

A360
**MEANINGFUL
ADOLESCENT
AND YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY
FRAMEWORK**



SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION



“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED PEOPLE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD. INDEED, IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.”
— MARGARET MEAD

THE WHAT

A360 is Population Services International’s (PSI) flagship adolescent sexual and reproductive health program, a girl-centered approach to contraceptive program focusing on improving health, wealth, and agency for girls. PSI as a signatory of the Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement affirms that young people have a fundamental right to actively and meaningfully engage in all matters that affect their lives.

Meaningful engagement of young people is central to our common vision of achieving the outcomes and targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s), FP2030 goals, and the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s, and Adolescents’ Health among other internationally agreed upon targets for eliminating poverty and promoting health, rights, and wellbeing. [1]

This document serves as A360’s Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE) Strategic Framework, co-developed through an ideation and visioning session carried out in 2021 with various stakeholders including country youth engagement

leads, young designers from our Young Designers conference organizing committee, A360 country teams as well as staff members from the A360 global team. This framework serves as a guide for A360’s Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement agenda – situating young people at the center of our work. It is a living document with ideas to help streamline and strengthen MAYE.

MEANINGFUL ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT CAN BE DEFINED AS:

“Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between adolescents, youth, and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people’s ideas, perspectives, skills, and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programs, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms, and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries, and world.” [1]

1. Global consensus statement for meaningful adolescent engagement 2020

THE WHO

Definition of Youth: The United Nations defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24.

Definition of Adolescent: WHO defines Adolescence as the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19.

While the definition of young people may vary, A360's core mandate covers adolescents between 15 to 19 years of age. However, A360 works with youth over 19 years to deliver on various adolescent targeted interventions and have proven to be key change makers and champions for adolescent needs. For this reason, we have included them as key actors in our meaningful engagement strategy.

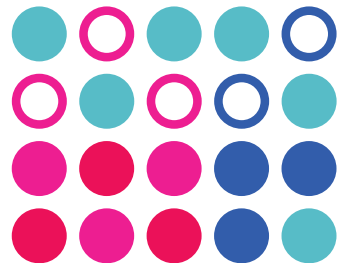
THE HOW

A360 supports governments to support girls to achieve their dreams and take charge of their lives. Across Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya, A360 is scaling girl-centered contraceptive programs – with girls and governments at the fore. Our girl-centered programming is tackling significant barriers standing in the way of girls exercising their sexual and reproductive health agency and governments achieving positive health and development outcomes.



SECTION 2

MEANINGFUL ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW



“IF YOU WANT TO GO QUICKLY, GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER.”
— AFRICAN PROVERB

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Unmet need for contraception among adolescents is a pressing global issue – one that includes and extends beyond just preventing adverse health outcomes resulting from unplanned pregnancy [2], [3]. Nearly half of the estimated 21 million adolescent pregnancies that occur in low- and middle-income countries each year are unintended [4], and more than half of these end in induced abortion [5], [6]. Pregnancy during adolescence increases health risks for the mother and child [7], [8], and can have a long-lasting detrimental impact on life trajectories, including educational attainment and economic security [9]. These adverse health outcomes as a result of a lack of access to adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSHR) also prevents youth from contributing to country-level economic prosperity and progress.

Access to and uptake of modern contraception for adolescents is constrained by an array of social, cultural, economic and legal barriers [3]. These include provider bias; lack of basic SRHR knowledge

about menstruation, fertility, sex, consent, and contraception; myths and misconceptions; concerns about confidentiality; limited method choice and provider skill gaps; cost of services and/or transport; proximity of service providers; parental / husband consent; social and gender norms; limited agency and self-efficacy; prevalence of transactional sex; and inadequate engagement of men and boys. Moreover, these barriers lead to variances in fertility intentions and contraceptive use data among adolescents, including high but desired fertility rates among many adolescent non-users, as well as higher rates of contraceptive failure and method discontinuation among those with a stated need for contraception and protection from unintended pregnancy [4], [5].

Together this landscape points to a need to reach beyond standard public health approaches to sexual and reproductive health in order to understand more fully the experience and desires of adolescents in these settings with an emphasis on their cognitive,

2. Loiaza, E. and M. Liang (2013). Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of the Evidence. United Nations Population Fund. Available: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ADOLESCENT%20PREGNANCY_UNFPA.pdf
3. UNFPA. (2014) The power of 1.8 billion: Adolescents, youth, and the transformation of the future. Available: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf

4. <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-meeting-contraceptiveneeds-of-adolescents>
5. Sedgh G et al., Induced abortion: incidence and trends worldwide from 1995 to 2008, *The Lancet*, 2012, 379(9816):625–632
6. Woog V, Singh S, Browne A, et al. Adolescent women’s need for and use of sexual and reproductive health services in developing countries. *New York Guttmacher Inst* 2015:1–63

developmental, cultural, and socioeconomic experiences. By understanding the adolescent experience through a range of disciplinary lenses—and doing so in meaningful partnership with youth and adolescents—development actors can gain critical insights into how health systems might better reach and serve adolescents and enable their full and engaged ownership of their sexual and reproductive health and their lives.

2.2 A360'S ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

VISION

In order to achieve meaningful adolescent and youth engagement, A360 envisions a world where every young person has a voice and agency, their respective contributions are valued and respected, and they are given equal opportunities to contribute to the AYSRH agenda — within A360's mandate and beyond.

“Often, Adolescents and Youth have opportunities to contribute to an agenda, however most of the contributions are not captured in the finalized concept/program/strategy/policy etc. This only implies that their contributions are not truly Valued”.

MISSION

Our mission is to create an enabling and sustainable environment for Youth Innovation Officers and Champions through purposeful mentorship and training with a focus on inclusive participation in decision making, program design, implementation and evaluation.

“Inclusive Participation” is of utmost importance on all levels of development, if we describe MAYE participation as inclusive, we mean that it allows the diverse groups of Adolescents and Youth (Both Vulnerable and Marginalized) to participate, rather than just one group. We believe participation is simply the act of showing up; Inclusive Participation on the other hand occurs when head, heart, feet and spirit are involved”.

VALUES

A360 is committed to realizing the following principles in line with the global consensus on meaningful adolescent and youth engagement as part of our efforts to meaningfully engage young people – valuing their expertise, work and input and nurturing their talents to maximize their potential.

1. **Rights-based** – A360 commits to keeping the adolescents and youth we engage informed and educated about their rights, with clear structures in place for them to hold us accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling these rights.
2. **Transparent and informative** – A360 commits to ensuring adolescents and youth are provided with complete, evidence-based, accessible and age-appropriate information, acknowledging their diverse experiences and promoting and protecting their right to freely express their views.
3. **Voluntary and free from coercion** – A360 commits to prioritizing choice, rights and agency - for the consumers we serve and the young people we work with and for. We create space so every young person can use their voice - if and when they choose – and make their own decisions on what actions to take and views to express.
4. **Respectful of young people's views, backgrounds, and identities** – A360 commits to encouraging adolescents and young people to initiate ideas and activities that are relevant to their lives, drawing on their knowledge, skills and abilities. We will prioritize culturally sensitive and stigma-free engagements.
5. **Safe** – A360 commits to taking every reasonable precaution to minimize the risk of violence, exploitation, tokenism or any other negative consequence of young people's participation.
6. **Accountability** – A360 commits to setting up an accountability mechanism to ensure MAYE principles are upheld, with a reporting and feedback mechanism developed and overseen by the advisory board to maintain and sustain the strategy integrity.

“To ensure far reaching engagement, the respective engagement structures should build in accountability, reporting and feedback mechanisms towards a constituency of Adolescents and Youth”.

7. World Health Organization (WHO), Mortality, morbidity, and disability in adolescence, 2014, <http://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section3/page2/mortality.html>

8. Kozuki N et al., The associations of parity and maternal age with small-for-gestational-age, preterm, and neonatal and infant mortality: a meta-analysis, BMC Public Health, 2013, 13(Suppl. 3): S2, <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/S3/S2>

9. Merrick TW, Making the Case for Investing in Adolescent Reproductive Health: A Review of Evidence and PopPov Research Contributions, Washington, DC: Population and Poverty Research Initiative and Population Reference Bureau, 2015.

SECTION 3

OUR APPROACH



“FOR TOMORROW BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE WHO PREPARE FOR IT TODAY.”
— AFRICAN PROVERB

Our approach builds on the following insights and recommendations from implementation learnings, the Young Designers Conference held in December 2020 and an ideation session held with the key stakeholders in early 2021.

INSIGHTS

- The use of the term Young Designers (YDs) could suggest that our meaningful engagement is limited to the design phase of the program, yet it is integral throughout the entire lifespan of the project.
- What is not measured is not managed. The lack of a standardized MAYE framework and metrics of success often means MAYE is not integrated systematically into implementation nor prioritized for measurement.
- Funding is finite and project implementation is time bound, presenting an opportunity to proactively embed a career progression/planning component to MAYE from the start.
- There are gaps in the body of evidence around MAYE, presenting opportunities to document learnings and good practices for other to build on and scale up.
- Meaningful engagement has traditionally focused on youth over 19 years, who have proven to be key

change makers and champions of adolescents’ rights. This presents us an opportunity to strategize on how to encompass those aged 15-19 years in our meaningful engagement.

- MAYE itself has not always been seen as the main agenda, rather as the means to an end.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review the Young Designers (YDs) title and consider a more representative approach that would reflect their scope and level of engagement throughout the life of the project. The working title moving forward is Youth Innovation Officers/Champions.
2. Develop a governance structure, with community-level representation, that will guide activities and the overarching strategy. Ensure that a process owner is assigned to each recommendation below.
3. Develop an overarching Adolescent and Youth Engagement framework.
4. Develop indicators and metrics for MAYE and incorporate them into the project’s results framework.
5. Develop and implement a learning agenda for A360’s MAYE.

6. Build capacity and resource teams to actualize the MAYE agenda across the A360 project.
7. Better incorporate the young people whom we serve into the MAYE agenda, specifically the adolescent girls, by deliberately expanding our scope of meaningful engagement beyond youth above 19 yrs.

8. Chart out a path of executing career planning/ progression of the adolescent and youth champions from the start, including an exit or transition plan for those who leave the project.

“Adolescent girls could form Youth advisory committee in the communities or Community Development Committee – girls becoming gatekeepers”

SECTION 4 THE “HOW”



“IT’S THE YOUNG TREES THAT MAKE UP THE FOREST.”
— AFRICAN PROVERB

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Assets: Adolescents have the necessary resources, skills and competencies to achieve desired outcomes.

Agency: Adolescents can employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, and can act upon those decisions to achieve desired outcomes.

Contribution: Adolescents should be engaged as a source of change for their own and their communities’ positive development.

Enabling environment: Adolescents should be surrounded by an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, access to services and opportunities, one that strengthens their ability to avoid risks and to stay safe, secure and be protected without fear of violence or retribution.

How then do the recommendations translate into opportunities and gaps and then further to strategies and actions that can be put into practice and measured? The table below sets out our plan of action to reach the desired outcomes.

Gap or Opportunity: what we can capitalize on for positive outcomes

Strategies: the means to address the gap or opportunity

Outcomes: the tangible result from the application of the Strategies

GAP/ OPPORTUNITY	STRATEGY/ ACTIONS	OUTCOMES
I. Mainstreaming Meaningful Youth and Adolescent Engagement (MAYE) across the A360 Project	Engaging the key stakeholders on an ideation process to come up with a shared Vision and Mission for the Projects MAYE Engagement	A shared understanding and Vision for the Project's MAYE agenda
	Developing MAYE Strategy Framework	Systematic application of MAYE framework and parameters across the various A360 platforms
	Identifying MAYE Result areas / indicators and having them on the Project's results framework	MAYE is measured and managed at overall project level as well as Country level
	Launch of the global MAYE strategy Framework and Result areas	MAYE strategy Framework document in place and a budget to support the MAYE agenda
	Launch of the Country MAYE framework and Result Areas	Clear MAYE Country strategies informed by the global overarching strategy framework
	Each Country selects a MAYE champion for the platform	MAYE Country Champions
	Each Country identifies the MAYE gaps/ Training needs and develops a training plan for execution	Teams and well trained and resourced on MAYE
II. Adolescents and youth onboarded to the MAYE are motivated to plug in, contribute, learn, and aspire for their next move	Change Young Designers titles to ensure that they capture the integral role they play throughout the life of the project	An agreed on standard name that better reflects the scope beyond design
	Adolescent and Youth MAYE has clear job description and or terms of reference (TOR)	Country platforms have MAYE JD and or TOR in place
	MAYE has a training and certification curriculum in place	Country platforms identify the MAYE curriculum to use
		MAYE clear country process for on-boarding, training, certification, and career progression plan in place
MAYE has a career transition plan in place	MAYE clear country process for career progression and a career pathing plan in place	

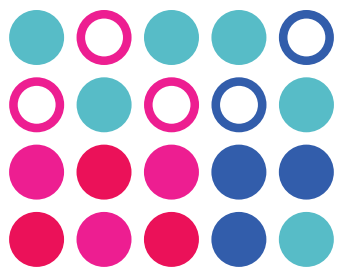


GAP/ OPPORTUNITY	STRATEGY/ ACTIONS	OUTCOMES
III. Adolescents and youth are pro-actively engaged and their voices, ideas and creativity amplified	Adolescent led human centered design	Adolescent and youth engagement is safe and rights-respecting
	Most vulnerable adolescents targeted and engaged for various initiatives	Most vulnerable adolescents engage and participate to deliver interventions impacting them and their communities
	Adolescent and youth capacities strengthened for leadership, advocacy, and entrepreneurship	Communication and advocacy actions are adolescent and youth relevant and responsive
	Adolescents lead in data collection and various advocacy initiatives with local level leaders and other key stakeholders	Involvement of adolescents and youth in monitoring the quality of services or programme delivery in various contexts
IV. Adolescents and youth are engaged in the decision-making at various levels	MAYE governance structure in place	Key decisions / forums are reflective of and responsive to adolescent concerns
	Youth Adult advisory board constituted	Decision-making structures are fully adolescent/youth inclusive and representative (ensuring participation of most vulnerable)
	MAYE Country champions/ leads identified	Services appropriately respond to needs and concerns of most vulnerable adolescents
	Institutionalizing mechanisms for adolescents' participation in decision making in local, national, and global platforms (councils, youth panels)	Mechanisms for systematic participation of adolescents within A360 at various levels are
	Involvement in formal consultations	
V. A360 MAYE proactively contributes to the body of knowledge on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement	Learning agenda for MAYE in place	MAYE component is managed and tracked
	MAYE indicators in place	Learning is curated and shared / disseminated
	MAYE Knowledge Management and Knowledge sharing framework in place	MAYE conferences or conventions organized.



SECTION 5

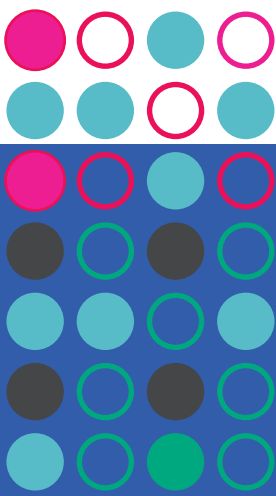
NEXT STEPS



“THOSE WHO ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS PAY ATTENTION TO LITTLE ONES.”
— AFRICAN PROVERB

This is a living document meant to guide and coordinate how to carry out, strengthen and streamline MAYE across the various A360 countries. The table above was co-developed to capture the immediate next steps in moving forward the MAYE agenda by


various country teams. It is by no means exhaustive and will continue to grow and take shape as we move the MAYE agenda forward to action.



“AFRICA’S GREATEST ASSETS ARE YOUNG PEOPLE”

- UN Envoy on Youth, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi

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