2018 LEADERSHIP REPORT

For 75 YEARS...
Protecting Women’s Reproductive Rights
Protecting Women’s Reproductive Health & Rights for 75 YEARS

Right now, women’s sexual and reproductive rights are more endangered than we’ve seen in decades. Over the past year, millions of dollars in federal funding have been cut from family planning and reproductive health programs in the United States, including those provided by EngenderHealth. On the world stage, the current administration’s move to reinstitute the Global Gag Rule—which limits America’s role as the largest provider of family planning aid in the world—means that many people who need reproductive health care may be forced to go without.

This reality demands our continued determination, drawn from the strength of our 75-year history, to improve and expand our efforts in new and innovative ways to serve women and girls in the countries where we work, while continuing to ensure sustainable development, provide critical support in the field, and save more lives.

Only when sexual and reproductive rights are respected as human rights will women and girls have the freedom to reach their full potential and determine the course of their own future. Access to contraception and the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion, opens a world of seemingly endless possibilities for women and girls: better health, a chance to finish school, and an ability to earn more and to truly thrive. In turn, they become a driving force that can transform communities and nations.

Your ongoing partnership is an essential component in our tireless global efforts to confront new challenges and maximize opportunities to create a promising new day for women and girls everywhere. Together, we’ll carry our progress forward for another 75 years. This progress can be seen in the following inspirational stories your generosity helps make possible.

Young Couple Promotes Family Planning in Their Village

Kizza Kedekiya and Katusemi Evelyne, residents of Bukona Village, Hoima District in Uganda, were late in their teens when they married. Five years later, they have two healthy little girls. Kizza, a farmer, and Katusemi, a nursery school teacher, are happy in life. They believe that raising two children is already a large responsibility for them, so for now, they use hormonal implants to keep their family small. A few years ago, EngenderHealth and the district health office in their village chose their youth group—the Bukona Youth Development Group—to mobilize youth leaders to disseminate messages about family planning in the community, especially among youth ages 10 to 24. They immediately signed up to be part of the initiative.

“We felt the need to be role models and examples to other married youth in our community. That is how we became peer educators in the group,” says Katusemi. After some basic training, the dedicated couple moved from house to house to inform youth and other community members about the importance of family planning. They also spread the word when health providers periodically came for special family planning youth days. The couple say that many youth are happy to have family planning information and methods, especially in youth-friendly spots outside the usual clinic settings.

In her role as a peer educator, Katusemi says that her biggest challenge is tackling misconceptions about family planning methods in the community. In their volunteer role, the couple discuss the benefits of family planning overall—and take questions about health issues during youth group meetings, drama activities, and community and religious leader meetings. Katusemi is certain that the entire Bukona Youth Development Group is proud of their leadership on sexual and reproductive health issues. She adds, “I believe we have sufficient information to clear up myths and misconceptions that block others from using family planning methods. It’s not foreign to us like it used to be.”
As a teenager, Joy Pelenia had hopes of being a cruise ship attendant. But then the unexpected happened: She got pregnant. Although upset with the turn of events, her family supported Joy and encouraged her to seek medical care at the nearby Iloilo Provincial Hospital. There, she enrolled in a new initiative known as the Program for Young Parents (PYP). It’s one component of the VisayasHealth Project, which is implemented by EngenderHealth with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assistance and donor support to improve maternal and child health and family planning services in eight provinces in the Visayas Region of the Philippines. Designed to give adolescent mothers the opportunity to pursue careers after giving birth, PYP, in particular, helped Joy “find strength to get up and move forward with my life for myself and for my baby.”

And she’s well on her way. Now 20, Joy, shown at left, is the mother of an 11-month-old baby boy and has become one of the active peer educators of PYP. She helps hospital staff with routine tasks, like signing in clients and making name tags. But most important, Joy shares her life experience with other teen parents during the weekly PYP Day at the facility. She is grateful for the solicitous care she received from PYP staff, which she credits for the change in her outlook from a sad, young pregnant girl to the hopeful individual she is today. Joy finds fulfillment in telling her story to other young parents in a group setting that helps them find comfort and draw strength from each other. With EngenderHealth’s support, dozens of young mothers, ages 18 to 20, have received Certificates of Completion from PYP during its first graduation rites last year, and the numbers continue to grow.

“Then one day, I went to the nearest hospital, where I met a medical practitioner. The zeal with which she offered family planning counseling and explained all of the choices helped turn my life around. I am happy that there are organizations that train medical practitioners and work at the very grass roots of society to change the lives of girls and women,” explains Sheila.

Today, an estimated 214 million women worldwide want to avoid unwanted pregnancy and plan their futures but lack access to modern contraception. EngenderHealth’s Expanding Access to Intrauterine Device (IUD) Services in India project increases family planning services in two states—Rajasthan and Gujarat—by expanding women’s access to and use of contraception. This is ensured through providing quality training to service providers from public health services, strengthening the enabling environment on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and increasing demand for quality SRHR services with the help of community health workers.

For many women like Sheila, the initiative’s impact has been profoundly transformative. After receiving in-depth counseling about her contraceptive choices from a health provider supported by EngenderHealth, Sheila was armed with new knowledge that informed her decision to choose an IUD as her preferred method of contraception. She also believes that if she can bring a dramatic change to her life by making this decision, so can other women who are waiting for help. Sheila says she looks forward to charting a brighter future by staying well-informed and claiming her rights.

“"In just four years of marriage, I became a mother of two. I felt like my life was in utter disarray. I know that I do not belong to a household of the rich and famous, but this was not the life that I desired for my children and myself," says Sheila, 25, of India.

With the ongoing support of our donors and partners, 7.1 million lives have been transformed with access to contraception.
On the Front Lines to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

In the United States today, 83% of teenage girls don’t receive formal sex education until after they’ve had sex for the first time. What’s more, recent studies reveal that 23% of teens don’t use contraception the first time they have sex. At EngenderHealth, our Re:MIX program is designed to address this nationwide problem in a way that speaks to teens through age-appropriate and medically accurate curricula. The program pairs youth parent peer educators with adult health educators to co-facilitate game-based, interactive sexuality education for young people. In turn, adolescents learn and practice crucial skills that empower them to make responsible, healthy, and safe life decisions—all leading to a chance for a brighter future free from unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and relationship violence.

“As Isabel, a peer educator, puts it: “Today I have money to buy diapers for my 10-month-old son, Adrian. That wasn’t true less than a year ago, when as a new 18-year-old mom, I had to search for spare change around the house and in the car just to buy the smallest package of diapers. I struggled to support my child, complete my education, and forget thinking about the future.”

But EngenderHealth’s Re:MIX program helped changed all that. Because when Isabel became a Re:MIX peer educator, she began to develop her leadership skills, gain confidence, and truly thrive. “I really like that I get to tell the students my story—I didn’t know about my sexual and reproductive health before I became pregnant, even though I thought I knew everything,” she says. “Now I get to teach teens to be comfortable with their bodies and give them the information they need to prevent pregnancies. I have gained confidence through the paid internship program, where I receive job training and mentoring.”

Despite the fact that the current administration has cut millions of dollars in federal funding over the last year from teen pregnancy programs like ours, EngenderHealth remains on the front lines offering vulnerable young people across the country the sexual health services they desperately need—largely thanks to the ongoing support of our loyal partners and donors.