

ENGAGE YOUTH AS EQUAL PARTNERS IN THEIR HEALTH

BARRIERS PREVENT YOUTH ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES



When youth can access and use contraception, they can protect themselves from harmful situations like unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.¹ But Ethiopian youth ages 15 to 24 revealed in interviews that they have difficulty accessing contraceptive services.²

In 2018, only half of Ethiopia's public facilities offered adolescent health services, and only one-third of facilities had trained staff available and guidelines for service provision to adolescents.³ Other access barriers include:

LACK OF PRIVACY

"The reason she does not use contraceptives is ... if she goes to a health facility, the health care providers **will not protect her privacy.**"

YOUNG WOMAN, SEMERA

STIGMA

"Usually, there are so many clients in the clinics, so **it is embarrassing** to seek family planning services **in front of people you may know.**"

YOUNG WOMAN, BAHIR DAR

LACK OF AVAILABLE PROVIDERS

"Service providers in kebeles **may not be at work always.** They leave their office at any time."

YOUNG MAN, ADDIS ABABA

ETHIOPIA IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES TO YOUTH



Despite these barriers, the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) has made strong policy commitments to provide sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services—including contraception—to adolescents and youth in health centers and clinics. The FMOH has also made policy commitments to support and facilitate youth engagement and ownership in health planning and programming at all levels.

“...enable youth [to] have access to a range of contraceptive methods and information so that they would be able to decide on when and how they would be able to have children and get protected from unplanned pregnancy...”

Standards on Youth Friendly Reproductive Health (YFRH) Services & Minimum Service Delivery Package on YFRH Services, 2006

“Support adolescent and youth participation and leadership in AYH [adolescent and youth health] planning and programming at all levels.”

National Adolescent and Youth Health Strategy 2016-2020

...BUT MANY YOUTH ARE UNAWARE THAT THESE POLICIES EXIST.⁴

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CAN HELP ETHIOPIA MEET THESE COMMITMENTS



Youth should be actively and purposefully engaged in the development and implementation of SRH policies and programs.⁵ Their inclusion can lead to:

- ▶ Improved program quality and effectiveness.
- ▶ More efficient use of resources.
- ▶ Better understanding of youth perspectives and issues by decisionmakers.
- ▶ Greater awareness of youth rights to reproductive health services.
- ▶ Improved capacity of youth to advocate for their health now and in the future.

HOW CAN DECISIONMAKERS ENGAGE YOUTH?

The FMOH and Regional Health Bureaus can engage youth as equal partners in their own health by:

Convening bi-monthly forums for youth and health bureau leaders to discuss the National Adolescent and Youth Health Strategy's implementation.

During these forums:

Health bureau leaders should report progress on the Strategy's implementation.



Youth should provide feedback on how to more effectively offer contraceptive services that overcome current barriers to access and use.



**LET'S ENABLE YOUTH TO ACTIVELY
SHAPE THE DIRECTION OF POLICIES
THAT IMPACT THEIR FUTURES!**



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Note: In 2018, Population Reference Bureau and the International Youth Alliance for Family Planning conducted interviews and discussions with youth and key stakeholders to assess the status of youth-friendly family planning services in Ethiopia. This fact sheet presents the results of this research related to gaps in youth-friendly service delivery.

REFERENCES

- 1 Jacqueline E. Darroch et al. "Costs and benefits of meeting the contraceptive needs of adolescents" (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2016).
- 2 Focus group discussions with youth ages 15 to 24 conducted in Bahir Dar, Semera, and Addis Ababa in 2018.
- 3 The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as those between the ages of 10 and 19 and youth as those between the ages 15 and 24. The National Youth Policy of Ethiopia classifies youth as those between the ages of 15 and 29 years; Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) and Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), Ethiopia Service Availability and Readiness Assessment (SARA) 2018 Final Report (Addis Ababa: EPHI and FMOH, 2018): 40-41.
- 4 Focus group discussions with youth ages 15 to 24 conducted in Bahir Dar, Semera, and Addis Ababa in 2018.
- 5 Women Deliver Youth Program Team, *Engage Youth: A Discussion Paper on Meaningful Youth Engagement* (New York: Women Deliver, 2016); Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (YACSA), *Better Together: A Practical Guide to Effective Engagement With Young People* (Adelaide: YACSA, 2016); Youth Coalition, *Meaningful Youth Participation: What It Actually Means for You, Your Work, and Your Organization*, accessed at www.youthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/MYP_en_web.pdf on April 8, 2019.