

Partnerships in Practice:

A Framework for Advancing
Locally Led Development



EngenderHealth

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ACRONYMS

BD	Business Development
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CCBRT	Comprehensive Community-Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania
CCP	Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP)
CLO	Community-Led Organizations
GB	Grand Bargain
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GYSI	Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion
IP	Implementing Partner
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LNGOs	Local Non-Governmental Organization
LEPs	Locally Established Partners
LNGOs	Local Non-Governmental Organizations
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning
MH	Mental Health
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSSFPO	MOMENTUM Safe Surgery in Family Planning and Obstetrics
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreement
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NNGOs	National Non-Governmental Organizations
NPI	New Partners Initiative
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PSA	Professional Services Agreement
PTA	Pre-Teaming Agreement
PwD	Persons with Disability
PWG	Partnership Working Group
QA	Quality Assurance
RFPs	Request for Proposals
TA	Teaming Agreement
TOC	Theory of Change
TORs	Terms of References
YLO	Youth-Led Organizations
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SWAA	Society for Women Against AIDS in Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit



EngenderHealth Partnership Framework

Why this framework? The global health landscape is evolving rapidly, characterized by shifting power dynamics and an increased emphasis on sustainability, equity, and local leadership. In this context, INGOs must rethink the way they do business to ensure their operations are responsive, equitable, and inclusive.

EngenderHealth recognizes that building and nurturing strategic partnerships is a cornerstone of our commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the world's most underserved communities. This partnership framework lays out our vision and approach for building strategic, trust-based, and impactful partnerships that are informed and inspired by our core objectives and values (i.e., Reflection, Inclusion, Integrity, Respect, and Transformation).

EngenderHealth takes a broad view of partnerships, building strong, often long-standing relationships with governments, health-system authorities, local NGOs and associations, private-sector partners, and donors. We know from experience that collaboration, trust, knowledge sharing, and a people-centered approach result in meaningful partnerships. We have pursued this commitment to partnering for local leadership through:

- **Co-designing with government and local partners.** We have long had close partnerships with government, civil society organizations, and other local stakeholders that help us understand contextual challenges, identify common goals and principles, define objectives and measures of success, and co-create programs for joint implementation.
- **Co-implementation with local partners.** Beyond co-designing, we believe in the shared responsibility and mutual accountability of executing projects with partners. This includes collaborating with governments, local organizations, and other stakeholders, regardless of whether there is a formal agreement involved. This approach ensures continued buy-in, enhances capacity strengthening, and supports sustainability even after project completion.
- **Placing partners in the lead by supporting local organizations.** This has included transitioning from being a prime to being a sub-grantee to former subs and providing demand-driven technical assistance and organizational management support to local organizations.
- **Elevating local voices.** We work to convene and amplify the work of youth-led and feminist organizations, elevating voices of marginalized groups, strengthening their skills, and fostering connections across countries and continents.¹
- **Advancing locally-led development within our internal operations.** While localization does not necessarily result in equity, it is a critical step – necessary even if not sufficient – in the path towards more resilient and sustainable development. Within our country offices, we are maximizing country-office autonomy by building core, back-office capabilities; promoting leadership that values gender equality and

EngenderHealth is committed to:

- Supporting **country-led solutions** for country-specific opportunities and challenges
- Co-designing projects for **local needs with local partners**
- Strengthening and supporting **systems and capacities** for the future
- Strengthening and **sharing power and resources** with national and local partners

¹ Feminist organizations are understood to champion gender equality, challenge patriarchal structures, promote women's rights, amplify marginalized voices, and advocate for systemic changes to address gender inequalities.



understands the complexities of overlapping social identities; and ensuring our staff and leadership at all levels represent diverse geography, experiences, and skills.²

The **purpose of this framework** is to guide EngenderHealth in developing partnerships with an increased focus on locally-led development, sustainability, and country leadership with the objective of ensuring that our partnerships – internally and externally – are more fit-for-purpose.

Pursuing fit-for-purpose, trust-based partnerships requires an organizational shift towards integrating both short-term project-based collaborations and long-term strategic alliances. These alliances, which extend to local organizations as well as INGO collaborations, aim to enable local leadership and reinforce equitable partnership principles. Short-term, project-based partnerships provide access to local knowledge, agility, and responsiveness. Meanwhile, long-term partnerships—whether they are alliances or extended projects—serve as the foundation on which we build trust, mutual understanding, and shared vision. As relationships deepen, they not only advance our joint strategic objectives but also establish a foundation for impactful project-based collaboration.

Intended use. The Partnership Framework and Toolkit (Framework) has been developed to provide both strategic direction and practical tools for EngenderHealth to build long-lasting partnerships.

- **Guidance on Partnership Dynamics.** The Framework offers conceptual guidance by setting clear principles, typologies, and ways of working. It serves as a reference for EngenderHealth to navigate partnership dynamics.
- **The Partnership Journey.** The journey presents a structured sequence of steps for building partnerships systematically and deliberately. It offers EngenderHealth teams a clear path to follow, ensuring consistency in approach while allowing for contextual nuances.
- **Operational Toolkit.** Aligned with the partnership journey, the Toolkit provides resources tailored for each step, from identification to investment in partnerships.
- **Adaptation at Local Levels.** Given EngenderHealth’s diverse operational settings, the Framework emphasizes adaptability. Country or regional teams are encouraged to modify the tools and approaches based on their unique circumstances.
- **Integration with Core Organizational Values.** All elements of this Framework and Toolkit align with EngenderHealth’s core values, ensuring that new partnerships resonate with the organization’s overall direction.

² Intersectional, feminist leadership emphasizes the importance of recognizing the interconnected nature of social categories, such as race, class, and gender, and inclusive and transformative leadership practices.

Defining Partnerships

A partnership at EngenderHealth is an arrangement or relationship formed around a shared vision or mutual interest. It is entered into consensually and intentionally between all parties, characterized by reciprocal benefits, formation of trust and commitment to either long-term collaboration or the lifespan of a specific project, as agreed upon by all involved.

Successful partnerships comprise:

1. **Trust as the cornerstone.** Every partnership should be grounded in mutual trust to enable transparency, foster shared risk-taking, and encourage openness in successes and failures.
2. **Shared decision-making power.** Partnerships should ensure all parties can influence strategic and operational decisions, reinforcing a trust and equity-driven dynamic.
3. **Clearly defined and mutually agreed upon roles and responsibilities.** Clearly defined roles and responsibilities build support and alignment throughout the partnership and help mitigate conflict between partners.
4. **Strategic complementarity of expertise and roles.** Each partner should bring unique strengths, skills, or capacities that strengthen the partnership. Complementarity can be in terms of technical expertise, geographic reach, or access to specific populations. Strategic complementarity fills gaps and amplifies impact.
5. **Mutual accountability.** Mutual accountability ensures all partners are committed to the agreed principles, expectations, and outcomes of the partnership. It is essential for maintaining trust, promoting transparency, and reinforcing commitments regarding a shared vision.
6. **Collaboration rather than consultation.** Collaboration distinguishes a partnership from a transactional relationship. Collaboration is driven by open, regular, and transparent communication to facilitate joint understanding and action.
7. **Commitment to and understanding of our partnership principles.** Understanding and adherence to EngenderHealth's partnership principles solidifies the trust-based foundation of the partnership and provides a robust ethical and strategic base for the partnership.
8. **A mechanism for conflict resolution.** Effective conflict management anticipates and addresses disagreements to maintain the health and productivity of the partnership. If managed constructively, conflict can be a catalyst for deepening trust between organizations.
9. **Regular performance measurement, learning, and evaluation.** Measurement enables partners to assess the effectiveness of the partnership, learn from experiences, and make necessary improvements.



Why Partnerships?

Benefits of Partnering

Partnerships drive **synergy** and often lead to outcomes that are considerably more impactful than the simple aggregation of individual efforts. Each participating entity contributes distinct resources, networks, and expertise that create a comprehensive capacity for delivering high-quality SRHR health services or capacity building. Diversity of experience, skills, and approaches within partnerships affords valuable perspectives that encourage innovation and nuanced problem-solving at scale. Furthermore, partnerships amplify the collective voice and the power of unified action. They strengthen our ability to advocate for policy shifts and raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health. And they enable resource pooling across geographical boundaries, which allows for broad and scalable impact.

In addition to the collective benefits, each participant in a partnership can realize substantial **individual gains**. Partnerships offer a platform for leveraging resources and optimizing cost and impact. Pooled resources (e.g., knowledge, technical expertise, networks, and funding) can catalyze reciprocal exchange that benefits all participants. The indirect gains from such collaborations are equally important. They include enhanced learning opportunities, shared risk, expansion of professional networks, and increased social capital.

Why We Partner

EngenderHealth recognizes the critical importance of partnerships in advancing our mission. Our partnership approach plays a crucial role in the effectiveness and efficiency of our work. These principles are woven into our partnership model and are reflected in the following reasons why we partner with local organizations, governments, and other entities:

1. **Implementation quality.** By partnering with local organizations, governments, and other stakeholders that understand the specific cultural, religious, social, and logistical context of the communities they serve, EngenderHealth can design and implement programs that are better responsive to context, needs, and sensitivities. Local partners' input results in interventions that are more likely to be accepted and successful.
2. **Synergies and complementarities.** Local organizations and other partners, including governments, research institutions, and INGOs, often have unique skills, knowledge, and relationships that have been developed in specific contexts and through working with communities and constituents. These qualities can complement those of EngenderHealth and result in more holistic and comprehensive approaches.
3. **Capacity strengthening.** EngenderHealth can help enhance the technical and organizational capacities of its partners, both through formal capacity-strengthening initiatives and through mutual learning and shared experiences. When this process is approached from a reciprocal perspective, partners can also contribute to strengthening EngenderHealth's capacity as well.
4. **Sustainability.** Local entities generally have a long-term commitment to their communities, unlike international entities, which may have a limited project timeframe. Partnering with entities that have long-standing presence, whether local organizations, governments, or other community entities, underpins the sustainability of interventions and their impacts even after EngenderHealth's direct involvement ends.
5. **Power balance and local ownership.** Development work has been criticized for perpetuating power imbalances and undermining local capacities. By partnering with local organizations and applying our



partnership principles, EngenderHealth actively seeks to address these concerns, ensuring that local stakeholders are active leaders in shaping and driving interventions. This approach promotes a more balanced relationship and contributes to the self-efficacy and capacity of local organizations and communities.

6. **Advocacy and policy influence.** Local organizations often have stronger connections with local and national policymakers. These relationships can be beneficial for advocacy efforts where constituency voices often resonate more with decision-makers. EngenderHealth can leverage these relationships to elevate local voices and catalyze more effective policy advocacy.
7. **Alignment with donor trends.** The global development sector has recognized the value of locally led development in achieving sustainable impact and local ownership. While donor commitments are nascent, and modalities are still forming, donors are increasingly orienting their support toward locally led development. By partnering with local organizations, EngenderHealth is anticipating and aligning itself for a future that will likely involve elevated roles for local organizations, redefined roles for INGOs, and changes in the funding landscape.

Theory of Change: Partnership-Driven Change

As we evolve in our work, it is increasingly clear that creating partnerships and strengthening the capacity of local organizations can dramatically amplify the impact of our efforts. EngenderHealth’s “Partnership-Driven Change” underscores the centrality and priority we place on building trust-based, equitable partnerships with local organizations, particularly those representing communities with the least access to such services. “Partnership-Driven Change” emphasizes the need to understand and, when necessary, strengthen the operational capacities of these organizations. These encompass a spectrum of functions, ranging from technical competencies in SRHR to essential back-office functions such as finance, monitoring and evaluation, fundraising/resource mobilization, communications, advocacy, human resources management, and program management.

This partnership-centered approach is expected to accelerate and amplify the impact and effectiveness of EngenderHealth’s work significantly by continuously prioritizing learning, leadership, and commitment to partners. The ultimate objective remains the same: **enabling women and girls to fully exercise their rights to gender-equitable sexual and reproductive health services and participate as equal members of society.**

Partnership-Driven Change: We believe that:

- IF EngenderHealth creates an enabling environment for collaboration and trust-based, equitable partnerships to thrive;
- IF staff have the knowledge and skills to effectively identify, create, and manage fit-for-purpose partnerships;
- IF partnerships are developed to align to EngenderHealth principles;
- IF partnerships are jointly created, implemented and evaluated;
- THEN partnerships will build trust and strengthen the capacity of collaboration partners and, in turn, will lead to long-term relationships that drive impact at scale.



Figure 1. Theory of Change



Partnerships at EngenderHealth

Partnership Principles

Our partnership approach is grounded in a set of core principles that reflect our broader organizational values: reflection, inclusion, integrity, respect, and transformation. In our partnerships, we focus on combining strengths and sharing responsibilities to achieve common goals. We aim to foster an environment of mutual respect, trust, and transparency, where every partner is heard, and the complexities of power dynamics are acknowledged and addressed. This approach allows us to fully embrace the unique strengths of local organizations, align our efforts with evolving donor trends, ensure sustainable impact, and facilitate capacity strengthening.

Table 1. EngenderHealth Partnership Principles

Principle	Description	What this looks like in practice
Collaboration	We align with partners around a shared vision and work together to develop goals and strategies for achieving them. Together, we share expertise, learning, and credit for joint successes. (Org Value: Reflection)	From inception, we engage our partners in full-cycle collaboration, from ideation and co-creation of goals, strategies, and action plans, through joint implementation, to monitoring, collective learning, and reflection. Together, we share learnings, celebrate successes, and address challenges as a team.
Inclusivity	We embrace diverse perspectives in our partnerships. We engage meaningfully with partners to create mutual value, address challenges, and design impactful solutions. (Org Value: Inclusion)	Systematically identifying partners with unique technical expertise, geographic experience, and representation that complements EngenderHealth's own capacities. This involves actively seeking diverse partners across countries and ensuring all voices (minority, women, and girls) are considered in decision-making processes.
Equity	We acknowledge and address the complexities of power dynamics in our partnerships. We aim for shared power, fair distribution of resources, benefits, and outcomes. Our commitment is to ensure that all partners gain value from the partnership, regardless of their size, influence, or resources. (Org Value: Inclusion)	Continuously working towards equitable partnerships by addressing power imbalances and ensuring fair distribution of resources. This is embodied in decision-making processes that benefit all parties and in our budgeting and indirect cost policies.
Shared responsibility	We foster a sense of shared ownership and joint responsibility for common goals and the partnership's outcomes – good or bad. (Org Value: Integrity)	Setting common goals, sharing resources, and jointly managing successes and failures. This involves explicit mutual accountability and ensuring that responsibility and accountability are equally distributed. These arrangements are generally embodied in formal and informal agreements that are mutually understood, agreeable, and accessible to all.
Transparency	We maintain a commitment to openness and transparency by	Openly sharing information about our capabilities, resources, potential risks, and concerns, and



Principle	Description	What this looks like in practice
	<p>sharing information about capabilities, resources, potential risks, and concerns throughout the length of the partnership.</p> <p>(Org Value: Integrity)</p>	<p>expecting the same from our partners. This includes regular and candid communication, clear financial reporting, and shared decision-making processes.</p>
Trust	<p>Trust is the cornerstone of our partnerships. We recognize that trust is built over time and based on experience. We aim to build relationships based on reliability, honesty, and openness to lay a foundation for effective joint action and shared success.</p> <p>(Org Value: Respect)</p>	<p>Consistently delivering on commitments, communicating openly and honestly, and showing respect and appreciation for our partners. Part of this is achieved by working towards streamlined, accessible funding and due diligence processes that not only comply with donor requirements but are also self-driven, designed to be understood and accessible by potential partners, and contribute to partners' internal reflection, learning, and capacity strengthening. We understand trust building is a continuous process, and we strive to strengthen trust through all our systems and interactions.</p>
Mutual Respect	<p>We ensure each partner is heard, respected, and receives the support they need to make the partnership successful. Our aim is for each partner to feel that the partnership is respectful and beneficial.</p> <p>(Org Value: Respect)</p>	<p>Entering partnerships with recognition and appreciation for the role, responsibility, and expertise of our partners. We create a space where every partner is encouraged to express their views without fear of dismissal or belittlement.</p>
Adaptability	<p>We embrace the potential for mutual growth and change inherent in partnerships. We are deliberate and open to learning from our partners, adapting our perspectives, and modifying our strategies and actions based on shared experiences.</p> <p>(Org Value: Transformation)</p>	<p>Remaining open to change and learning from shared experiences. This involves creating opportunities to put our partners in the forefront (e.g., for representation and visibility), adjusting our strategies, revising our plans, or learning new methodologies based on partner input and the changing context of our work.</p>



Whom We Partner with and Why

EngenderHealth collaborates with a wide range of partners to advance its mission. Its primary partners span local and national NGOs, community-based organizations, international NGOs, government agencies, and funding entities. Other types of partners include research institutions and private-sector companies.

Each type of partner brings a unique set of attributes and advantages that contribute to the breadth and depth of EngenderHealth's impact. Each type of partnership is underpinned by different sources of benefit and strategic value – for EngenderHealth and for the partner. It is important to understand the diverse rationales for partnering to optimize mutual benefits that underpin the potential and dynamics of each partnership. The following section provides an overview of our primary types of partners and outlines the potential benefits for both EngenderHealth and each type.

Engaging with International Partners

While this framework emphasizes EngenderHealth's partnerships with local organizations in line with our commitment to locally led development, we also collaborate extensively with a diverse array of international partners. This includes relationships with other international NGOs, donor agencies, research institutions, UN agencies, and the private sector.

Shared Elements Across Partnerships:

- **Core Principles.** Whether partnering locally or internationally, our relationships are rooted in mutual respect, trust, and transparency.
- **Common Objectives.** All our partnerships, regardless of their geographic focus, center on mutual goals, from health outcomes to broader developmental objectives.
- **Emphasis on Learning.** Continual mutual learning, adaptation, and growth characterize all our partnerships.

Distinct Aspects of International Partnerships:

- **Power Dynamics.** In our local partnerships, there is a strong emphasis on sharing power and ensuring local perspectives take the lead. With international partners, the dynamics often differ, reflecting more equal levels of influence and resources.
- **Scope.** Collaborations with international partners can often span multiple countries, reflecting broader regional or global strategies.



Table 2. Partner Types and Potential Benefits

Description	Potential EngenderHealth Benefits	Potential Partner Benefits
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)		
<p>EngenderHealth works with community-based organizations to reach the grassroots level and ensure that its work is aligned with community needs and realities. These include local constituency groups, such as feminist and youth-led organizations, survivor groups, etc.</p>	<p>EngenderHealth partners with CBOs to reach grassroots levels, better understand community needs and aspirations, and gain insights to guide interventions. These partnerships can also ensure community ownership and buy-in.</p>	<p>CBOs may be motivated to form partnerships that recognize and engage their local insights and relationships while also connecting them with wider networks, funding, and other resources.</p> <p>They may seek to influence broader strategies and policies with their grounded understanding of community needs. Being linked with a recognized INGO can - in some cases - give more weight to CBOs' demands and initiatives.</p>
Local and National Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs, NNGOs)		
<p>EngenderHealth often collaborates with local and national NGOs to implement programs and services. Partner NGOs may represent or target specific groups, such as young people, persons with disabilities (PwD), women, or marginalized communities.</p>	<p>EngenderHealth partners with NGOs to harness their deep knowledge of local contexts, culture, and community dynamics. This can help ensure interventions are relevant, effective, and sustainable. These partnerships can also create opportunities for mutual capacity strengthening and shared learning.</p>	<p>NGOs may seek partnerships to access funding, facilitate mutual learning, exchange resources, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. Partnerships can enhance the effectiveness of their programs, extend their reach, and provide opportunities to contribute their local knowledge and expertise. NGOs may also seek partnerships to strengthen their organizational capacities through skills exchange and joint training initiatives, as well as to increase their impact and visibility by being associated with a well-known international organization like EngenderHealth.</p>
International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs)		
<p>EngenderHealth often works with other INGOs to access consortium-based funding opportunities, share resources, coordinate efforts, and expand the reach of its programs.</p>	<p>Collaborations with other INGOs can help EngenderHealth expand the reach and impact of its programs, pool resources, share best practices, and coordinate efforts for larger-scale change. Such partnerships also enable mutual learning and capacity strengthening. EngenderHealth may also seek partnerships with INGOs to access complementary expertise.</p>	<p>In addition to consortium-based funding, INGOs may be interested in partnerships that enable reciprocal knowledge exchange, coordinated action, and resource pooling. INGOs may seek partnerships with EngenderHealth to access specialized technical expertise and innovative approaches that can strengthen their own programs. Partnerships can enhance the effectiveness and reach of INGO initiatives while also enabling them to learn from and adapt to local contexts.</p>
Government Agencies		



Description	Potential EngenderHealth Benefits	Potential Partner Benefits
<p>EngenderHealth works closely with government health ministries and agencies to align its programs with national priorities and strategies. This often involves technical assistance, capacity strengthening, and policy development.</p>	<p>EngenderHealth partners with government agencies to ensure its interventions align with national priorities and can be integrated into existing systems and structures. This can enhance program scalability and sustainability. These partnerships can also enable EngenderHealth to directly engage in policy dialogue and influence.</p>	<p>Government agencies may seek partnerships that enrich their policymaking and program implementation with external expertise and on-the-ground insights. They may partner with INGOs to leverage global networks, access additional resources, and elevate the visibility and credibility of their initiatives. Collaborative relationships can help tailor interventions to local contexts, enhance service delivery, and ensure governmental perspectives and priorities are incorporated into EngenderHealth strategies.</p>
<p>Funding Partners (Institutional and Foundation Donors)</p>		
<p>EngenderHealth receives funding and support from diverse institutional and foundation donors. It is important to think of institutions and foundations as funding partners rather than simply donors. It often works closely with these entities to ensure that funding is used effectively and aligns with both donor priorities and community needs.</p>	<p>EngenderHealth partners with donors to secure funding for its programs, but also to engage in strategic discussions about priorities and approaches. Such partnerships can enable shared learning, mutual accountability, and strategic alignment with broader trends and priorities in the field.</p>	<p>Donors partner to maximize the impact of their contributions and align investments with their strategic priorities. They may seek partnerships to ensure their funds are used effectively and efficiently, and generally expect regular updates and rigorous evaluations of the projects they support. They also value opportunities to learn from and influence the programs they fund.</p>

Working with Partners

How We Work with Partners

Our partnerships, although diverse, are characterized by three core approaches that broadly define our roles and contributions. As a “Convener and Amplifier,” we bring together and elevate the voices of local organizations, fostering connections and synergies that can boost impact. Through “Co-Design and Joint Implementation” we align with our partners’ expertise, resources, and objectives to co-create and jointly implement projects and programs. Finally, through “Technical Assistance and Capacity Strengthening,” we share resources, knowledge, and specialized expertise to collectively elevate the profile, impact, and sustainability of our joint efforts.

Table 3. EngenderHealth Core Approaches to Partnerships

Approach	Examples
Convener and Amplifier	
EngenderHealth works to amplify the work of local organizations by elevating their voices, strengthening their skills, fostering connections across communities and countries, and bringing separate but related networks together.	<p>EngenderHealth supports young feminist activist networks and organizations in Benin, Burkina Faso, and Côte d’Ivoire through our Equitable Partnership with Youth-Led Organizations for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Elimination project. Through the project, we have established equitable partnerships with nine youth-led organizations (three in each country) and are providing technical and financial support to ensure they can effectively implement their advocacy goals and plans.</p> <p>These efforts are strengthening grassroots and regional SRHR and GBV movements, which previously operated separately from one another, and amplifying the voices of young feminist activists and organizations for more effective advocacy of SRHR at all levels.</p>
Co-Design and Joint Implementation	
A program can only be successful when the qualities, abilities, and experience of its partners are aligned with the program’s deliverables and objectives. When forming partnerships, we seek out organizations with complementary expertise and aligned values. This enables us to facilitate a truly “one team” approach guided by co-creation and joint implementation.	<p>To ensure that our Scaling Up Family Planning project in Tanzania reaches the country’s most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, such as people living with disabilities, we are partnering with a local organization, Comprehensive Community-Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT). CCBRT’s extensive experience in delivering services to people with disabilities, combined with EngenderHealth’s expertise in strengthening the quality of contraceptive services, is accelerating the uptake of SRHR services among impacted populations, addressing gaps in service delivery, and making services more inclusive.</p> <p>In Nigeria, as part of our global Momentum Safe Surgery in Family Planning and Obstetrics project, EngenderHealth collaborates with partners, including the Institute of Social Work of Nigeria (ISOWN) and the Centre for Population and Reproductive Health.</p> <p>To launch this partnership, we hosted a comprehensive co-creation process to develop a country-led, context-specific</p>



Approach	Examples
	<p>project work plan. Acting as a catalyst, the project uses learning-by-doing interventions to strengthen the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women Affairs to implement a locally led approach that best meets the needs of women and adolescent girls.</p>
<p>Capacity Strengthening and Sharing</p>	
<p>EngenderHealth offers technical support across core impact areas. These areas encompass SRHR, which includes contraception and abortion care, GBV, and maternal and obstetric care. Moreover, we integrate a gender, youth, and social inclusion perspective throughout our programming and organizational operations. Additionally, EngenderHealth provides our partners with targeted training and coaching on donor procurement processes. This encompasses guidance on proposal writing, management, financial management, and donor reporting. These efforts enable our partners to become better able to pursue, access, and steward donor funds, which helps them diversify their portfolios and deepen their impact.</p> <p>EngenderHealth also offers technical assistance and capacity sharing to government partners. Our collaboration includes strategic guidance on policies, standards, and SOPs, as well as implementation support to ensure the availability of quality services.</p>	<p>Following the successful completion of the EngenderHealth-led Burundians Responding Against Violence and Inequality project, EngenderHealth supported our local partner, Society for Women against AIDS in Africa (SWAA-Burundi) to prime and win its first award directly from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the follow-on GIR'ITEKA project. EngenderHealth now provides technical assistance to GIR'ITEKA, transferring our expertise in gender integration and GBV response and prevention to SWAA-Burundi and supporting them in the roll-out of GBV-sensitive training to other USAID-funded HIV and GBV implementing partners and healthcare providers.</p>



The Partnership Journey

Overview

The principles of trust, equity, and mutual respect guide both long-term and project-based partnerships. EngenderHealth's Partnership Journey encompasses both the development and maintenance of long-term partnerships and the implementation of collaborative projects. This journey is fluid and iterative. It recognizes that partnerships are dynamic and evolve over time.

EngenderHealth's partnership journey (below) is grounded in the cultivation of **trust-based relationships** rather than a strict compliance-based approach that is often tied to donor risk management requirements. However, it acknowledges that EngenderHealth currently operates in a funding landscape shaped by donor requirements for due diligence and policy compliance. These requirements are addressed in the "Assessment and Due Diligence of Potential Partners" step and the ongoing "Continuous Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning" step of the journey. In the partnership journey, compliance is not a one-sided burden, but a shared responsibility. It is not about strict adherence alone but achieving a balance with mutual respect and trust-building.

The journey outlined here represents an ideal scenario. We acknowledge the realities of proposal processes and donor timelines. There may be instances where time constraints prevent us from establishing the depth of trust, transparency, and collaboration we aim for at the outset. However, we believe that a foundation of trust can be established after the initiation of a partnership, and we remain committed to living up to our partnership principles even when circumstances are less than ideal.

We also recognize instances where donors influence the selection of partners, directing collaborations with specific entities. While these partnerships may not originate from an organic desire for collaboration, EngenderHealth is committed to cultivating trust, transparency, and mutual respect over time, ensuring that every partnership, regardless of its inception, aligns with our core principles.

The model also suggests that EngenderHealth and its partners can advocate together for more flexible funding mechanisms that allow for greater adaptability, risk-taking, and innovation. The "Advocacy and Transformation" step recognizes that the global health sector's broader funding structures and practices play a significant role in shaping partnerships and locally led development. By advocating for change at this systemic level, EngenderHealth and its partners can potentially contribute to transforming the sector toward local leadership and locally led development. As indicated below, this framework is supported by EngenderHealth's Partnerships in Practice: A Toolkit for Advancing Locally-Led Development.



Figure 2. EngenderHealth Model Partnership Journey



Table 4. Steps in the EngenderHealth Model Partnership Journey

Step	Description & Considerations	Tools
Phase 1: Partnership Landscape		
1. Assess EngenderHealth's partnership needs	<p>Global and country teams should be proactive in anticipating what kinds of partnerships are likely to be beneficial. By looking forward and taking a long-term perspective, EngenderHealth can be strategic and systematic about which organizations it partners with and how it builds partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical expertise. Identify the common technical areas required for EngenderHealth activities that are not currently available in-house. These needs should come out through the development of country or regional program strategies and reflection on current project needs, recent RFPs, or donor strategies. • Geographic complementarity. Determine the geographic areas (regional or country-based) where EngenderHealth currently has a minimal presence but seeks to expand its work, driven by EngenderHealth program development strategy, and where this may intersect with anticipated donor priorities. This could involve a mapping exercise to understand where your work is currently concentrated and where the gaps are. • Local engagement. Identify areas or issues where local interlocutors might be more effective than an international organization. This is particularly important for sensitive subject matters that require nuanced understanding and trust from local communities. 	
2. Map the partner landscape	EngenderHealth identifies potential partners that fit its needs, leveraging the existing networks of country teams, online	Partner mapping matrix (Tool 1)

Step	Description & Considerations	Tools
	<p>research, consultations with stakeholders, and attending relevant workshops and conferences. A starting point can be a mapping of current EngenderHealth partners to identify areas where partnership efforts should be directed.</p> <p>A partnership mapping matrix with a clear set of criteria can help identify 'fit-for-purpose' partners that align with EngenderHealth's goals, values, and needs. Criteria could include technical expertise, geographic presence, reputation, alignment with EngenderHealth's values, and potential for mutual benefit.</p> <p>Strategic dimensions of partner selection should be clearly communicated between EngenderHealth global and country teams, particularly where they involve bid development. Considerations might include the partner's reputation, potential for long-term collaboration, alignment with donors' preferences, and the added value they bring to programs and projects (or specific proposals).</p>	Partnership tracker (Tool 2)
Phase 2: Partnership Development		
3. Identification of potential partners	<p>Drawing from the partnership mapping, EngenderHealth strategically seeks out organizations that align with its goals and values. This includes considering each potential partner's technical expertise, geographic experience, and representation that complement EngenderHealth's capacities.</p> <p>EngenderHealth should also consider the unique capabilities, community ties, and local insights that potential partners may bring.</p> <p>During initial conversations with potential partners, it should be a priority to understand the alignment of interests with EngenderHealth and agree on an overarching vision for collaboration.</p> <p>If these conversations are organized around a specific business opportunity, discussions can be grounded in the opportunity itself. However, the EngenderHealth lead should keep in mind a broader alignment of interest, vision, and ways of working.</p>	<p>Partnership development checklist (Tool 3)</p> <p>Prospective partnership assessment – General (Tool 4)</p> <p>Partnership Assessment Tool – Proposal Stage (Tool 5)³</p> <p>Intersectional and inclusive youth partnership checklist (Tool 6)</p>
4. Assessment and due diligence of potential partners	<p>Following identification, EngenderHealth carries out a simplified yet thorough assessment to evaluate the organization's financial health, governance structure, operational capacity, past performance, reputation, and alignment with EngenderHealth's mission and values.</p> <p>EngenderHealth strives for an assessment process that is as thorough as necessary, yet not overly burdensome to potential partners. The goal is to strike a balance between</p>	<p>Organizational Capacity Assessment (Tool 7)</p> <p>Due diligence survey (Tool 8)</p>

³ The Partnership Assessment Tool is not currently publically available. If you would like an example template, please reach out to info@engenderhealth.org.

Step	Description & Considerations	Tools
	<p>ensuring due diligence and fostering respectful, mutually beneficial partnerships.</p> <p>For prospective long-term capacity-strengthening partnerships, the organization’s openness to change, existing capacities, and capacity gaps are also evaluated using a tailored organizational capacity assessment tool.</p> <p>These assessments can be tailored to suit the nature of each partnership, and might include the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minimum Threshold Check. In collaboration with the EngenderHealth contracts department, establish criteria to determine if potential partners meet the minimum requirements for partnering. This includes vetting potential partners against prohibited party lists. 2. Simplified Capacity Self-Assessment. Implement a self-assessment tool as a learning and capacity-strengthening exercise for potential partners. This assessment can explore technical expertise, staff capacity, project management ability, governance and accountability measures, and alignment with EngenderHealth’s mission and values. 3. Simplified Due Diligence. Depending on the nature of the funding and the donor involved, EngenderHealth may need to carry out a simplified but rigorous due diligence process. This involves evaluating the potential partner’s reputation, alignment with EngenderHealth’s values, ability to comply with donor requirements, and openness to change and growth. The assessment may include field visits or interviews with staff and key stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the partner’s operations and culture. <p>To be efficient and respectful of potential partners’ time, it may be beneficial to take an iterative approach. This would involve carrying out preliminary research before beginning discussions, followed by a more detailed assessment (or self-assessment) if the potential partner meets the initial criteria and shows interest in collaborating.</p> <p>EngenderHealth staff undertake these assessments. The primary goal at this stage is to understand whether the organization meets the basic requirements for partnering and if they align with EngenderHealth’s mission and values. This preliminary assessment might include a broad organizational overview, a reputation check, a financial health check (if public records are available), and an understanding of governance structure, technical expertise, geographic scope, and regulatory compliance.</p>	
<p>5. Building trust and engagement</p>	<p>After a positive assessment, EngenderHealth begins engagement with potential partners. This stage is characterized by open and honest discussions about the possibility of a partnership, including meetings, consultations,</p>	

Step	Description & Considerations	Tools
	<p>and joint planning sessions. This is where EngenderHealth begins to establish a trust-based relationship, which is essential for both project-focused and capacity-strengthening partnerships.</p> <p>This stage should also involve shared learning sessions, where both parties familiarize themselves with each other's mission, methods, and culture. EngenderHealth should ensure that it allows enough time for relationship building without rushing the process.</p>	
<p>6. Develop and formalize the partnership</p>	<p>Once both parties agree to partner, formalize the relationship through a mutually agreeable agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU). At this point, EngenderHealth and potential partners work together to articulate a common purpose/mission and agree on specific objectives and activities that reflect the nature of the activity (e.g., capacity strengthening, project design and implementation, or advocacy). The agreement outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each party, as well as emphasizes shared responsibility, equity, transparency, and adaptability.</p> <p>The type of agreement may differ depending on the nature of the partnership. An MOU may lay out general principles of collaboration in a specific domain, agreeing to identify and engage opportunities. In cases where partnerships (with new or existing partners) are mobilized for a bid (with EngenderHealth as a sub or a prime), this takes the form of a Pre-Teaming Agreement (before the bid), a Teaming Agreement (during the bid), or a contract/sub-award agreement (once the award is made).</p>	<p>Agreement Templates (Tool 9)</p>
<p>Phase 3: Partnership Implementation</p>		
<p>7. Planning, co-creation, and implementation</p>	<p>This phase transforms the partnership from a shared commitment into an active collaboration. With the formal partnership established, EngenderHealth and the partner can co-create the goals, strategies, and action plans of joint initiatives.</p> <p>This process often but not always takes the form of full-cycle project design and implementation, beginning with the co-creation of a funding proposal. Ideally, EngenderHealth will have already initiated partnerships based on a program development strategy before specific funding opportunities arise. With a foundation of trust and communication already established, engaging in co-creation is a smoother and more effective process.</p> <p>Implementation is a shared responsibility, with both partners actively involved in executing co-developed plans. During this full-cycle process, it is essential that all parties feel their perspectives and ideas are valued and incorporated. Joint decision-making and shared responsibilities can foster a</p>	<p>Locally Led Development Spectrum and Checklist (Tool 10)</p> <p>Power Awareness Tool (Tool 11)</p>

Step	Description & Considerations	Tools
	<p>deeper sense of commitment and engagement in the partnership.</p> <p>In a capacity-strengthening partnership, this stage may also encompass the co-development and concurrent implementation of a capacity-strengthening plan. This often runs parallel to project activities, technical assistance, or advocacy.</p>	
<p>8. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and learning</p>	<p>Throughout the implementation, EngenderHealth and the partner monitor progress and evaluate performance in terms of both the status of the partnership and the goals and objectives of joint activities (whether a formal project or less formal collaboration).</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation feed back into the joint initiatives and projects to facilitate continuous improvement. It allows for adjustments to be made in real-time, ensuring that the partnership is on course and joint activities remain effective, efficient, and relevant.</p> <p>In a capacity-strengthening partnership, this ongoing evaluation informs adjustments to the capacity-strengthening plan and promotes mutual learning.</p>	<p>Partnership Health Check (Tool 12)</p> <p>Partnership Status Update (Tool 13)</p> <p>See “Partnership Measurement” section.</p>
<p>Phase 4: Reflection and Follow Up</p>		
<p>9. Review, reflection, and learning</p>	<p>At the completion of a project or after a certain period in a long-term partnership, both EngenderHealth and the partner engage in a review process. This involves reflecting on the partnership and joint activities, identifying learnings, successes, areas for improvement, and celebrating shared successes.</p> <p>The review process should not only look at the outcomes of the partnership but also the process itself. This includes the quality of the relationship, the level of communication and collaboration, and the overall satisfaction of both parties.</p> <p>These insights inform future partnerships and projects.</p>	
<p>10. Renewal, expansion, or termination</p>	<p>Based on the success and review of the project and the partnership, EngenderHealth and the partner may decide to renew the partnership for another project or term, expand it to include new areas or activities, or terminate it. This decision should be made collaboratively, taking into consideration the review and reflection process. In the case of termination, it is important to ensure a smooth transition that respects the contributions and work of all parties.</p>	
<p>11. Advocacy and transformation</p>	<p>EngenderHealth partners can join in advocating for more flexible funding and building a culture that embraces risk and encourages innovation. As the partnership matures, EngenderHealth and its partners can leverage our collective influence to advocate for systemic changes and transformation in the development sector. We can also work</p>	

Step	Description & Considerations	Tools
	together to share their partnership model and learnings with other organizations to contribute to a broader shift towards more equitable, trust-based partnerships and locally led development.	

Partnership Measurement

EngenderHealth's measurement framework is a key tool for evaluating our efforts to establish more inclusive, effective, and fit-for-purpose partnerships. Measurement aids strategic decision-making and ensures alignment with EngenderHealth's Theory of Change. EngenderHealth organizes its partnership measurements around three concepts:

- **Partnership Progress.** This concept captures the development and evolution of commitment to our partnerships. It assesses the degree and way EngenderHealth engages and commits to working collaboratively with partner organizations.
- **Partnership Quality.** This concept evaluates the depth and character of the relationships we establish with our partners. By assessing aspects such as mutual respect, effective communication, and shared decision-making, we gain nuanced insights into the health and robustness of our partnerships.
- **Partnership Outcomes.** This concept focuses on both concrete and intangible results generated by our partnerships. It gauges outcomes that deliver added value or advantages to our partners, their stakeholders, and other parties impacted by our work. This can range from project outcomes and policy impacts to capacity-strengthening successes.

Building on EngenderHealth's distinction among Progress, Quality, and Outcome measurement in partnership initiatives, this partnership measurement module is organized around three interconnected levels: sector, organization, and partnership.

- **Sector Level.** At this level, monitoring focuses on EngenderHealth's participation in advancing sector-wide commitments to locally led development, allocation of resources to local organizations, and local leadership. This might include EngenderHealth's participation in policy forums, advocacy campaigns, or platforms where EngenderHealth advocates with funding partners for increased funding and support for locally led development in SRHR.
- **Organizational Level.** At this level, measurements function as a self-assessment tool to allow EngenderHealth to gauge its alignment with stated commitments for trust-based and equitable partnerships. By tracking pertinent Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), EngenderHealth can evaluate the extent of its progress toward these commitments. A dashboard monitoring these KPIs over time can provide insight into trends, progress, and areas needing improvement. These data can support internal accountability, inform strategic planning, and communicate progress to external stakeholders.
- **Partner Level.** At this level, measurements focus on how effective EngenderHealth has been in building and maintaining healthy, productive partnerships. This may involve implementing regular satisfaction surveys, establishing feedback mechanisms, or conducting joint reviews. A "dipstick" method can be an effective way to periodically assess the health of specific partnerships. This could involve short surveys, quick check-ins, or mini-reviews that gauge the state of communication, decision-making, resource sharing, respect/trust, and overall satisfaction within the partnership.



Table 5. Partnership Measurement Concepts

Measurement Concept	What the concept looks like at each level		
	Sector Level	Organizational Level	Partner-Level
Partnership Progress	EngenderHealth’s participation in platforms that support local organizations	Development of new partnerships	Initiation of joint projects
Partnership Quality	Advocacy for local organization representation in sector-wide initiatives	Ensuring diversity, financial equity, and localization in organizational partnerships	Quality of relationship and mutual benefit realization
Partnership Outcomes	Changes in sector practices favoring local organizations	Impact of partnerships on organizational strategies and goals	Direct outcomes of joint projects

Key Performance Indicators

We propose a streamlined set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure that our measurement strategy remains simple, cost-effective and targeted to the information we need to track progress and make strategic and management decisions. Through the KPIs, we track commitments to partnership diversity, financial equity, locally led development, capacity-sharing, and overall quality of our partnerships.

Table 6. Key Performance Indicators

Level	Description	Indicator	Data Source
Sector	Tracks EngenderHealth’s participation in platforms to elevate local organizations and locally led development	Number [count] of initiatives and platforms (digital platforms, forums, events, publications, coalitions) where EngenderHealth is active and advocates for local organizations and locally led development	Records of advocacy activities, participation in forums/platforms [plan and track count over time]
Organizational: Program *	Tracks the overall number and diversity of partnerships (Partnership Diversity)	Total number [count] of partnerships in active projects; disaggregated by type (e.g., donor, government, consortium, sub-prime, private) and focal group representation (e.g., youth-led, persons with disabilities (PWD), community-based) ⁴	Partnership Records Partnership Tracker
Organizational Program	Monitors how much of total project budgets is allocated to local partners (Financial Equity)	% of total project budget allocated to local partners	Project budget records

⁴ Specifics depend on what types of partners and focal groups are meaningful for EngenderHealth to track.

Level	Description	Indicator	Data Source
Organizational Program *	Measures the degree of localization in projects (Locally Led)	% of projects implemented with major local partners (i.e., those with at least 25% of total budget, following Grand Bargain target) ⁵	Project records and partnership agreements
Organizational Partnership Outcomes	Tracks the influence of partnered advocacy on policy changes or improvements	Number [count] of policy changes or improvements influenced through partner advocacy	Advocacy reports, policy change records, partner feedback [plan and track count over time]
Organizational BD *	Assesses the level of local NGO engagement in proposal design processes	% proposals designed with local NGO; disaggregated by type	Business development tracker
Partnership *	Tracks the health of the partnerships over time (health check)	Average score on biannual partnership health check (dipstick survey)	Biannual dipstick survey to partners

* Indicates suggested KPIs to begin tracking EngenderHealth's progress against its partnership commitments and partnership quality.

⁵ From the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the UN](#): “The [Grand Bargain](#), launched during the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul in May 2016, is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action.”



EngenderHealth