



WorldYWCA



Safe Spaces for women and girls

S U M M A R Y

Defining Elements and Best Practices

From the YWCA's extensive experience working in the heart of local communities to advance women's rights, empowerment and leadership, we have identified eight elements that are essential in creating safe spaces for women, young women and girls:

1



Accessible and safe location:

Safe spaces located in accessible areas, central and convenient to women, young women and girls, where safety and privacy are assured. They reach isolated communities through mobile outreach programmes, and extensive rural networks and prominent urban and rural visibility ensure awareness of

YWCA activities.

- Issues of safety and accessibility are addressed in programme planning.

2



Leadership and participation:

Women-led spaces that offer inclusive and empowering spaces for women, young women and girls of all ages and in all their diversity. Leadership development and participation are essential components of YWCA programming, fostering a sense of solidarity and ownership that transforms a beneficiary into an active agent of change.

- Programmes are targeted to vulnerable groups of women, young women and girls (i.e out of school girls, teenage mothers, women living with HIV, survivors of violence, domestic workers, victims of trafficking, migrants and indigenous women).
- Target groups are included in project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to ensure community relevance and ownership.

3



Accurate and reliable information:

Sharing and promoting evidence-based information that supports women, young women and girls to make informed choices.

- Information about sexual and reproductive health and human rights is evidence based and provides factual, non-judgemental information that supports women, young women and girls to make informed decisions.
- YWCAs build the knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers to challenge harmful traditional practices in communities, such as early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and violence against women and girls.

4



Building trust:

Places where women, young women and girls can openly share their experiences, challenges and traumas, and be assured of confidentiality and support.

- YWCAs form support groups in communities that enable women, young women and girls to share their experiences with their peers and access information about their rights and services.
- YWCAs provide a private space where a woman, young woman or girl can meet with a counsellor or mentor and talk about private or sensitive topics, including sexual and reproductive health issues.

5



Holistic Approaches:

Places that take into consideration the multiple facets of women's lives and deliver services that respond to the life cycle of women, young women and girls. Education and economic empowerment are recognised as fundamental tools for empowerment, personal security and claiming rights.

- YWCAs are a place for women, young women and girls to learn life skills that broaden opportunities and build self-reliance to prepare them for life's economic, social and emotional challenges and strengthen their personal security.
- YWCAs promote and/or deliver initiatives that economically empower women, young women and girls (ie. vocational skills training, financial and business management and small loans).

6



Intergenerational cooperation:

Encourage intergenerational sharing, mentoring and cooperation between women and girls of all ages. These supportive relationships are based on respect and equality among different age groups, with a focus on

developing

young women's leadership.

- YWCAs ensure that a minimum of 25% of decision making positions are held by young women 30 years or under.
- YWCAs practice positive interpersonal relationships that foster respect for one another and acceptance of differences of lifestyle and opinion.

7



Dignity and respect:

The organisational structure of the space provides a local and global network of women, young women and girls who support and inspire one another. It is a place where women, young women and girls in all of their diversity are respected and their dignity and rights are upheld.

- YWCAs model transformative and shared leadership, which encourages participation, collective efforts and common ownership for creating positive change among individuals and society.
- YWCAs champion women's human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights and freedom from violence, in local health centres/hospitals, police stations, schools and government offices.

8



Partnership and Accountability:

YWCAs are part of their communities and are permanent, reliable and sustainable spaces for women, young women and girls. They work in partnership with local, regional and global actors to advance women's rights and demand accountability from relevant duty bearers.

- YWCAs model good governance and management through their compliance with the World YWCA Standards of Good Management and Accountability.
- The YWCA is a volunteer-led movement that promotes shared leadership with staff, values and respects members and claim holders and is sustained by community involvement.

This document was produced with the support of:

- Elizabeth Nash
- Michelle Higelin
- Hendrica Okondo
- young women from YWCAs of Angola, Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia.



WorldYWCA

16 L'Ancienne-Route
CH-1218 Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland

T (+41) 22 929 6040

www.worldywca.org