Towards Achieving improved access to youth-friendly Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services in Cross River State (CRS) Nigeria; Sustaining Evidence-Driven Advocacy through the CRS SRHR policy.
In 2019, International Youth Alliance for Family Planning (IYAFP) and Population Reference Bureau under the Empowering Evidence Driven Advocacy (EEDA) project conducted research across three states in Nigeria (Federal Capital Territory, Cross River, and Anambra) to access the status of Youth-friendly Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services in Nigeria. In Cross River State, the study revealed that despite the availability of SRHR services, young people experienced limitations in accessing youth-friendly SRHR services due to lack of clear and reliable information, provider discrimination and judgment, disregard for youth confidentiality and privacy and family planning (FP) programming that do not consider the felt needs of Youth.

The SEDA project was born out of the need to implement solutions that address research findings thus leading to the creation of a policy advocacy objective - to domesticate National Policies on SRHR with a focus on Youth friendly Services (YFS). Over a period of 13 months of implementation through the multi-stakeholder approach involving interactive diverse policy editing workshops, policy validation, and review meetings, a novel CRS SRHR policy was developed which focuses on youth rights addressing the need for access to safe, effective, non-discriminatory, and affordable SRHR youth-friendly services, to achieve the goal of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

Since the policy launch in 2021, there has been increased advocacy and resource mobilization by public and private stakeholders towards the implementation of the policy holistically, which strongly demonstrates the strength of our established multi-stakeholders partnership committee in ensuring policy adoption and use.

Based on our success with these programs and its strategies, we recommend that research and policy advocacy should always involve meaningful youth engagement throughout the entire process to ensure that the final policies/outputs reflect the youth perspective and respond adequately to that demographic. Additionally, partners working with state/local governments should form a multi stakeholder partnership committee who have committed to continuing and amplifying gains after program close out to ensure sustainability of gains. There is a need for continuous advocacy to ensure adequate implementation and accountability of the policy.