

Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Eliminating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence through Partnerships with Feminist and Youth-Led Organizations in West and Central Africa

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Background & Program Intervention

- **West and Central Africa (WCA)** is one of the youngest parts of the world, with an estimated **77 million young people** between the ages of 15 and 24.
- Young people around the world face many challenges, particularly in terms of respect for their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- Across the region, violence against women and girls is endemic, with **high rates of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**.
- **EngenderHealth's Building Equitable Partnerships with Youth-Led Organizations (YLOs) in WCA to Advance SRHR and Eliminate SGBV project in Benin, Burkina, and Côte d'Ivoire** aims to support local organizations addressing the SRHR needs of young people.

Methodology

- We established **partnerships with young feminist activists and organizations** from all three countries, which facilitated joint activities.
- We learned that partnerships with a range of different stakeholders are crucial to achieving desired results for communities.
- We **selected nine youth-led organizations (YLOs)** that we identified as being the most committed, having sound reputations, and able to quickly mobilize. We **assessed their capacities and needs**, identified common themes, and created and **implemented customized plans to strengthen their capabilities**.

Results / Key Findings

- We **trained 52 young leaders** from YLOs (aged 18 to 30, 73% of whom were female)
- We indirectly **reached 1,305 other YLO members and volunteers** across the region.
- All organizations **developed SGBV prevention action plans**, which are currently being implemented.

Program Implications / Lessons

- **Flexible, local, agile, and customized partnerships with YLOs can strengthen and increase meaningful youth participation** in SRHR programs and activities, including those targeting SGBV.
- Including young people across all project phases enhances their responsibility and decision-making power while affirming their leadership.
- YLOs often have limited institutional capacities. Partnerships that include **targeted institutional and financial support** while simultaneously **supporting the implementation of their activities** can yield immense success.
- More **donors and partners must be willing to invest** in similar capacity strengthening partnerships **to maximize outcomes**.



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