

Action Learning Cycle #7

Compensating Youth Work: What does compensation look like, and what processes does that involve?

February 2024

(Source: YIELD research findings and YIELD Theory of Change)

"The success of many youth-focused and youth-led interventions depends on the contributions of numerous youth who operate voluntarily. Compensating their work is not only the right thing to do but also a means of sustaining their efforts and investing in their leadership."

- Past Cycle Member -

Discussion around compensating young people is not only a matter of equity but touches on the power dynamics, privilege, and inequality that exist when working with youth. [The State of Youth Civil Society](#) report, a global, youth-led publication, reveals growing inequality from the lack of compensation for youth work. The report findings show two things. First, not compensating youth creates inequality among people working in civil society, including the reproductive health and rights field. Second, despite inclusivity and representation being a major focus of youth initiatives, the sector tends to be predominantly led by young people with higher education and often from middle and upper-class socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, youth advocates and volunteers are often those who can afford to engage in unpaid roles, with those in underserved, less privileged positions and communities left behind.

Beyond this, and compared to adult allies or other employed youth within the Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR) field who hold paid positions, youth volunteers who serve in various volunteer capacities are disadvantaged as they may lose money, time, and other valuable opportunities. The lack of compensation invariably forces young people to take on multiple roles, contributing to stress and burnout. A YIELD project report on [young people advancing sexual and reproductive health: toward new normal](#) reveals the rather painful experience of some young people.

*"We need to **reconceptualise young people's input as "expertise" with inherent value** - and as something that shouldn't just come for free by default."*

- Past Cycle Member -

At the YIELD Hub, we believe that advancing youth partnership* includes compensating young people for their work. We acknowledge that young people bring essential knowledge and lived experience to improve AYSRHR.

Join this collective action learning group to reflect, discuss and learn how stakeholders within the AYSRHR field can compensate youth for their time and efforts, as well as what process and form such compensation should take. The cycle will also explore how to influence other organizations to compensate youth fairly and share collective learning on how to practically implement recommendations around adequately compensating young people.

* The YIELD Hub is using the term "partnership" to reflect the nature of relationships between all actors, including young people. It connotes equitable, mutually respectful, and beneficial relationships that allow stakeholders to work together and make complementary contributions to processes that lead to achieving the Hub's shared vision.