

Action Learning Cycle #8

Capacity Development For Youth Transition: How can organisations support youth leaders to age up and not out?

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

"I am growing tired of exclusively being seen and treated as a young person and only engaged on issues as they relate to youth. I have gained experience and expertise on a range of issues and want to transition to other kinds of roles."

(Young male informant from YIELD project)

Any definition of "youth" is intrinsically inadequate, as the experience of adolescence and young adulthood is as varied and diverse as young people themselves. This experience is conditioned by power and dynamics related to gender, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and other shapers of personal identity.

However, young people who participate in Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR) efforts experience engagement limitations based on their age. Many questions abound for organizations on how to ensure that youth leaders have ongoing access to mentors and professional accompaniment to prepare them to better transition into diverse fields of work within the AYSRHR ecosystem. At the YIELD Hub, we believe in strengthening youth partnerships* in the AYSRHR for beneficial relationships. Thus, we must continue exploring how AYSRHR stakeholders can initiate support mechanisms and processes to build young people's capabilities to transition to professional roles.

To achieve this, stakeholders within the AYSRHR must have a broader view and perspective of what youth participation is about. That is, understanding that youth participation is not only about engaging young people as partners or leaders but necessarily develops from a broad, foundational base, including providing relevant skills (capabilities) and opportunities to apply them (agency). When young people have the relevant skills and opportunities, they age up into professional roles within the AYSRHR ecosystem and not age out.

Stakeholders within the AYSRHR must continue providing training to build youth knowledge, skills, and capabilities. However, they must move a step further by intentionally designing and fostering supportive environments that allow young people to exercise their agency and apply their knowledge, skills, and capabilities in more professional and paid roles, thus becoming genuine contributors to AYSRHR efforts in the long term. In the absence of such a transition, youth aging out affects the stability of youth-led organizations and their adult allies.

At the YIELD Hub, we researched this topic and had young people speak out about what they want. In our report on [young people advancing sexual and reproductive health: toward a new normal](#), the youth seek more answers on how they can transition into professional roles. They want to be more than "youth experts." Young people want to use their evolving skills to participate in AYSRHR efforts in more diverse ways, reinforcing the need to provide training that exposes young people to specialized competencies and allows them to build skills that prepare them to lead their own initiatives or assume influential organizational positions.

Join this collective action learning group to reflect, discuss and learn how stakeholders within the AYSRHR field can deliver ongoing layered approaches that build young people's personal, technical, and functional capabilities – and enable them to transition into professional opportunities. The group will understand, from other organizations' experiences, how to better support young people to take up leadership roles. What does the process look like? How do we usher the change in mindsets? How do we operationalize it?

* 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.