



HOW TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO SAFE ABORTION:

Youth Friendly Spaces

STRATEGY:

Providing **Youth Friendly Spaces**

MEMBER ASSOCIATION:

Rahnuma Family Planning Association of Pakistan (R-FPAP)



STRATEGY OVERVIEW:

Youth Friendly Spaces (YFS) are designated areas located within a health facility that are designed to be accessible and welcoming to young people. The Youth Friendly Spaces described in this strategy are just one particular component of the comprehensive youth friendly package in R-FPAP and there remains many other elements to the YFS programme.

YFS are stigma-free spaces that guarantee confidentiality, crucial for young people who may be reluctant to go to SRH clinics due to embarrassment or fear of being judged. YFS also provide a safe place for young people to access information and discuss SRH issues and services with their peers or clinic staff.

BENEFITS OF YOUTH FRIENDLY SPACES

THE PROVISION OF YOUTH FRIENDLY SPACES CAN:

- Improve confidentiality and privacy - key drivers for young people to access SRH services, especially those related to abortion, which is highly stigmatised
- Help young clients feel more comfortable and confident in asking for information and seeking services without feeling discriminated against, stigmatised or judged
- Empower young people by increasing their awareness and choice of SRH services
- Increase the uptake of services by young people
- Increase client satisfaction, and their likelihood to return and recommend the service to their friends

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

In Pakistan, abortion is legally allowed to save the life of a woman or to provide "necessary treatment" early in pregnancy.¹ Given a lack of clarity in interpreting the law, and restrictive religious and cultural norms and practices, safe abortion services are difficult to obtain. Therefore, many women and particularly young women with limited access to relevant and accurate information turn to unsafe abortion to end an unwanted pregnancy.² Unequal power relations between men and women in Pakistan also contribute to women's difficulty in exercising autonomy to make informed decisions about their own bodies and to negotiate safe sex, as well as their ability to access SRH services.

YOUTH FRIENDLY SPACES IN PAKISTAN

R-FPAP has extensive experience of working with and reaching out to young people to increase their access to safe abortion and SRH education and services. R-FPAP has established Youth Friendly Spaces within 17 of its health facilities. To ensure these spaces meet the needs of young



1 Guttmacher Institute Fact Sheet: Unintended pregnancy and induced abortion in Pakistan. January 2015. Guttmacher Institute, USA. (<https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/fb-pakistan.pdf>)

2 Sathar Z et al., Induced abortion and unintended pregnancies in Pakistan, *Studies in Family Planning*, 2014, 45(4):471–491.



people, R-FPAP has trained youth volunteers to be involved in the running and management of the YFS. The areas are made youth friendly with comfortable furniture and modern decoration, with resources such as televisions to screen SRH films, and magazines and games to create a space where young people want to spend time. Once using the space, the opportunity is provided for young people to interact with others and discuss SRH issues and services at the clinic. Clear sign-posting guides young people to services and the opening times for young people's services are extended to evenings to make it easier and more convenient for young people to avail of the services. Young people are also provided with quiet corners and access to a toll-free helpline so that they can speak to a medical professional in private.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1. Involve young people from varied backgrounds to ensure sensitivity and diversity (e.g. existing programme youth volunteers), in the design, implementation and on-going evaluation of youth-friendly approaches.
2. Confidentiality and privacy is a key driver of "youth friendliness" to ensure that a young person feels comfortable during their visit at the YFS and gains trust in the service provider at the clinic.
3. In addition to providing a supportive environment, service provision should be youth-friendly and all clinic staff should be trained on providing youth-friendly services.
4. Offer a full and integrated package of SRH services (e.g. full range of contraceptive methods, counselling, STI testing and treatment, comprehensive abortion care etc.) in a single location to provide a convenient "one stop shop" service for young people.
5. Build the capacity of young people to be involved in the running, management and implementation of the YFS.





HOW TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE YFS

Step 1:

Conduct an assessment of young people's and organizational resource needs. An effective Youth Friendly Spaces strategy requires a good understanding of the needs of young people, as well as your organization's capacity to deliver and sustain the YFS.

Step 2:

Decide on the location and design of your YFS. Identify which facilities are best located to be accessible to young people, and give special attention to the position and entrance of the YFS within the premises.

Step 3:

Establish links with other youth organizations and services. Form partnerships with existing youth focused organizations and establish referral mechanisms for other important youth services.

Step 4:

Plan demand creation and community-based activities. Build upon existing events and activities in the local community, such as work with peer educators, as well as media channels to raise awareness and inform young people about the YFS services.

Step 5:

Deliver Youth Friendly training. Conduct training to all service providers and staff to ensure everyone has a full understanding of the SRH needs of young people in the community and non-judgemental and confidential care is provided (e.g. value clarification).

Step 6:

Implementation of the YFS. Ensure the YFS is well maintained and staffed and delivers the facilities it says it provides. This includes up-to-date SRH educational materials and clear displays informing young people about available services.

Step 6:

Monitor young people's feedback. A good way to know the YFS is responding to the needs of young people is to allow the opportunity for feedback directly from young clients. Using comment boxes or client exit interviews can help to ensure that youth friendly components are implemented in a consistent manner.



Rahnuma Family Planning Association of Pakistan 2015 SERVICE DATA



	Number of SRH services provided in 2015	7,850,173
	Proportion of SRH services provided to young people	42%
	Proportion of abortion related services provided to young people	46%
	Proportion of contraceptive services provided to young people	30%



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