



USAID | HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



& Tools

News

About Us

Dimensions

Guiding Principles

YRH policy encompasses a very broad range of documents and statements. Each of the [key elements](#) of YRH policy can be applied across four dimensions-level, sector, type, and authorship. Depending on the country, a comprehensive national YRH policy framework may include policies in all these dimensions.

Level. From the international to the local level, policies affect young people's access to care. Youth-policy.com classifies policies according to the following levels:

International. Documents such as the Cairo Programme of Action and the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), that are created by international bodies and meant to apply globally or regionally. Individual countries commit to these international policies when they become signatories.

National. Policies formulated at the national level, for example, the [Zambia National Youth Policy](#).

Subnational. Policies at the state, provincial or regional level. Of increasing importance as many countries continue to decentralize services and policymaking. An example is the [India State Policy for Women](#) from the state of Rajasthan.

Local. Policies formulated and applied locally, for example by municipalities or other local policymaking bodies such as school boards.

Resources and Links

[International Agreements Affecting YRH](#)

UNFPA's web site highlights relevant sections of international conventions and consensus documents.

[Human Rights and Reproductive Health](#)

This POLICY project database shows how international human rights agreements affect key areas of reproductive health, including youth reproductive health.

[State Mandates for Sexuality Education](#)

Summarizes sexuality education policies in each of the 50 U.S. states.

Sector. Important YRH policy can emerge from various sectors. These include:

Communications and Information. Policies relating to advertising of reproductive health products and care for young people. See an example from the [Ghana ARH Policy](#) in the database.

Education. Policies relating to sexuality education and HIV education in the schools as well as distribution of condoms and other provision of other reproductive health care in the school setting. See an example from the [Nigeria Guidelines for Sexual Education](#) in the database.

Resources and Links

[Education Sector Global HIV and AIDS Readiness Survey 2004: Policy Implications for Education and Development](#) (2.14MB) (UNAIDS IATT on Education, 2006). Survey results from 71 countries.

Health. Policies relating to the provision of reproductive health care and products to youth. Some countries bring these policies together under a national health policy, national youth health policy, or national youth reproductive health policy. See the [Philippines Youth ARH Policy](#) in the database.

Labor. Policies relating to provision of reproductive health information and care in the workplace.

Resources and Links

[HIV/AIDS and Work: Global Estimates, Impact on Children and Youth, and Response - 2006](#) (7.5MB) (ILO, 2006). Presents updated estimates of the impact of the HIV epidemic on the world of work, the labor force, and the working age population in 60 countries. Chapter 5 examines the legal and policy framework for children and youth in the world of work.

Other. (Justice, Commerce and Industry, Culture). See an example from the [policy database](#).

Multisectoral. National youth policies and national population policies typically fall under this category.

Type. YRH policy can be found across a wide range of types of policy documents. These documents include:

Laws. Legislation can be an important policy instrument by introducing legally binding commitments to promoting young people's reproductive health. Examples include laws guaranteeing access by minors to certain reproductive health care, minimum age at marriage, and bans on female genital cutting. An example is the [Republic of Kyrgyzstan Law on AIDS Prevention](#).

Constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, executive orders. Like laws, these are legally binding commitments.

Political statements. Speeches and other statements by political leaders can have an important effect on the policy environment. These do not have the status of laws or written policies but can often have.

Population policy. Broad national policies that may include language on youth reproductive health, for example the [Population Policy of Mozambique](#).

Youth reproductive health policy. Policies that focus exclusively on youth reproductive health. See the [Kenya ARH Policy](#) in the Policy Database.

Youth policy. Broad policies that cover all aspects of the lives of young people, including reproductive health. See the [Botswana National Youth Policy](#) in the Policy Database.

Norms, standards and guidelines. Typically (but not exclusively) applied to public sector services, such policies influence the actions and attitudes of health workers and others that serve young people. They include rules, regulation, guidelines, operating procedures, and administrative norms that governments use to translate national laws and policies into programs. See the [Nigeria Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Schools](#) in the Policy Database.

Standards of practice in professional fields. Includes policies by national, regional, or local professional bodies such as associations of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and teachers.

Resources and Links

[National Youth Policies](#)

An informative web site from The International Council on National Youth Policy

[Reforming Operational Policies](#)

This publication from the POLICY project discusses the nature of operational policies and provides a framework for their reform.

Authorship. Policymaking is not just a government function. Policy made by other important sources of power in society can often

be just as influential in determining the access that young people have to information and services. Authors of policies include:

Government. Policies issued by government agencies such as a ministry, a national commission, a state, or a municipality.

Nongovernmental organization or group of organizations. Non-profit groups such as the [International Planned Parenthood Federation](#) that make policy towards serving young people with reproductive health care.

Associations of Medical Professionals. For example, [this policy statement from the Society for Adolescent Medicine](#) in the U.S.

Private commercial entities. Policies made by companies or other for-profit entities or associations. For example, the decision by a pharmacy chain to provide youth-friendly services for reproductive health care products.



Last Updated: May 24, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Key Elements of YRH Policy

A simple framework for thinking about YRH policy is to organize policy into key elements. The key elements of YRH policy are those broad goals that are the aim of all YRH efforts. These include:

- [Encouraging healthy, wanted pregnancy](#)
- [Preventing STI/HIV infection](#)
- [Improving nutritional status](#)
- [Reducing harmful cultural practices](#)
- [Reducing human trafficking and sexual abuse/coercion](#)
- [Stimulating economic development and reducing poverty](#)

Each of these key elements encompasses a number of specific topics that are elaborated on in these [fact sheets](#).

Dimensions of Policy

YRH policy does not reside in a single document or sector or necessarily at the national level or solely within the public sector. YRH policy encompasses a very broad range of documents and statements. Youth-policy.com classifies this diversity of policies according to the following dimensions:

- **Level:** international, national, subnational, and local
- **Sector:** health, education, labor, etc.
- **Type:** constitutional provisions, laws, national population policy, youth reproductive health policy, operational guidelines
- **Authorship:** governmental bodies, NGOs, professional associations, and private commercial entities

Find out more about these [dimensions](#)

- Collection of data
- Safe and supportive environments

Seligman and others (1996) conceived of a framework for youth reproductive health policy that categorizes policies under three broad "essential requirements" to ensure the reproductive health of young people:

- access to quality services and information
- self esteem and the self confidence to use services
- life choices that influence motivation to use services

Q. Does youth-policy.com include broader youth policies?

The policy database does include some national youth policies and policies in education and other sectors, but only when they directly key elements of youth reproductive health such as pregnancy and HIV prevention. Other groups collect policies in related areas such as youth employment and education, for example the [employment law database](#) of the International Labor Organization and the youth policy database of the [International Council for National Youth Policy](#).



Last Updated: May 22, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Encouraging Healthy, Wanted Pregnancy

Key Element of Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Preventing unwanted pregnancy and ensuring care for healthy pregnancy are at the core of any country's YRH program. On average, one-third of women in developing countries give birth before age 20; a large proportion of these pregnancies are unplanned. Each year, between 2 and 4 million adolescents undergo clandestine or unsterile abortion. Moreover, teen mothers are twice as likely as older women to die of pregnancy-related causes, and their own children are at higher risk of illness and death.

YRH programs share a number of important goals related to pregnancy, including:

- Delaying sexual debut
- Access to education and information
- Access to contraception
- Emergency contraception
- Preventing complications from abortion
- Maternity care and safe delivery
- Mitigating the effects of early sex

For a more in-depth discussion of the policy environment for each of these topics, see the [fact sheets](#).

Resources and Links

[Advancing Young Adult Reproductive Health: Actions for the Next Decade](#). This report from the FOCUS on Young Adults project reviews effective programming for youth sexual and reproductive health.

[United Nations Population Fund](#). The section of the UNFPA web site devoted to adolescent sexual and reproductive health programs.

[In this Generation: Sexual and Reproductive Health Policies for a Youthful World](#). This report from Population Action International includes several country case studies.



Last Updated: May 22, 2007



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Preventing STI/HIV Infection

Key Element of Youth Reproductive Health Policy

By now, few doubt the centrality of young people in the battle against HIV/AIDS. Half of the 14,000 new infections that occur each day are in the 15-24 age group, with young females disproportionately affected. In the generalized epidemics of southern and eastern Africa, 10% or more of youth are infected with HIV, with heterosexual transmission by far the most likely route of infection. The concentration of new infections amongst the young has created immense health problems and threatens the economic and social underpinnings of those countries hit hardest by the epidemic. In addition, over 100 million young people each year contract curable STIs.

HIV prevention efforts aimed at young people focus on the following goals:

- Access to education and information
- Access to condoms
- [VCT \[fact sheet available\]](#)
- PMTCT
- [STI Management \[fact sheet available\]](#)
- Care and support for PLHA
- Orphans and other vulnerable children
- Reducing stigma and discrimination

Read the [fact sheets](#) for a more in-depth discussion of this and other key elements.

Resources

[HIV/AIDS Policy Database](#). This searchable database of national policies includes several targeting youth.

[Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS](#). In June 2001, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS laid out international goals specific to youth access to information and services to combat the epidemic.

[Preventing HIV/AIDS in Young People](#). This 2006 WHO review provides evidence-based recommendations for policy-makers, programme managers, and researchers.

[Report Cards: HIV Prevention for Girls and Young Women](#). The Report Cards are UNFPA advocacy tools aimed at increasing and improving the programmatic, policy, and funding actions taken on HIV prevention for girls and young women. Available for Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, and the Philippines, the Report Cards include analysis of relevant national legal and policy provisions.



Last Updated: May 24, 2007



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Improving Nutritional Status

Key Element of Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Adolescence is a key time from a nutritional standpoint. For many young people, chronic undernutrition causes stunting, delays growth and physical maturation, increases risk to pregnant teens and their newborns, and decreases the capacity to work. Nutritional deficiencies such as anemia are widespread in both young men and women. The importance of good adolescent nutrition goes beyond reproductive health. Diet and lifestyle-related chronic diseases--many with their roots in adolescence--are emerging as one of the most important health problems in the developing world.

Efforts aimed at improving the nutritional status of adolescents focus on the following goals:

- Prevention of problems during [pregnancy](#) [[fact sheet](#) available]
- Prevention of diet-related illness

For a more in-depth discussion of these and other topics, see the [fact sheets](#).

Resources

[Adolescent Nutrition at-a-Glance](#). This World Bank website provides a brief overview of adolescent nutrition problems and program and policy responses.



Last Updated: May 22, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Reducing Harmful Cultural Practices

Key Element of Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Many cultural norms and practices perpetuate poor reproductive health. Among those practices that are particularly harmful to young people are:

- gender inequalities
- limited access to education
- [female genital cutting](#) [[fact sheet](#) available]
- early marriage

For a more in-depth discussion of this and other key elements, see the [fact sheets](#).

Resources

[U.S. State Department, FGC individual country reports](#). Each report includes information on FGC policies.

[INTACT Research Network](#). An international network of FGC researchers.



Last Updated: May 22, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Reducing Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, and Sexual Abuse and Coercion Key Element of Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Young people are too often the victims of egregious human rights abuses. Those abuses that cause poor reproductive health outcomes include:

- Trafficking of young people
- sexual abuse and coercion
- domestic and family violence

For a more in-depth discussion of this key element, see the [fact sheets](#).

Resources

[Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#). U.S Department of State web site.

[International Organisation for Migration](#). This section of the IOM's web site describes its counter-trafficking activities, which include aid to governments to improve legal systems for combating trafficking.

[USAID Anti-Trafficking Activities](#).

[Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women](#). Visit the web site of this network that brings together over 200 members working against trafficking.



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



& Tools

News

About Us

Stimulating Economic Development, Reducing Poverty, Slowing Population Growth

Key Element of Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Good, comprehensive policies acknowledge the relationship between investments in the reproductive health of young people and broader positive impacts on society. Among the most important of these impacts are:

- Stimulating economic development
- Reducing poverty
- Slowing population growth

For a more in-depth discussion of this and other key elements, see the [fact sheets](#).

Resources

[The Case for Investing in Young People as Part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy](#). This 2004 UNFPA publication presents seven arguments for why national public policy makers should give more attention to young people.



Last Updated: May 22, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Reinforce the Inter-Connectedness of YRH Elements

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Policy should make clear the connection among the various [key elements of YRH](#), for example reinforcing the connection between policies that help to both [prevent unwanted pregnancy](#) and [prevent HIV/STI infection](#). One way to stress the inter-connectedness is to ensure that policies begin by communicating broadly an integrated message about youth reproductive health.

Resources

[Expanding Contraceptive Options and Access for Youth](#) (148kb). FHI, 2004. This YouthLens publication discusses how education, services, and products can help protect youth against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

FAQs

Q. What are the common influences on the reproductive health of young people?

Young people's vulnerability to risky sex and other unhealthy behaviors is tied to a host of individual, family, and community factors that influence young people and are closely related to economic and educational opportunities. Good health and other physical, moral, and intellectual development outcomes are often mutually reinforcing. For example, children who are healthy do better in school; likewise staying in school helps to protect many adolescents from risky behavior that may lead to unwanted pregnancy and STIs. Several common factors are associated with protection of youth from risky sex. These include connectedness to parents and parental expectations about school, marriage, and sexuality; factors in the school environment such as connectedness, family life education, and academic performance; expectations and attitudes of sexual partners and peers; and feelings of self-efficacy and self-control.

To find out more about risk and protective factors, read about the study by Robert Blum and Christine Nelson-Mmari presented at the 2003 YouthNet meeting on [HIV Prevention for Young People in Developing Countries](#).



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Guiding Principles

What makes YRH policy language good? Good YRH policy incorporates a set of guiding principles that cut across all [key elements](#) and [dimensions](#). Good policies:

- [Acknowledge gender differences](#)
- [Segment the youth population by age and life stage](#)
- [Acknowledge the needs of marginalized sub-populations](#)
- [Promote youth involvement](#)
- [Respect culture](#)
- [Treat youth as assets, not problems](#)
- Promote access to information and care
- [Are consistent](#)
- [Reinforce the inter-connectedness of YRH](#)

General Principles of Good Policy

The guiding principles highlighted in youth-policy.com are those with specific relevance to YRH policy. Other, more general guiding principles of good policy apply equally to YRH policy. These include the following:

Be Realistic. Policies should be realistic in their goals and objectives. Too many policies suffer from being impractical.

Tie language to resources. Policies should not exist in a vacuum. They should make resources available and be linked strategic plans of action.

Support policy with solid information. Although a lengthy diagnostics section is not always desirable or feasible in a policy, such information can help to clarify the underlying rationale for the policy course chosen.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Acknowledge Gender Differences

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Policies should recognize that boys and girls may have different reproductive health needs and thus require different program strategies. At the same time, it is important for policies to recognize that differential treatment for boys and girls—specifically barring access to girls—can be an important barrier to YRH care. Many field staff act on underlying biases that limit girls' access to care. In Jamaica, for example, health workers are much more likely to give condoms to boys than to girls. In theory, most policies could incorporate this guiding principle fairly easily. Recognition of gender differences in programming, although not universal, is accepted by most who work with young people.

Resources

[Working with Young Men to Promote Sexual and Reproductive Health](#). A publication of the DFID Safe Passages to Adulthood Program.

[In Their Own Right: Addressing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs of Men Worldwide](#). A comprehensive report from the Alan Guttmacher Institute

[Involving Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health: An Orientation Guide](#). A practical guide from the Inter-Agency Gender Working Group.

FAQs

Q. Is acknowledging gender differences the same as promoting gender equity?

Not necessarily. A policy that advocates for separate programs for boys and girls may do so out of a desire to be more effective rather than as a way to promote gender equity.



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Segment the Youth Population by Age and Life Stage

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

In the same way that good policy acknowledges [gender differences](#), policy should recognize that youth differ according to age and life stage. Sexually inexperienced 11-year-olds require a different approach from a married 19-year-old. Similarly, a married youth may have very different needs than an unmarried sexually active youth of the same age. This guiding principle—essentially an extension of the principles of good program design—generates relatively little controversy among YRH program officials. Nonetheless, it is important for policy documents to state this principle clearly, because in practice many programs approach young people as if they were a single, homogenous group. This shortcoming particularly affects subgroups such as married adolescents, whose special needs are often ignored in programming. Implementing this guiding principle may face difficulty, mainly because lack of resources may limit the extent to which programs can offer different packages of services to different population of young people. Moreover, the potential for controversy may limit the ability of programs to provide appropriate information and services, particularly for older, sexually active youth.

Resources

[Investing when it Counts: Generating the Evidence Base for Policies and Programmes for Very Young Adolescents](#) (Population Council and others, 2006). Describes methods for data collection and research.

[Technical Consultation on Married Adolescents](#). Report from a 2003 WHO technical consultation.

[Meeting the Health Needs of Very Young Adolescents](#). A 2003 WHO consultation on the health needs of 10-14 year olds.

[Reaching the Youngest Adolescents with Reproductive Health Programs](#). An overview from the FOCUS on Young Adults program.

[Differential Use of Adolescent Reproductive Health Programs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia](#) (Erulkar and others, 2006, *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38(3): 253–260; subscription only). The study concludes that greater segmentation of the adolescent population is needed in the design and content of adolescent reproductive health programs.

FAQs

Q. Why is it important for policy to recognize the special needs of married adolescents?

Programs in many countries continue to assume that young people, male and female, are unmarried and solely responsible for risky sexual activity and unwanted pregnancy. However, the problem of early marriage in developing countries is significant, especially in the poorest of these countries. A significant proportion of girls in many countries are married, most often at their parents' behest, below the legal age of marriage of their own country, and/or before the age of 18 (recognized under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children as the formal end of childhood). Indeed, the majority of sexually active adolescent girls in developing countries are married. Among 45 countries that have DHS surveys, in the majority (37, or 82%) over 60% of the sexually active adolescent females are married.

Though marriage is often seen as the gateway to safe, socially sanctioned sexual relations, it does not reduce, and in fact may increase girls' exposure to STIs, including HIV. The younger a girl's age at marriage, the more significant the age gap with a spouse tends to be, intensifying girls' disadvantage in bargaining with partners over sex and reproduction. For married adolescents (younger and older) the non-health concerns include the curtailment of their education, employment and other options. The social challenges to adolescent mothers are also substantially neglected. A young adolescent mother is simultaneously dealing with the development of a pregnancy and a new relationship, and is often in a low-power position in her new family. She may even have difficulty accessing basic antenatal care. Married adolescents could benefit substantially from a more integrated approach, inclusive of their partners, that would build a foundation for future reproductive health-seeking behavior.

(Adapted from the





USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



& Tools

News

About Us

Acknowledge the Needs of Marginalized Sub-Populations

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Policy should pay particular attention to marginalized groups such as young refugees, street children, and sex workers. Youth in these situations are among the most vulnerable of all young people to risk taking and sexual coercion and abuse. Too often, policy addressing these vulnerable youth has taken the approach that such youth are problems to be dealt with. A more [positive approach](#) is needed that identifies the needs of specially vulnerable youth and promotes effective programmatic solutions.

Resources

[Reaching Socially Marginalized Youth with Reproductive Health Services](#). A brief overview from the FOCUS on Young Adults program.

FAQs

Q. What are the special reproductive health challenges confronting adolescent refugees?

Due to forced displacement from their homes, exposure to violence, acute poverty, and separation from their families and communities, refugee adolescents face additional difficulties that affect their reproductive health. They often lack sufficient education, health care, protection, livelihood, recreational activities, and friendship and family support. Furthermore, compared with non-refugees, refugee adolescents may begin sexual relations at an earlier age, and take more sexual risks, such as having sexual intercourse without using a condom. They are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation in the absence of traditional socio-cultural constraints. These conditions limit their access to information on reproductive health; exacerbate unsafe sexual practices, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions; and increase their exposure to STIs, including HIV/AIDS. In situations of conflict, the dearth of youth-friendly services is a significant barrier to ensuring young people's right to a healthy and productive life.



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

Privacy Statement
Photo Credits



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Promote Youth Involvement

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Policy should acknowledge the importance of meaningful involvement of youth at all stages of policy and program design, implementation, and evaluation. Few working with youth will argue with this principle, and many policies already promote youth involvement. Still, the YRH field is grappling with cost-effective approaches to involving youth and there are legitimate questions about the value of such efforts. As a result, implementation of this guiding principle may face some resistance.

Resources

[Our Voice, Our Future. Young People Report on Progress Made on the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS](#) (598KB) (UNFPA, 2005). An example of young people evaluating policy impact.

[YouthNet's Youth Involvement Activities](#). See how YouthNet worked to involve youth.

FAQ

Q. How do international reproductive health agreements address the principle of youth involvement?

Paragraph 7.47 of the Cairo Programme of Action states that "Adolescents must be fully involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of [youth-focused] information and services with proper regard for parental guidance and responsibilities."

See the UNFPA web site to read more about how the [Programme of Action addresses adolescent reproductive health](#).



Last Updated: May 25, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Respect Culture

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Policy should acknowledge the cultural context for YRH, and assign roles to parents, teachers, and other influential adults. Although respecting culture is a principle that applies to all reproductive health policy, it has particular resonance with youth-focused efforts. YRH programs often face resistance because they challenge deeply held cultural beliefs about sex, parenting, and the roles that men and women play. The success of youth reproductive health programs depends largely on recognizing these underlying beliefs, understanding how they manifest themselves as barriers, and employing a range of culturally sensitive strategies to address these obstacles. Policies are generally good at incorporating this guiding principle, mainly because most policies are well grounded in a country's social and political context.

Resources

[Addressing Cultural Sensitivities](#). An overview from the FOCUS on Young Adults program.

FAQs

Q. Can "respecting culture" limit access?

While important to appropriately ground policies in a country's culture, some may see this guiding principle as a way to limit the rights of youth to quality reproductive health care. This issue arises often in the debate over minor consent laws.



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010.
This copy of the website content is maintained with
support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



Tools

News

About Us

Treat Youth As Assets, Not Problems

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Policy should recognize and promote young people as a positive force for economic and social development, not exclusively as a problem group that must be addressed. Most laws and policies exist to control "bad" youth behavior. The reality is that much of the advocacy around youth reproductive health issues takes a negative approach by focusing on the risky behaviors (unprotected sex, drug abuse, violence, etc.) and on the negative consequences to society. While such an approach may be effective to mobilize policy makers and the public to take action, it does reinforce the image of young people as a problem to be solved. Thus, it is a challenge to write policy that recognizes the legitimate problems that young people and society face while also shining a positive light on young people and their capacity to [get involved in](#) the programs which target them.

Resources

[International Youth Foundation](#). IYF is one of the leading proponents of the youth development approach, which helps young people develop fully into caring, committed, and connected people with the skills they need to succeed in life.

FAQs

Q. How are YRH policies related to broader youth policies?

Youth policy looks at broader youth concerns, such as education, jobs, and healthy living. Youth reproductive health policy is a subset of these broader concerns. For more on youth policy, visit the web site of the [International Council on National Youth Policy](#).



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)



USAID | HEALTH POLICY INITIATIVE

The Youth-Policy activity ended in 2010. This copy of the website content is maintained with support from Futures Group.

Better Policy, Healthier Youth

youth-policy.com



[Tools](#) [News](#) [About Us](#)

Consistency

Guiding Principle for Good Youth Reproductive Health Policy

Laws and policies affecting YRH should be consistent across sectors and from one document to the next. Although consistency is an issue for reproductive health policy more broadly, it is of particular concern for YRH because youth policy and programming in most countries lacks a sectoral home. Currently, too many countries have a scattershot approach to YRH policy, with the result that policies lack consistency and often contradict each other. Age of consent is one reflection of this contradiction, with many countries having different age of consent for marriage, consensual sex, [VCT](#), employment, etc.

Resources

[Minors and the Right to Consent to Health Care](#). This AGI publication demonstrates some of the difficulties in establishing consistency in consent laws in the United States.



Last Updated: May 18, 2007

The information provided on this website is not official U.S. Government information and does not represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

[Privacy Statement](#)
[Photo Credits](#)