

GENDER APPROACHES IN YUVAA

ABOUT YUVAA

The Next Generation: YUVAA (Youth Voices for Agency and Access) Project will implement and evaluate program that combines social entrepreneurship with innovative communication approaches in ten districts (five each) of Bihar and Maharashtra from July 2018 – June 2022.

YUVAA will reach 1.2 million young women and men in the age group of 15-24 years in the districts of Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Solapur, Ahmednagar in Maharashtra and Nalanda, Gaya, Patna, Vaishali, Muzaffarpur in Bihar during life of project.

NEED FOR GENDER INTEGRATION IN YUVAA

Gender dimensions must be systematically considered and addressed in family planning (FP) programs as improving women’s reproductive health is more complex than just making family planning services more accessible. A holistic approach is required to address the underlying factors as women and men make choices within the context of their homes and communities where gender roles, responsibilities, and status are defined. Use of FP is powerfully shaped by these social and gender norms, including the perceived acceptability of FP and gender roles that limit women’s autonomy and restrict communication and decision-making between men and women. Arranged and early marriages are still prevalent in many of the project intervention areas; although the legal minimum age at marriage for girls and boys in India is 18 years and 21 years respectively. The expectation that women will start childbearing soon after marriage remains high with most couples facing immense pressure to prove fertility at the earliest. There is also pressure from family members on ideal family composition and size (While at least one son is preferred in most families, Bihar has a two sons’ preference). Negotiating when to have children and how many is a difficult task for most women and they rely on their partners and their elders to decide for them. The Camber segmentation study conducted in YUVAA also reveals that couples feel pressured by key influencers like mothers-in-law (MIL)/ fathers-in-law (FIL); most women (75%) say that the approval/ support of someone is important for them; women (59%) state that they get nervous or fearful in disagreeing with their MILs; women (67%) were found to be nervous or fear disagreeing with their husband. The findings further reveal that the space for disagreement or negotiation for women is almost non-existent, hence reducing her status to a subordinate role and creating an inequitable power dynamic within the relationship.

GENDER STRATEGY UNDER YUVAA

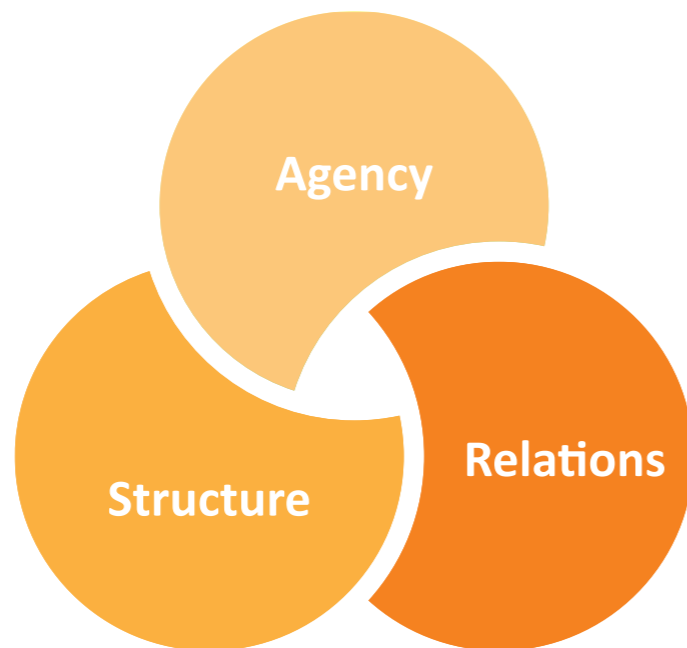
VISION:

By 2022, YUVAA will achieve its *gender transformational agenda of promoting more gender equitable relationships amongst young married couples; more awareness, reflection, and dialogue on gender roles; more agency amongst young women and favorable shift in perceived gender norms* at individual, couple, family, and community levels on Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancy (HTSP) and Contraceptive use.

KEY APPROACHES:

YUVAA’s **Gender Strategy roots itself on the foundational approaches of Gender-Transformative Empowerment Framework** aimed at addressing the descriptive and injunctive gender and social norms systematically, from the individual to the community level, pivoting on the interplay of changes in:

- **Agency:** individual or collective capacities (knowledge and skills), attitudes, critical reflection, assets, actions, and access to services;
- **Relations:** (intrahousehold and beyond): the expectations and cooperative or negotiation dynamics embedded within relationships between people in the home, community, groups and organizations;
- **Structural:** informal and formal institutional rules and practices (environment, norms, recognition and status).



This approach also enables the project to align to BMGF’s Conceptual Model of Women and Girl’s Empowerment contributing to the gender transformative change agenda in the domains of:

- **Agency:** decision making and collective action,
- **Institutional Structures:** family relations and norms, and
- **Resources:** Bodily Integrity, Critical Consciousness and Assets (Knowledge and skills).

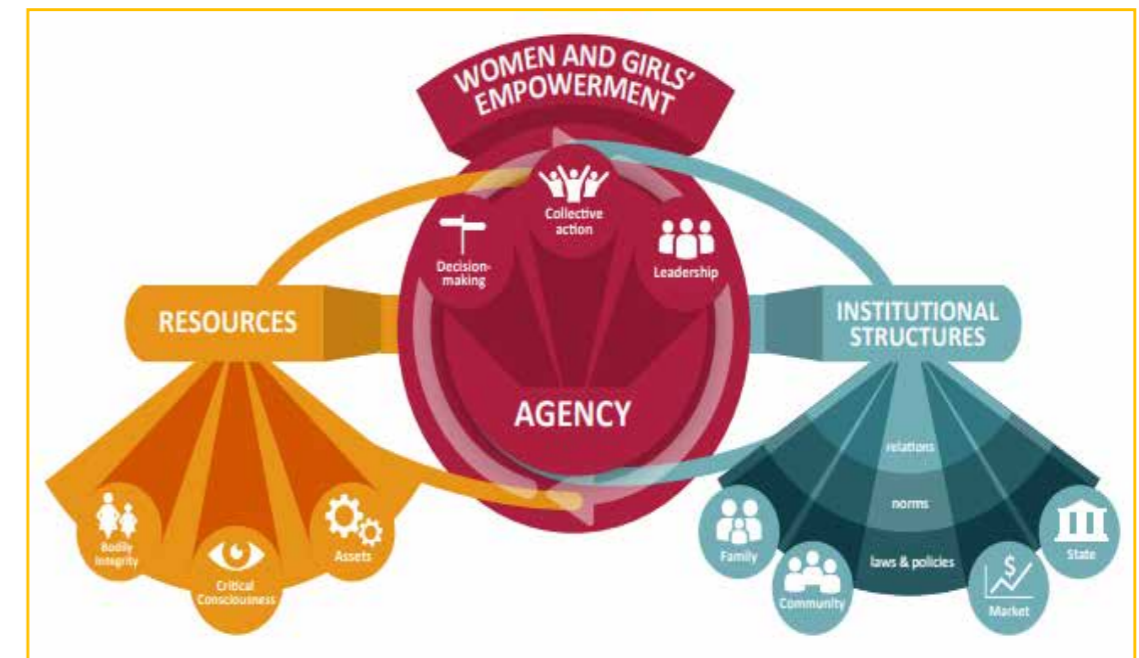


Figure: BMGF’s Conceptual Model of Women and Girl’s Empowerment

YUVAA will employ a range of innovative interventions to raise awareness amongst women and men and their influencers (MILs and peers) and promote reflection and dialogue that results in increased bonding and mutual respect, shared decision making and improvement in women’s agency to take decisions on HTSP and contraception. These unique and innovative approaches will include:

Recruiting and training Couple YUVAA Corps	YUVAA will engage Couple entrepreneurs as change agents in the community to facilitate engagement of young women and men in family planning and create opportunities for dialogue and reflection amongst YMCs and their immediate influencers to critically examine and challenge the prevalent sensitive and well-entrenched beliefs impeding healthy family planning behaviour and practices.
Designing segment-specific gender-transformative interventions	Camber’s segmentation research presents deep insights into attitudes and behaviors influencing couples’ family planning choices. YUVAA will be adopting the insights in designing innovative segment specific gender-transformative interventions, both physical and digital, best suited to encourage positive behavior change in these sub-groups.
Tailored gender-transformative content	To encourage dialogue and reflection on gender roles, YUVAA will incorporate gender transformative content at individual, couple, family and community levels. YCs will discuss issues related to harmful gender and social norms related to family planning, agency and autonomy of women, and benefits of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy with these groups using physical and different digital platforms, including WhatsApp and social media.
Increasing male engagement	Men engagement remains as an integral strategy in YUVAA to promote gender equality and equity by creating opportunities to promote dialogue amongst men to stimulate conversations about the negative impacts of rigid gender roles, and actively address gender inequalities and be a supportive partner to increase the use of modern contraception, improved birth spacing, and healthier family size.
Leveraging existing interventions	Efforts will be made to involve YMCs in community interventions like ‘Saas Bahu Samellan’ under Government of India (GOI)’s Mission Parivar Vikas encouraging newly wed women and their MILs to attend these events. YUVAA will also actively work with other Gates Foundation partners to leverage ongoing mid-mass media activities/campaigns already existing and work with other relevant partners in Bihar and Maharashtra.

MONITORING GENDER STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

YUVAA will be gathering gender dis-aggregated data on various indicators and will also be collecting specific data related to change in social and gender norms. YUVAA will monitor the implementation of the gender strategy by assessing the progress on the gender specific indicators in the RFRT through various methods and tools at mandated frequencies.

OPERATIONALIZING THE GENDER STRATEGY

YUVAA is committed to working towards addressing the salient gender and social norms that hamper contraceptive uptake amongst young married couples. YUVAA will work with couples and their key influencers to improve gender dynamics in relation to contraceptive uptake, delaying and spacing child birth. YUVAA gender strategy is a living document and will be operationalized by the responsible staff across the project. The project will adapt as per emerging gender needs, gaps, and opportunities. The project gender team will convene a gender strategy review meeting with key project staff to map progress achieved toward this gender strategy and refine activities and indicators for the next project year accordingly.

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