduction

The Impactful, Inclusive, Integrated Higher Education in Eastern Africa (3is) Project has successfully concluded, marking a significant milestone in transforming higher education across Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, the project united 22 partners from Spain, Greece, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia to advance internationalization, inclusiveness, innovation, and regional integration in higher education.

The 3is Project brought together a diverse consortium of partners, including European institutions such as the University of Girona (UdG), Spain, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (PU), and Youthmakers Hub (YMH) from Greece, alongside leading Eastern African universities and organizations including Kenyatta University (KU), Garissa University (GU), Turkana University College (TUC), University of Gondar (UG), Debark University (DU), University of Hargeisa (UoH), Puntland State University (PSU), and the Rural Agency for Community Development and Assistance (RACIDA). Together, these partners worked to strengthen institutional capacity, foster collaboration, and drive inclusive and transformative change across the region.

Guided by the principle that “Every Voice Matters,” the project amplified the perspectives of communities and institutions historically on the periphery of global higher education discourse, ensuring that all stakeholders could

contribute to shaping a more equitable and impactful higher education ecosystem. The 3is Project has been nominated for the Global Education Awards, a recognition celebrating excellence and innovation in transformative education.

2. GTRCMC–EA’s Role and Leadership

The Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre – Eastern Africa (GTRCMC–EA), hosted at Kenyatta University, played a pivotal role in the project. Under the leadership of Hon. Rebecca Miano, EGH, Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife (Kenya), and guided by its founding vision from Hon. Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism for Jamaica, the Centre continues to champion resilience, innovation, and sustainable development in higher education and tourism.

In November 2024, GTRCMC–EA was honored with the Global Resilience Award in London for its excellence in promoting sustainable tourism and crisis recovery. Through the 3is initiative, it extended its mission beyond tourism to include educational resilience, capacity building, and community empowerment across Eastern Africa.

3. Thematic Focus Areas

The project revolved around five interlinked pillars:

- **Internationalization** – Breaking boundaries and fostering global academic collaboration.
- **Inclusiveness** – Ensuring equitable access to education for all learners.
- **Educational Innovation & Academic Excellence** – Transforming learning through modern, adaptive methods.
- **Community & Industry Outreach** – Embedding higher education within community realities.
- **Regional Integration** – Promoting unity and cross-border cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

4. The Process: Activities and Milestones

1. Kickoff Meeting – Nairobi, Kenya (March 7–8, 2024)

The Kickoff Meeting marked the official launch of the 3is Project. Hosted by Kenyatta University, it brought together partners from Spain, Greece, Somalia, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

Discussions centered on the project's implementation strategy — highlighting internationalization, innovation, academic excellence, and community engagement. The event underscored the power of collective action in redefining higher education systems for inclusiveness and regional growth.

2. "Internationalization of Higher Education" Workshop – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (May 21–22, 2024)

This workshop strengthened institutional capacity for international collaboration and academic mobility.

Participants developed frameworks for establishing international offices, staff and student exchange programmes, and strategic global partnerships. The event also guided HEIs in preparing policy reports and actionable internationalization strategies tailored to their contexts.

3. "Inclusiveness of People with Fewer Opportunities" Workshop – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (May 21–22, 2024)

Held alongside the Internationalization workshop, this event promoted inclusive education across partner institutions. It emphasized policies supporting students with disabilities, women, and ethnic or religious minorities, introducing digital access pathways and positive discrimination mechanisms to empower underrepresented groups. The outcomes included institutional policy reports and inclusive education action plans customized to regional needs.

4. "Learning and Teaching Innovations in Higher Education" Workshop – Girona, Spain (November 20–23, 2024)

Hosted by the University of Girona, this event explored innovative learning, staff professional development, and academic excellence. Participants examined digital learning models, AI integration, micro-credentials, and blended learning methodologies. The result was a set of action plans and policy recommendations for adopting innovative learning frameworks across participating HEIs.

5. "Community and Industry Embedding" Workshop – Turkana, Kenya (May 20–23, 2025)

This field-based event, hosted by Turkana University College, focused on how universities in remote and marginalized regions can better integrate community needs and industry collaboration into academic programs.

Through field visits and dialogue sessions, the partners identified strategies to embed local innovation, entrepreneurship, and resilience in university missions — highlighting education's role in addressing drought, insecurity, and marginalization.

6. "A More Integrated Higher Education System in the Region" Workshop – Garissa, Kenya (May 26–29, 2025)

The Garissa workshop explored how higher education institutions can strengthen regional cooperation and quality assurance across Eastern Africa. The sessions addressed micro-credentials, recognition of prior learning, student and staff mobility, and cross-border program alignment. Discussions also linked higher education integration to regional priorities like digital transformation, peace and security, migration, and sustainable growth.

7. Closing Conference – University of Gondar, Ethiopia (November 6–7, 2025)

The Closing Event at the University of Gondar brought together partners, ministries, and community representatives to celebrate the project's achievements. It provided a platform to reflect on outcomes, share best practices, and develop a shared vision for the future of inclusive and resilient higher education in the region. The event also showcased the project's cumulative impact in empowering communities and transforming institutions.

3. Additional Achievements

- *Visit to the University of Hargeisa (25–31 May 2024)*: Strengthened institutional ties and discussed frameworks for joint capacity-building programs.
- *Visit to Puntland University (11–18 May 2025)*: Focused on academic collaboration and innovation in higher education.
- *Visit to the Commission for University Education, Kenya (29 May 2025)*: Engaged on accreditation and policy frameworks supporting international partnerships.
- Over 20 Mobilities facilitated between Spain, Greece, Italy, and Eastern Africa through Panteion University and University of Girona.
- Many MoUs signed among partner institutions, creating sustainable international collaborations.
- Collaborative connections established with numerous European and African universities for future projects.

4. Way Forward

The next phase of the 3iS project seeks to deepen the impact through actionable strategies that align with the needs of local communities and the evolving global education landscape.

Key focus areas include:

- *Increasing Employability:* Equip students with practical and digital skills aligned with labor market needs.
- *Bridging the Skills Gap:* Co-develop programs with industry partners to ensure relevance and adaptability.
- *Supporting Rural Communities through Micro-Credentials:* Develop short courses based on indigenous knowledge and traditional skills, which remain untapped and are fading fast.
- *Creation of Cross-Border Innovation and Knowledge Hubs:* Facilitate collaborative spaces to co-create solutions to societal problems.
- *Involving Relevant Ministries for Policy Reforms:* Work closely with ministries of education, labor, and technology to harmonize frameworks for regional education and innovation.
- *Use of AI and Emerging Technologies:* Integrate digital tools for teaching, storytelling, and community engagement.
- *Co-Learning Models:* Encourage participatory learning between formal academia and community practitioners rather than imposing formal systems.
- *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):* Formalize traditional skills and competencies, particularly for those in marginalized or insecure regions.
- *Support for Communities in the Periphery:* Special attention to regions facing recurring drought, insecurity, and limited access to education, ensuring inclusivity in all interventions.

5. Conclusion

The 3iS Project has demonstrated that when higher education is inclusive, connected, and community-driven, it becomes a tool for peace, resilience, and transformation.

The project has strengthened institutions, empowered youth, and bridged communities across borders. The 3iS legacy continues to inspire a new vision for higher education in the Horn of Africa — one where every learner matters, every idea counts, and every border becomes a bridge.



Closing Ceremony, Gondar, Ethiopia, 6-7 November 2025