

# RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

## What are Sexual and Reproductive Rights?

Sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) are human rights that are universally-applicable, indivisible and undeniable. SRR are grounded in other human rights –such as the right to health, the right to privacy and the right to be free from violence and discrimination – that are guaranteed in international treaties and national law and policy. Authoritative human rights bodies – such as UN treaty-monitoring mechanisms, regional courts, and constitutional and supreme courts – have interpreted and applied human rights to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues.



### Young people's sexual and reproductive rights

- Right to equality
- Right to participation
- Right to life and to be free from harm
- Right to privacy
- Right to personal autonomy and to be recognized before the law
- Right to think and express one's self freely
- Right to health
- Right to know and learn
- Right to choose whether or not to marry or have children
- Right to have your rights upheld

## What Is the Rights-Based Approach?

The starting point for any youth-focused SRH program is recognition of young people's status as rights-holders. This recognition alone mandates program designers and implementers to align their work with global standards for the respect, protection, and fulfillment of human rights. Beyond that, a rights-based approach is a useful lens that, when applied, brings into focus the unique challenges and barriers that young people face in accessing SRH information and services. The rights-based approach requires critical thinking about whether current approaches are respecting, protecting, and fulfilling young people's rights, as well as concerted action to address underlying, root causes of inequality, lack of access, discrimination and other rights violations that occur in the context of SRH.

A rights-based approach can and should be adopted at all stages of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH) programs. The table below presents generally applicable human rights principles and examples of their application adapted from the World Health Organization's [Ensuring human rights in the provision of contraceptive information and services](#).

Human rights principles	Application
Non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide contraceptive services to all young people free from discrimination, coercion, or violence</li> <li>• Give special attention to marginalized groups of young people who would not otherwise access contraception</li> </ul>
Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that a wide range of contraceptive options are available to young people, including emergency contraception</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide comprehensive, scientifically accurate sexuality education for young people</li> <li>• Eliminate financial barriers to SRH services for young people</li> <li>• Improve access to SRH services for young people who have difficulties in accessing them, such as the urban poor and younger adolescents</li> <li>• Ensure that services reach displaced young people, as well as those who experience sexual violence</li> <li>• Integrate contraceptive services with other SRH services, including HIV, maternal health, and post-abortion care</li> <li>• Use mobile services to reach young people with services and information</li> <li>• Advocate for elimination of parental or caregiver consent and notification requirements in law and policy</li> </ul>
Acceptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide contraceptive counseling for young people</li> <li>• Include side effect management as part of the service package for young people</li> <li>• Refer young people if services are not available</li> </ul>
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a quality assurance process for SRH services provided to young people</li> <li>• Provide long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) insertion, removal, and counseling services in the same location</li> <li>• Provide ongoing competency trainings on youth-friendly SRH services for health professionals and other staff who come into contact with young clients</li> </ul>
Informed decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer evidence-based, comprehensive contraceptive information, education, and counseling to ensure informed choice</li> <li>• Ensure that young people are able to make an informed, autonomous choice about whether to use emergency, short-acting, long-acting or permanent methods of contraception without discrimination</li> </ul>
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that young people's privacy is protected, including their medical records and personal information</li> </ul>
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve young people directly affected by programs and the opportunity to meaningfully engage in design, implementation, monitoring, and accountability</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish effective accountability mechanisms for SRH service and information provision, including monitoring and evaluation and remedies/redress, at the individual and systems levels</li> </ul>

## Tools Related to This Approach

### Guidance on adopting a rights-based approach to the provision of SRH services and information:

- [Ensuring human rights in the provision of contraceptive information and services](#), WHO
- [Essential Packages Manual: Sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes for young people](#), Rutgers
- [Fulfil! Guidance document for the implementation of young people's sexual rights](#), IPPF
- [Rights and Empowerment Principles for Family Planning](#), FP2020
- [Keys to youth-friendly services](#), IPPF

- [Rights-based Family Planning: 15 Resources to Guide Programming](#), E2A Project
- [Checkpoints for Choice: An Orientation and Resource Package](#), Engender Health

**Information on the sexual and reproductive rights of young people:**

- [Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration](#), IPPF
- [Exclaim! A young people's guide to Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration](#), IPPF
- [Love, Sexual Rights and Young People: Learning from our peer educators how to be a rights-based organisation](#), IPPF
- [Understanding young people's right to decide](#), IPPF
- [Capacity and Consent: Empowering adolescents to exercise their reproductive rights](#), Center for Reproductive Rights

**References**

- Amnesty International (2017) [Sexual and reproductive health rights fact sheet](#)
- Chandra-Mouli (2015) [What Does Not Work in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Evidence on Interventions Commonly Accepted as Best Practices](#)
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (2011) [Exclaim! A young people's guide to Sexual Rights: Declaration](#)
- United Nations Population Fund (2014) [Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 1994](#)
- WHO (2014) [Ensuring human rights in the provision of contraceptive information and services: guidance and recommendations](#)

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