

SPARKS Project

Project Title: Strategic Policy Advocacy for Reproductive Knowledge and Services

Acronym: SPARKS



ABBREVIATIONS

AGYW: Adolescent Girls and Young Women

ARHP: Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy

CSE: Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

CCPA: Centre for Contemporary Pan-Africanism

HPs: Harmful Practices

IEC: Information, Education, Communication

SPARKS: Strategic Policy Advocacy for Reproductive Knowledge and Services

SRH: Sexual and Reproductive Health

SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

Executive Summary

Unintended pregnancies, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and harmful practices (HPs) remain significant issues in Ghana despite the implementation of gender-responsive policies like the Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (ARHP) in 2000, the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy for young people in 2015, and the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) policy in 2019. Inadequate enforcement has resulted in over half a million teenage pregnancies over the last five years (DHIMS, 2021), averaging over 112,800 annually. Additionally, child marriage rates are at 21%. The **SPARKS** project (Strategic Policy Advocacy for Reproductive Knowledge and Services) aims to address these challenges through a multifaceted approach. This includes a social media advocacy campaign to reach over 100,000 users, including policymakers, and stakeholder meetings to establish a Youth Council on Gender-Responsive Policy Dialogue and SPARKS Toolkit. The development of the SPARKS Toolkit will aggregate relevant policies and offer advocacy strategies, while media engagement will sensitize the public. The project will culminate in a national policy dialogue uniting young people and decision-makers to inspire unanimous commitment. Targeting young people aged 13-35 as primary beneficiaries, the project also aims to influence policymakers, stakeholders, and the broader community over three months. The ultimate goal is to strengthen the implementation and uptake of policies safeguarding the rights and well-being of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), contributing to SDG 3. This will enhance AGYW involvement in decision-making across governance tiers, increase cooperation among relevant actors, and ultimately reduce the incidence of HPs, SGBV, and poor sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

Project Description

and Services (SPARKS)” project seeks to reform policies regarding harmful practices (HPs), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and poor sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Ghana. Despite policies like the Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy (2000), Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2015), and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (2019), these issues persist due to non-compliance and inadequate enforcement, leading to over half a million teenage pregnancies in the last five years (DHIMS, 2021), averaging over 112,800 annually. Child marriage stands at 21%.

In partnership with the University of Media, Arts, and Communication, SPARKS aims to launch a social media campaign across Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Instagram, and TikTok, targeting over 100,000 users, including stakeholders and policymakers. The campaign's goal is to highlight the adverse effects of HPs, SGBV, and poor SRH on adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). In addition, SPARKS will hold a stakeholder meeting including adolescents, youth-led and women-led CSOs, and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to establish a Youth Council on Gender Responsive Policy Dialogue and develop a “SPARKS Toolkit”—a strategic document for aggregating and simplifying gender-responsive policies with strategies that will be used by CSOs and the public to influence actors to address HPs, SGBV, and poor SRH.

The project includes media publications and tour of five media houses in Ghana, with Youth Council members YISGs Grantees serving as panelists to sensitize the public. It will culminate in a national dialogue to bring together youth and decision-makers to secure commitments for effective policy implementation and sustainability.

Target

The target beneficiaries are young people between the ages of 13 – 35 years. To achieve this, the direct audience are policymakers, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, MMDCs, CSOs, Schools and community leaders.

Objectives

- Raise awareness among over 100,000 stakeholders on YISG grantees’ work and gender-responsive policies, as well as their implication on AGYW.
- Develop SPARKS Toolkit for aggregating and influencing policies’ implementation and uptake to address HPs, SGBV, and poor SRH.
- Embark on media publications and tour to sensitize the public and galvanize support in addressing HPs, SGBV, and poor SRH.
- Provide a common platform for both youth and decision-makers to dialogue and secure commitments for policy implementation, strengthening, ownership, and sustainability.

Expected Outcome

The project will lead to strengthened implementation and uptake of policies and frameworks that safeguard the rights and well-being of AGYW—contributing to SDG 3, increasing AGYW's participation in decision-making at various governance levels, fostering greater collaboration among stakeholders, and ultimately reducing the incidence of HPs, SGBV, and poor SRH.

Project Activities (August 2024 – November 2024)

No#	Activity /Months – 2024	August	September	October
1	Work with YISGs grantees to develop Information, Education, Communication (IEC) materials			
2	Support YISGs Grantees to either create communications channels or optimize existing channels			
3	Publicity and Communication Capacity Strengthening workshop for YISGs Grantees (Photography, videography, interviews, story gathering,, etc.)			
4	Feature YISGs grantees work on the social media advocacy campaign			
5	Work with Youth Champions and YISGs grantees to establish the Council			
6	Provide news publications for YISGs grantees work and engage them and the Youth Council members on a media tour			
7	Work with YISGs grantees to gather content for a final documentary of all grantees activities			
8	Include YISGs grantees and Youth Council activities in the conference content			
	TOTAL (Ghc)			

Sustainability Plan

CCPA's core mandate includes facilitating and influencing policy dialogue for the welfare of African youths and adolescents. Hence, the organization will continue to champion the interests of SPARKS even beyond the implementation phase. Below are the specific activities CCPA will undertake for sustainability:

1. **Quarterly Youth Council Meetings:** The established Youth Council on Gender-Responsive Policy Dialogue will continue to convene quarterly, and outcomes from these meetings will be disseminated to the public through various channels. The council will also issue communiques to relevant authorities, demanding policy actions and accountability.
2. **Online SPARKS Toolkit:** The SPARKS Toolkit will be hosted online, providing a centralized resource for gender-responsive policies and policy advocacy strategies. This

online platform will ensure easy access for civil society organizations and the public, promoting widespread engagement and utilization.

Institutionalizing the National Dialogue Conference: The national dialogue conference will be institutionalized as an annual event. This conference will provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss, refine, and commit to the implementation and sustainability of the SPARKS Toolkit and related policies, leading to continuous improvement and sustained commitment to gender-responsive policies will be ensured.

Expected Impact and Benefits of the Project

- **Spotlight on YISG Grantees' Work and Gender-Responsive Policies:** The project will highlight the works of YISG grantees and the importance of gender-responsive policies as well as their impact on adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), thereby contributing to Ghana's progress towards achieving SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being.
- **Increased Awareness and Public Support:** A robust social media campaign will significantly raise awareness about existing gender-responsive policies. This will increase public support for addressing policy gaps that need urgent attention.
- **Enhanced Advocacy with SPARKS Toolkit:** The SPARKS Toolkit will serve as a crucial resource for YISG Grantees, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the public, providing easy access to information on gender-responsive policies. This will enhance advocacy efforts to protect AGYW.
- **Empowerment through Youth Council:** The Youth Council on Gender-Responsive Policy Dialogue will empower young people to actively participate in policy discussions. This ensures their voices are heard and promotes swift policy actions benefiting AGYW.
- **Direct Engagement through National Dialogue:** The National Dialogue on Gender-Responsive Policies will create an essential platform for young people to engage directly with decision-makers. This will foster commitments and develop actionable roadmaps to address harmful practices (HPs), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues.