

POLICY AND ADVOCACY

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Rationale

The African Youth Alliance's (AYA) focus countries - Botswana, Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda - are among a growing number of developing countries that have, in recent years, adopted adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) policies aimed at creating an environment that supports not only the provision and use of reproductive health care for youth, but also social norms and cultural practices that promote positive reproductive health behaviour. However, while officially these policies have been adopted, few - if any - countries have successfully implemented them. Several factors can be identified as contributing to this dichotomy, including weak political will and the persistence of adverse social norms and cultural practices.

Efforts in policy and advocacy - which support AYA's major programme interventions, behaviour change communication and youth-friendly services - seek to improve the legal and policy environment and thereby assure successful implementation of supportive ASRH laws and policies

Definition

UNFPA's efforts in policy and advocacy - which support AYA's major programme interventions, behaviour change communication and youth-friendly services - seek to improve the legal and policy environment and thereby assure successful implementation of supportive ASRH laws and policies through the removal and/or amendment of unsupportive laws and, where they do not exist, through the promotion and adoption of new supportive laws, social norms and cultural practices.

Key Programme Elements

Expected results include: (1) an improved legal and policy environment for ASRH policies and programmes in general and for AYA in particular; (2) strengthened capacities for policy formulation, analysis and implementation, and enforcement of ASRH laws and policies; (3) strengthened capacity of AYA implementers for ASRH advocacy at all levels; (4) enhanced multi-sectoral approach to ASRH programmes in AYA countries; and (5) strengthened capacity for resource mobilisation to sustain ASRH programmes.

UNFPA's approach to advocacy also addresses the promotion and adoption of social norms and cultural practices that support young people's reproductive health

Strategic Approaches

Approaches adopted to achieve these results build on the experiences and lessons learned in ASRH policy and advocacy implementation over the past decade. Under the Policy sub-component, improvement in the legal and policy environment will be achieved by pursuing the following strategies:

- Reviewing and synthesising, as appropriate, evaluations and/or research findings in the four AYA countries and elsewhere;
- Analysing policy at the national, sub-national and/or sectoral levels in order to identify gaps and inconsistencies in existing laws and policies. Special attention will be paid to determining whether or not specific legal issues, such as early marriage, prohibitions against pregnant girls and young mothers enrolling in school, laws permitting prosecution of women who have undergone abortion procedures, and the needs and rights of various youth segments, including

out-of-school youth, married adolescents, and adolescent single mothers, have been addressed;

- Undertaking policy dialogue and advocacy with policy makers at the national, district and community levels in collaboration with PATH;
- Establishing and/or strengthening national and local multi-sectoral groups to co-ordinate policies and programmatic initiatives directed at improving young people's reproductive health;
- Building national capacity for policy formulation, review and implementation, including issues such as reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence, reducing adolescent pregnancy, promoting condom use and delaying onset of sexual activities;
- Mobilising political support from established political, government and community organisations, particularly youth advocates, for policy formulation, review and implementation. This may include identifying necessary policy and/or legal reforms, guidelines, and protocols that will be required for policy implementation (e.g., removal of legal barriers or promotion of key reforms and early/forced marriage); and
- Involving youth in planning and carrying out policies and training and equipping them with tools to adequately participate in planning and delivery services.

UNFPA's approach to advocacy is closely linked to the strategies outlined above, but also addresses the promotion and adoption of social norms and cultural practices that support young people's reproductive health. At the national level, advocacy strategies involve:

- Developing information and briefing on key AYA outcomes, specifically targeting high-level policy makers, political, government and religious organisations, traditional leaders, civil society, academic institutions and influential individuals;
- Directly involving youth in AYA's advocacy efforts as young people are known to be among the most effective advocates for change. Their energy and enthusiasm have been used in several programmes to help modify social norms and lower barriers to youth programming;
- Seeking the support of influential leaders to champion AYA causes. This approach has proved very successful in persuading high-level decision makers to make a commitment to ASRH policy and programmes;
- Building youth-focused advocacy networks and coalitions at the national and local levels. Such networks, involving all sectors of society including nongovernmental organisations,

have proven critical to helping create and support positive policies, as well as to carrying out and scaling-up programmes; and

- Building the capacity of national institutions and community organisations to advocate for ASRH in general, and for AYA in particular. This involves training coalition partners on advocacy skills and ASRH issues, conducting workshops to empower youth and youth advocates on reproductive health rights, facilitating effective participatory and leadership skills, conducting workshops to train media personnel on ASRH issues and the AYA programme, conducting community mobilisation and soliciting community leaders' support.

At the global level, advocacy activities will target executive bodies including the ambassadors of participating countries and donor countries to the United Nations (UN), relevant media institutions, partner UN agencies active in the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, and relevant international NGOs.

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Scaling-Up

The mobilisation of national capacity and the involvement of the society, community-based organisations, youth organisations and beneficiaries are not only important for ownership and sustainability, but also for accountability. Scaling-up of policy and advocacy activities will be achieved by successfully revising laws and policies at the national level and also by transferring the capacity to formulate policy and monitor implementation in order to pressure influential community-based organisations.

Linkages to Other Program Areas

Policy dialogue with national policy makers and advocacy to improve the legal and policy environment are

Strategic approaches adopted build on the experiences and lessons learned in ASRH policy and advocacy implementation over the past decade

directly linked to activities in other AYA programme areas, specifically behaviour change communication and youth-friendly services. Successful policy and advocacy efforts will facilitate the achievement of AYA outcomes as they relate to behaviour change, the reduction of HIV/AIDS prevalence, the reduction of pregnancy rates and the promotion of condom use.

A review by Pathfinder of studies on the current state of young adult reproductive health policy and advocacy initiatives suggests that even where such policies exist, a lack of political will continues to hamper efforts to implement these policies. Indeed, many country-level decision makers still need to be convinced about the national benefits of investing in adolescent reproductive health. Moreover, some decision makers are unaware of these benefits and others are personally uncomfortable with issues of adolescent behaviour and sexuality. Improving this environment is a challenge that AYA must overcome, using some of the strategies that have proved most effective.

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the community and in social norms and cultural practices. For the assessment of community norms, some form of operations research, coupled with in-depth socio-cultural studies may be undertaken. With regard to the involvement of media institutions, media content analysis and audience survey will be conducted while budget analysis may be targeted to assess political support for ASRH.

Evaluation Methods for Assessing Program Interventions

A variety of monitoring and evaluation methods will be used to assess the policy and advocacy outcomes. These will include conducting and updating situation and stakeholder analyses to provide baseline data; and conducting policy reviews and periodic rapid assessment and pre- and post- intervention surveys to assess the nature and level of change among opinion leaders within