



## Vision and Commitment

We support the right of every person—including every young person—to make free, informed decisions about whether, when, and with whom to have sex and whether, when, and with whom to have children. Our programs use a youth-centered approach that is grounded in gender equality and socially inclusive principles. Our youth-centered approach entails reaching young people<sup>1</sup> with sexual and reproductive health information and services and meaningfully engaging them throughout all stages of programming and within our organizational systems and structures. Because young people are not homogenous, we tailor our youth-centered programs to fit the specific needs of the population we are reaching.

## Our Approach to Youth-Centered Programs

### *Comprehensive and Age-Appropriate Information about Sexual and Reproductive Health*

Comprehensive sexuality education is a rights-based, gender-focused approach. Seen as a best practice, evidence has shown that comprehensive sexuality education improves young people's attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health, contributes to delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, decreases frequency of sexual intercourse and number of sexual partners, reduces risk-taking, and increases use of contraception.

EngenderHealth tailors comprehensive sexuality education to the populations served, providing age-appropriate information consistent with the evolving capacities of young people. This approach engages young people to strengthen their capacities for citizenship, encourages local ownership and cultural relevance, and takes a positive lifecycle approach to sexuality.

### *Supportive and Enabling Communities*

Supportive communities are essential to creating an enabling environment where young people can exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Together with communities, we reflect, plan, implement, and evaluate community engagement activities. This allows us to better understand the societal and gender norms that create barriers to young people exercising their sexual and reproductive health and rights and work with those communities to foster a more enabling environment. We use best practices to influence attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that support healthy sexual and reproductive health behaviors. These best practices include social and behavior change communications techniques, such as mass media campaigns and community group engagement.

### *Adolescent/Youth-Friendly Services*

We support young people's access to adolescent/youth-friendly services that include:

- Information and counseling on sexuality, safe sex, and reproductive health
- Contraceptive counseling and method provision
- STI diagnosis and management
- HIV counseling (and testing or referral for testing and care)
- Pregnancy testing and antenatal and postnatal care, including contraception for birth spacing
- Screening and care for sexual and gender-based violence

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<sup>1</sup> Young people are inclusive of those ages 10-24, including adolescents (10-19) and youth (15-25).

- Counseling (and referrals if needed) for sexual and gender-based violence
- Safe abortion care
- Postabortion care counseling and contraception

When it is not feasible to offer young people the full package of adolescent/youth-friendly services, we modify services to include those that are appropriate in a given context. To effectively meet the needs of all young people, we ensure adolescent/youth-friendly services are accessible, acceptable, equitable, appropriate, and effective, following the guidance of the World Health Organization’s Quality of Care Standards.

### **Youth-Friendly Policies, Laws, and Regulations**

Local, national, and global laws, policies, and procedures should protect the rights of young people and promote their health and well-being. We advocate for policies that advance gender equality and full access to sexual and reproductive health services for all young people. This includes advocating for laws, policies, procedures, and regulations that:

- Eliminate harmful practices such as child early forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- Promote adoption and implementation of comprehensive sexuality education, in and out of schools
- Promote access to a full range of contraceptive methods, including long-acting reversible contraceptives
- Promote access to safe abortion care services and reduce barriers to care (i.e. parental consent and notification, waiting periods)
- Promote and elevate the voices of young people in decision-making bodies

### **Learning, Leadership, and Partnership with Young People**

We believe that young people are experts in their own sexual and reproductive health and rights and hold the power to develop comprehensive and successful solutions for the sexual and reproductive health-related challenges they face. We therefore invest in meaningfully engaging young people across all programming and within our organizational structures and processes. This includes providing training to build knowledge, skills, and capabilities; fostering young people’s agency to meaningfully contribute; creating pathways for young people to grow over time as leaders in sexual and reproductive health and rights; and monitoring and evaluating our efforts to meaningfully engage young people.

## **The Gender and Youth Marker: A Tool for Internal Reflection & Change**

EngenderHealth’s Gender and Youth Marker\* is an internal accountability and monitoring tool that helps programs to assess the degree of gender and youth integration within our programs. This helps teams to track, improve, and support youth-centered approaches. The Youth section of the Marker grades programs based on five critical criteria—analysis, activities, participation, negative effects, and monitoring and evaluation—using a Youth Integration Continuum (below). Program teams are encouraged to use the tool during all phases, from design to implementation to evaluation.



*\*The Gender and Youth Marker is adapted from two global gender markers—CARE International’s Gender Marker and the European Commission’s Gender and Age Marker. Youth integration refers to the integration of all young people (inclusive of adolescents and youth) ages 10-24. For ease of reference, the tool is called the youth marker but is inclusive of and calls attention to the integration of adolescents and youth.*