



---

**11/05/2021**

---

**Compiled by: Lemanyishoe Samuel**

# **ADDRESSING ACCESS TO YOUTH FRIENDLY SRHR SERVICES IN A PASTORALIST COMMUNITY**



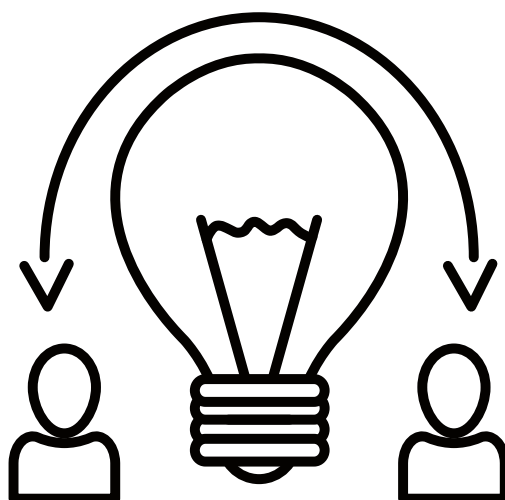


## THE PROBLEM

Samburu County – a pastoral community in Kenya – faces numerous health system-based, cultural, and economic and illiteracy challenges that hinder the provision of health services to general public. However, the challenges are even greater for adolescents and youth.

## ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

Y-ACT organized youth from 17 youth-led organizations to form a coalition in Samburu County to conduct research on youth health seeking behaviour in the County. The research uncovered a number of barriers to youth access to SRHR services including limited knowledge and understanding of youth friendly services by health care service providers (facility-based health workers and community health volunteers), poor monitoring systems for capturing data on the adolescents seeking SRH services, and insufficient health commodities and equipment. The Y-ACT coalition held several engagements with Samburu County policy makers and, using the evidence from the research, they made several ‘asks’ of the county policy makers, one of which was to domesticate the National YFS Guideline for Samburu County.



## **SAMBURU COUNTY POLICY MAKERS AGREE TO DOMESTICATE THE NATIONAL YFS GUIDELINES**

In August 2020 the Samburu County Government Department of Health agreed to partner with the Y-ACT coalition to work on domesticating the National Youth Friendly Services Guideline. The department formed the Adolescent and Youth Technical Committee to lead the domestication process. The Committee tasked the Y-ACT coalition with carrying out several activities during the domestication process including data collection, validation and dissemination of data on youth health seeking behaviour in Samburu County. A Ministry of Health official from Samburu County confirmed this:

### **ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS**

Y-ACT organized youth from 17 youth-led organizations to form a coalition in Samburu County to conduct research on youth health seeking behaviour in the County. The research uncovered a number of barriers to youth access to SRHR services including limited knowledge and understanding of youth friendly services by health care service providers (facility-based health workers and community health volunteers), poor monitoring systems for capturing data on the adolescents seeking SRH services, and insufficient health commodities and equipment. The Y-ACT coalition held several engagements with Samburu County policy makers and, using the evidence from the research, they made several 'asks' of the county policy makers, one of which was to domesticate the National YFS Guideline for Samburu County.

***“The Y-ACT Coalition, in collaboration with the Department of Health and together with the involvement of adolescent and youth, carried out a baseline assessment survey which informed the development of the guideline policy” Ministry of Health Official***

# YOUTH AND POLICY MAKERS WORKED COLLABORATIVELY TO DEVELOP THE SAMBURU COUNTY AYFS GUIDELINE

During the guideline development process, the level of mutual understanding and trust between policy makers and participating youth was strengthened. Policy makers' knowledge of youth issues increased whilst Y-ACT coalition members gained a new-found respect for the experiences and achievements of policy makers. During an interview, the Samburu County Deputy Director of Gender culture and social services expressed his appreciation for work done by the project:

*“The (Y-ACT) project has really assisted in raising awareness for provision of youth friendly services especially on reproductive health issues. They should aspire to broaden coverage to reach out to further areas in the entire county” Ministry of Gender Official*



## **Y-ACT COALITION MEMBERS GAIN VALUABLE SKILLS AND HAVE BECOME A REFERENCE POINT FOR YOUTH ISSUES IN SAMBURU COUNTY.**

Y-ACT coalition members report that they learned a range of skills from participating in the process, particularly their research and evaluation skills. Other skills gained include: problem solving and decision making, creative and critical thinking, collaboration, communication and negotiation, flexibility and adaptability.

***“Y-ACT built our capacities and supported us to identify our own issues, reach to mutually consenting solutions through to engagement with decision makers. I also learnt that partnerships and synergy in issues afflicting many could help to bring more inclusive and informed decisions to remedy a problem” Y-ACT Coalition member***

In addition to this, the coalition members reported that they have expanded their social networks between themselves (coalition members), international organizations and policy makers in Samburu county and have now become a key point of contact for the Samburu County Department of Health on all youth health-related issues in the country.

***“It’s an advantage to get an organized group of youths in community based organizations who are struggling in their small ways to advocate for the needs of their fellow vulnerable youths. Also, the decision makers were willing to collaborate with the youths to identify their issues and advance their engagements”, Y-ACT Coalition member***

## **Lessons learnt**

- Using evidence to influence policy is a powerful advocacy strategy.
- Involve all stakeholders at all stages of policy making, especially policy makers, as this leads to ownership of the policies and guidelines.
- Policy advocacy requires a multi-sector approach and the Y-ACT coalition has really aided in our engagement in Samburu County.

