

ACTION LEARNING CYCLE #4

Capacity Development for Youth Transition

Recommendations from Action Learning Group Members

"We have amazing young people who have an incredible set of skills but we haven't quite figured out how to link them to different opportunities and how to transition them to other leadership positions, whether it's with other non-profits or in the government. The best-case scenario is that they'll get picked up by another nonprofit, or they'll become a government teacher. But worst-case scenario is that they aren't able to find a job and they have to basically live hand to mouth."

- Action Learning Cycle 4 Member -

Transitioning youth shouldn't be the sole responsibility of specific organisations; it demands a collective effort from a network of actors, including funders and international NGOs, to build the capacity of youth for a successful transition into leadership roles. Such a collective field-wide approach is essential as it is the only authentic way to cultivate and maintain youth leaders, shaping them into responsible professionals in Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR) work.

At the YIELD Hub, we convened our fourth Collective Action Learning group with nine youth-led and international non-governmental organisations. The purpose was to reflect, learn, and design practical solutions to enhance the provision of relevant skills, opportunities, agency, and support mechanisms.

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 build young people's capabilities for a smooth transition to professional roles.



MenEngage Alliance: Conducted a needs assessment and strengthened capacity development support for all young people working across the alliance through training, mentorship, and peer support mechanisms.



African Population and Health Research Center: Expanded their capacity-strengthening initiative to increase opportunities for entry-level/early career researchers to attain relevant skills that will make them attractive in the job market. Through capacity strengthening programs, the centre strives to nurture African research leadership by strengthening institutional and individual capacity.



Nyanam International: Engaged more funders and INGOs to support their youth capacity efforts aimed at successfully transitioning the youth leaders they have mentored and supported over the past three years. Initiated the process of developing a new youth strategy, which will include transition plans for its youth volunteers.



Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG): Conducted a needs assessment of their youth leaders and expanded their capacity development support for the Youth Action Movement Network as a means of motivating and providing training opportunities to support their successful transition.



Visible Impact: Provided capacity and skill development support for youth in their network and in the process of creating a sustainable networking platform for the youth in their network to find career and other relevant professional opportunities.



Save The Children: The Kosovo office of Save the Children is developing effective strategies to support sustainable transitions for child/adolescent-led groups, ensuring their continued meaningful participation in decision-making processes. The Process has begun with reviewing and integrating systematic transition steps within Save the Children's processes and co-creating innovative methods for meaningful compensation, promoting sustainability and independence for youth/children.



Restless Development: Providing ongoing job-specific skills and capacity for their youth network and supporting these youth with essential resources and platforms where they can find relevant opportunities for their transition.



Projet Jeune Leader (PJJ): Created a summer training and mentorship internship experience for PJJ Educators so that they have transferable skills and practical experience to secure job opportunities.



Sonke Gender Justice: Implemented new internal structures and processes to provide the needed leadership, capacity development support, and job-relevant skills for their youth volunteers to transition to paid professional roles.

These organisations are operating within their capacities to assist the youth they work with to transition through coaching and training, capacity strengthening, and adopting management strategies that outline pathways for youth transitions.

"For most young people, especially those with disabilities, getting a job – even after an internship where you develop some skills – is very difficult. As active civil society organisations, how can we support youth employment after internships?"

- Action Learning Cycle 4 Member -



Despite their efforts, they collectively acknowledge the need to address significant challenges and gaps to ensure that youth can transition meaningfully and progress in their career.

The Gaps



Insufficient Needs Assessment and Resources to Support Youth Transition

Organisations working with youth often lack a thorough needs assessment to understand the genuine aspirations and skills needs of young individuals to support their transition. This hinders their ability to develop initiatives, tailored mentorship, and training programmes that actively support the career growth of the youth they work with. In instances where such assessments do exist, donor budgetary support may lack the flexibility needed to endorse these transition plans.



Overlooking Essential Capacities in Youth Engagement

The involvement of youth with organisations is often restricted to roles in project implementation, advocacy research, and decision-making. This neglects the crucial aspect of instilling relevant soft skills and other essential capacities that empower youth to thrive beyond their association with a specific organisation.



Limited Opportunities and Accessibility Barriers in Practical Training for Youth

Comprehensive internship programmes and fellowships for young people to undergo practical training are limited. Even when such opportunities are available, the requirements often disqualify or restrict the participation of youth volunteers from underprivileged backgrounds and communities, further exacerbating the gaps in accessibility.

Members of the Collective Action Learning group have not only identified gaps but have also actively designed and are implementing solutions within their organisations to effectively support youth transitions. Together, they propose recommendations that youth-led and youth-serving organisations can adopt to inform their work, ensuring support for youth to age up instead of aging out.

“When we design programmes that give young volunteers an opportunity to understand and experience all aspects of a project through different roles, we help them build a better idea of their future careers and pursue it.”

- Action Learning Cycle 4 Member -



To reduce these gaps, the group proposes a set of recommendations to support organisations that are open and willing to improve their practices on how to successfully transition youth.

Recommendations

A. Coaching & Training

Implement continuous training and coaching initiatives, such as skills-building programmes, to empower youth volunteers. These programmes should cover essential skills including CV writing, project management, business planning, research & evaluation, administration, finance, and other leadership skills. By providing these skills, we empower youth to have transferable skills and practical experience to secure job opportunities and take an active role in their transition.

B. Building a Transition Framework and Share Opportunities

Commit to creating institutional and operational youth transition plans that empower youth through diverse approaches. This commitment includes offering career training, connecting youth to other networks and alliances, and proactively sharing relevant professional opportunities with your youth volunteers. These opportunities include internships, job vacancies, mentorships, youth fellowships, and other relevant resources that align with their professional and career development. This must be an intentional effort.

C. Defining Clear Roles for Youth Work and Compensate Youth Work

Create and promote clear professional roles, responsibilities, and terms of reference for youth workers in your organisation. This will enhance the credibility and employability of the youth you work with. Additionally, offer financial and non-financial (supporting youth to access conferences, training, etc) incentives to your youth workers and volunteers, including compensation for skilled work that is typically reserved for consultants.

While these recommendations may not be exhaustive, they provide a foundation for parties involved in the SRHR field to consider. We encourage you to share and, where relevant, incorporate some of these suggestions into your ongoing efforts in Youth Transition for Capacity Development.

