

ACTION LEARNING CYCLE #3

Finding, Engaging, and Sustaining New Generations of Youth Leaders

Recommendations from Action Learning Group Members

The third YIELD Hub Collective Action Learning group brought together seven organisations dedicated to advancing Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRRH). Within this group, there was a general consensus that organisations, including those involved in the action learning groups, often attract and involve youth volunteers possessing certain privileges. These privileges may include higher levels of education, soft skills, internet access, responsiveness, webinar attendance, and a willingness to speak at events, among other traits. However, it was also recognised that there is a need to expand their strategy for youth partnership and engage youth in all their diversity. This requires intentional efforts from donors, INGOs, youth-led and youth-serving organisations.

"While there is a great effort to engage young people, some end up being favoured for different reasons. Maybe a privileged background, higher level of education, soft skills, responsiveness, webinar attendances, willingness to speak at events, and so on."

- Action Learning Cycle 3 Member -

During their seven-month action-learning journey, these organisations worked together to design and implement practical solutions in the form of action-learning goals to strengthen their approach and work towards engaging a diverse cross-section of young people, with a priority on reaching the most underserved. They assessed both their successes and areas for improvement and identified specific steps to enhance their contributions within their respective institutions.

 annihilate
the taboo

Annihilate the Taboo: Engaged young people within their network who represent diverse perspectives to bring their voices to programmes and decision-making in the domain of SRHR within India.

 FP
2030

FP2030: Reevaluating its programs/processes to engage youth as equal partners in their programming, including engaging support staff to understand the importance of meaningful youth partnership in FP2023's work around the globe. Action learning reflections are also leading FP2030 to capacitate its youth leaders with diverse skills to increase their chances of receiving funding to reach more adolescents and youth in their programming.

 Gender Equality

Gender Equality Solutions, LLC: Leveraging their position as a senior consultant, Suzanne Petroni is working with the YIELD Hub staff and other Action Learning Group members to publish an editorial containing practical recommendations for international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and donors on how to follow through on their commitments to meaningful youth engagement.





Irise Institute East Africa: Strengthened their internal working structures and ways of working to support and influence the youth they work with to become motivated in their work as menstrual health youth advocates.



Pathfinder International: Engaging its global organisational leadership to champion holistic youth programming and gain buy-in to rethink its youth programming. The goal is to deliver effective MYE (Meaningful Youth Engagement) at Pathfinder country offices.



Restless Development: Developing a new organisational strategy that includes approaches on how to enhance and provide holistic skill sets to the youth they work with beyond programmatic needs. This includes considering diversity and inclusion in the recruitment process for young people, creating meaningful opportunities for them, and ensuring their voices contribute to the decision-making process and program implementation related to SRHR.



Reach A Hand Uganda: Strengthen the capacity of their peer educators to meaningfully take up leadership positions and champion change in their AYSRH work beyond programme implementation and engagement.

Despite their efforts, the group collectively acknowledges the need to address significant challenges and gaps to ensure that hinder innovative approaches to finding and engaging new youth.

The group has identified the gaps and challenges that hinder Finding, Engaging, and Sustaining New Generations of Youth Leaders.

The Gaps



Outreach Methods and Platforms

There is a gap in reaching out beyond conventional digital and traditional approaches in order to proactively engage marginalised or excluded youth. Organisations need to be mindful of the channels and platforms used for connecting with young people, considering potential limitations in access.



Inclusive Spaces

A gap exists in intentional efforts to include adolescents and youth who do not conform to the conventional Western image of youth leaders, considering factors such as background, education, language, and behaviour. Creating inclusive environments is essential for acknowledging and incorporating diverse youth experiences and ideas into decision-making processes.



Mentorship and Sustainable Capacity Building

Integrating youth from diverse backgrounds into the engagement space highlights a gap in support mechanisms. There is a limited provision of mentorship and capacity-building initiatives for new youth leaders, which is crucial to sustain their involvement and foster their growth within the engagement framework. It is essential to address this gap to ensure a strong foundation for long-term contributions from a broad spectrum of young voices.



To reduce these gaps, the group proposes a set of recommendations to support organisations that are open and willing to improve their practices within the youth engagement space.

Recommendations

A. Creating Inclusive and Judgment-Free Spaces

Establish and implement principles that create inclusive and judgment-free spaces for young people in all their diversity. Collaborating with youth means providing them with avenues and opportunities to be themselves, develop leadership skills, take ownership of tasks, and cultivate independence within their work. Promote and emphasise constructive feedback, learning from mistakes, and mentorship to build mutual trust and create a positive environment.

B. Addressing the Digital Divide

Call for innovative strategies to address the digital divide and other barriers to youth participation. This involves conducting ongoing in-person outreach in the communities where the youth are, providing training and capacity building, and access to digital tools and resources. To recruit and engage new youth leaders, it is essential to reach them within their communities and ensure they have the necessary capacity to participate in the decision-making process. This may involve accessing digital tools and resources or securing funding to acquire them.

C. Flexible Funding and Grant-Making Processes

A commitment to flexible funding and grant-making processes is crucial for providing innovative financial support, including fair compensation, training, mentorship, and capacity building to sustain youth engagement work. To achieve this:

1. Donors and international NGOs collaborating with youth must take proactive steps to operationalise and allocate budget towards meaningful youth participation and partnership work, involving youth in the grantmaking process.
2. Simultaneously, youth-led and youth-serving organisations should consistently document and share their experiences, challenges, gaps, and success stories of engaging young people. This will strategically influence donors, NGOs, and multilateral organisations in their work process.

"Moving forward, these recommendations will serve as a valuable precedent for engaging with youth in the future, allowing us to strategically map out our approach. We are grateful for the facilitation, extensive feedback, and support provided by the Yield Hub team. Being part of this Action Learning Cycle has been genuinely helpful!"

- Action Learning Cycle 3 Member -

While these recommendations are not exhaustive, they serve as a starting point for further reflections for relevant stakeholders within the AYSRHR field. We invite you to share and, where applicable, integrate some of these recommendations into your ongoing efforts to find, engage, and sustain new generations of youth leaders.

