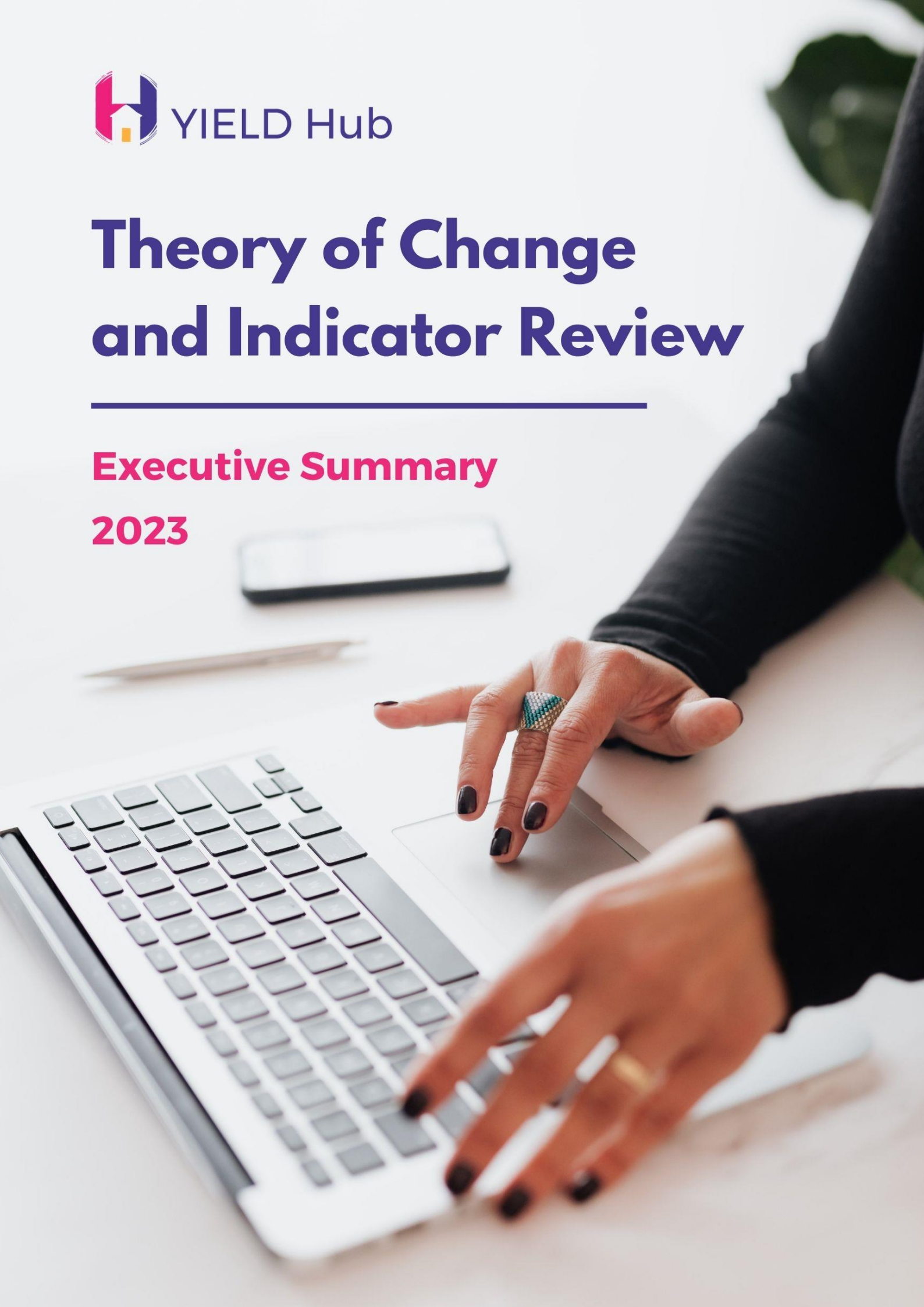




Theory of Change and Indicator Review

Executive Summary
2023





ACRONYMS

AYSRHR Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

SRHR Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

ToC Theory of Change

YIELD Youth Investment, Engagement, Leadership and Development

INTRODUCTION

The Hub is currently looking to review and update its theory of change and indicators to respond to developments in the youth leadership and AYSRHR space.

This ToC is a proposed tool for the Adolescent and Youth SRHR field, with the indicators to become alive once they are adopted by organizations in their strategies, work plans, programs, etc. As part of this, the YIELD Hub conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders who have been part of its collective action learning journey. A total of **33 organisations from 5 action learning cycles** participated in the review.

The questions sought to understand the extent to which the YIELD Hub indicators could provide data for evaluation, with defined baselines, responsibilities, data sources and timelines. They also sought to assess the extent to which the current YIELD Hub Theory of Change was fit for purpose, with regards to emerging trends and good practices in youth partnership globally.



FINDINGS

Relevance of Indicators

The indicators are relevant and helpful in measuring changes that result from working with young people.

Most respondents agreed that the indicators were relevant and helpful in measuring changes and the impact of working with young people. The quantitative indicators were the easiest to understand and replicate. Partners also saw relevance in the focus of the YIELD Hub's indicators on youth, with their own areas of focus as well as good practices in measuring change in the youth partnership field.

Partners do not have the capacity to collect data on some of the sample indicators (especially qualitative) due to the absence of sources of data.

Respondents experienced difficulties in understanding and utilising some of the qualitative sample indicators due to the absence of sources of data and a lack of measurement capacity. Some respondents highlighted that the indicators were not realistic, and that they lacked clarity in some instances.

There are too many indicators, they need to be fewer and focused on the most relevant.

Some interviewees highlighted that there were too many indicators in the list of sample indicators and the document lacked guidance on which indicators were of higher priority than others. They noted that some indicators were duplicative whilst others did not seem relevant or important in demonstrating progress.

The framework is gender-blind

The indicator framework was criticised as being gender-blind, in that it did not disaggregate data in a way that could help partners track progress towards gender transformation.

Coherence of Indicators

Most of the indicators are detailed and are attributable to the theory of change.

Most respondents agreed that the indicators were detailed and were easy to attribute to the YIELD Hub Theory of Change. Respondents lauded the way in which the indicators empowered them to collect data, and how easy they were to translate to their data collection work.

Some data will be difficult to collect because of a lack of clarity of indicators, especially qualitative indicators.

Partners identified the qualitative and compound indicators as difficult to define, when compared to the quantitative indicators in the framework. The process level and output level indicators were clearer and easier to understand. The absence of clear definitions and data sources for the measurement of the indicators made them difficult to use.

There are no targets or baselines for the sample indicators.

Most interviewees expressed concern about the lack of targets and baselines in the sample indicator framework. They noted that this was made worse by the lack of guidance on existing or potential sources of data for the different indicators.

There is no clarity on who is meant to collect data on different indicators and what the limitations of the YIELD Hub are in data collection.

The sample indicators did not provide sufficient guidance on which types of organisations were best placed to collect data on the different indicators. They also called for the clarification of timelines in the Theory of Change document, to help partners distinguish between short-term, medium-term, and long-term targets and related indicators.

It is difficult to measure changes in social norms or at societal level in general.

Partners called for caution in setting indicators and targets for social norms change. They warned that the direct work of the YIELD Hub could not be attributed for changing social norms and that their work as partners had similar limitations.

Recommendations to Update Indicators

New indicators to be added:

Partners made the following specific recommendations for indicators to add to the existing framework:

- Add a quantitative indicator to 'track decision-maker actions';
- Add an indicator on 'creating a safe-space for young people to be honest';
- Add indicator on attitude change measures linked to 'strengthening youth skills, knowledge and capabilities';
- Add an indicator on the 'operational inclusion of youth' to track how power is shared between adults and youth operationally;
- Add a quantitative indicator that can track 'decision-maker actions' that can be measured on-going process;
- Add an indicator that shows how the 'grant-making process benefits youth advocacy organisations/efforts/networks that are registered and unregistered' on a case-by-case basis;

- Add indicators that measure ‘co-creation between youth, allies and partners’;
- Add process indicators on ‘operational inclusion of youth that measures the professional advancement of youth’ and how power is shared between adults and youth;
- Add an indicator on ‘tracking indicator commitments following alliance or participation of youth’ to track how young people follow up on their commitments.

Existing indicators to be clarified:

Partners provided a broad range of recommendations on the types of clarifications they needed the indicator framework to incorporate as follows:

- Clarify how to track the number of youths with grant-making and decision-making roles within an organisation;
- Clarify the definition of youth-friendly laws;
- Clarify indicators on power-sharing and youth-centred funding;
- Clarify indicators that refer to ‘proportion of’, and explain how proportions will be measured;
- Clarify how to track the number of youths with grant-making and decision-making roles within an organisation;
- Simplify the indicator on ‘youth compensation is equitable and fair’, and break down the concepts to show the elements that bring change;
- Clarify indicator on measuring ‘SRHR knowledge’ and consider adjusting it to measure ‘comprehensive sexuality education’ instead;
- Clarify which types of organisations are best-placed to collect data on the different indicators;
- Break down difficult concepts to clarify the different elements that bring change in that area;
- Include definitions of different concepts to clarify the different elements that bring change in each area;
- Have short-term indicators at 3 years, medium-term indicators at 5 years, and long-term indicators at 7 years.

Indicators to be further explored:

For new areas of exploration, interviewees spoke to the need to:

- Consider segmenting indicators to reflect on gender, age, economic and geographic factors;
- Consider introducing indicators on child health and development in line with the life course approach;
- Introduce indicators that reflect on the linkage between climate and SRHR;
- Explore indicators that speak to co-creation between youth, allies, and partners.

Indicators to be removed:

Partners made specific recommendations for indicators to be removed or revised for brevity. They were identified as follows:

- Reduce the number of indicators that track how well we make a case for youth engagement because there are several organisations driving work on this already;
- In the sample indicators, consider removing the health focused indicators as they are difficult to attribute to the work of the YIELD Hub;
- Remove indicators on GBV but include data collection on GBV as an advisory instead, to avoid the risks associated with untrained partners collecting data the wrong way.

Operationalising recommendations:

In bringing life to the recommendations, partners provided guidance on how the YIELD Hub could operationalise their suggested changes to the indicators.

- **Guidelines:** Partners advised the creation of guidelines for how qualitative and compound indicators should be measured.
- **Capacity:** Interviewees recommended their orientation as action learning cycle partners on the indicators and theory of change as part of their engagement.
- **Collaboration:** Partners suggested the creation of a partnership platform to collaboratively track progress on the indicators and to continue to develop measurement tools for youth partnership and youth contributions.

Relevance of Theory of Change

The theory of change is relevant to work on youth-adult partnerships, social norm changes and health outcomes in SRHR.

Most respondents agreed that the YIELD Hub Theory of Change was relevant to their work, and to emerging trends in the field of youth-adult partnerships in SRHR. They noted that its outcomes on changes in individuals, the SRHR ecosystem and society were in line with the outcomes and impact of their own theories of change.

The Theory of Change lacks nuance on specific adult-youth partnership related norms that are expected to change (e.g. adultism, biases, etc.).

Interviewees criticised the framework for not reflecting on the complexities associated with youth-adult partnerships, and the norms that would need to be addressed to create an enabling environment for youth-adult partnerships.

The ToC focuses only on health field; however, it needs to reflect changes in education, civic engagement and more.

Interviewees were concerned that the ToC's focus on health was not an accurate reflection of the full range of changes that youth-adult partnerships can bring in the SRHR field.

The ToC doesn't reflect on the components that make youth partnership meaningful.

Partners highlighted the absence of clear rationale and guidelines on the YIELD Hub's concept of what are progressive youth partnerships. Some interviewees registered concern that the ToC did not refer to youth in their diversity or acknowledge differences within and amongst youth.

The ToC doesn't reflect on how youth partnerships and contributions can support the localisation agenda.

Some interviewees highlighted gaps in the outcomes with regards to how youth partnership can support the localisation of international development work. They urged the ToC to reflect on how youth partnerships and contributions can support the localisation agenda.

Power-sharing is referenced in the graphic but not expressed in a practical way.

Partners were concerned about the lack of depth in reflection on power-sharing within the ToC. They highlighted that the sample indicators provided some detail on how power-sharing would be measured, but that this was not sufficiently reflected in the ToC.

The ToC does not reflect on technological advances.

Interviewees noted a lack of reflection in the ToC on the role of technological advances in advancing youth partnership. They urged the YIELD Hub to reflect on the influence of digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence, and connectedness on youth-adult partnerships and SRHR outcomes.

The ToC does not reflect on issues of SRHR justice, and the engagement/inclusion of adolescents below the age of 18 years.

Some partners identified the need for the ToC to speak to emerging issues on SRHR, including SRHR justice. They urged the YIELD Hub to also consider including adolescents below the age of 18 years.

The ToC does not reflect on the challenges that we are trying to address.

Interviewees raised concern on the absence of challenges/problems in the graphic of the ToC. They identified the need for the YIELD Hub to reflect on the key issues, needs and challenges that were at the route of the solutions proposed in the ToC.

The ToC is too broad.

The general criticism of the ToC document was that it was too broad and didn't provide the specificity required for partners to prioritise their actions. Interviewees were concerned that the outcomes in the document could not be directly attributed to the work of the YIELD Hub.

The ToC does not reflect on the value-add of meaningful youth partnership.

One organisation highlighted the need for the ToC to include a reference to the value-addition of youth partnership, possibly in the outcomes.

The ToC doesn't reflect on climate change and SRHR linkages.

Some partners reflected on the absence of a reference to climate change and SRHR linkages in the ToC document. They noted that climate change issues were closely correlated to SRHR outcomes and had a bearing on youth partnership.

Coherence of Theory of Change

It is laid out plainly and easy to understand.

Most respondents agreed that the ToC was easy to follow and understand. They noted that the framework did not have a lot of jargon and that it was clear enough to be shared with a wider audience.

The introduction to the theory of change doesn't provide practical advice on how to read and understand it.

Some interviewees noted that the introductory pages of the ToC document did not provide enough guidance for users of the document to know how to use it effectively. They highlighted that any young person reading the document would need to receive guidance so that they could understand what different concepts in the ToC meant.

Some elements of the ToC are mixed up and difficult to understand.

Some partners experienced difficulties in understanding the ToC due to the lack of clarity on some components of the framework. They noted that the arrows and inputs had missing links and that the underlying assumptions were difficult to explain to an external audience.

Recommendations to Update Theory of Change

Increase depth of theory of change:

Partners advised the YIELD Hub to consider making the following changes:

- Identify and include activities that provide a positive sense of belonging for young people who are collaborating with YIELD including positive norms;
- Reflect on the interlinkages between climate change and SRHR;
- Include a focus on child health and young parents from the perspective of the life-course;
- Reflect nuances on specific adult-youth partnership related norms that are expected to change including adultism and associated biases;
- Broaden the range of changes reflected in the outcomes to include changes in education, civic engagement and economic empowerment;
- Reflect on how youth partnerships and contributions can support the localisation agenda;
- Reflect on the future of SRHR and the different levels of power and funding;
- Reflect on technological advances including digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence and their effect on SRHR;
- Reflect on issues of SRHR justice, especially looking at young leaders and young partners;
- Reflect on the engagement/inclusion of adolescents below the age of 18 years;
- Reflect on the challenges that are affecting the field of youth-adult partnerships and have them on the left of the graphic;
- Reflect on the factors that need to be addressed to create an enabling environment that affirms and enables young people's agency and protects them from risks;
- Develop a culturally adaptable theory of change that is comprehensive and easy to apply;
- Include a reflection on the anti-rights movement;
- In the pathways reflect on supporting youth-initiated contributions;
- Consider skills development beyond professional skills;
- Reflect on the importance of inclusive governments in creating an enabling environment;
- Include inward-looking aspects for the YIELD Hub in terms of staffing and the advisory board;
- Consider including justice, inclusivity, safety, and rights.

Improve design of Theory of Change:

Partners made recommendations for the improvement of the design of the Theory of Change as follows:

- Create a separate category for social norms;
- Reflect expected changes in the short-term, medium-term and long-term;

- Create spheres of influence that clarify the inputs and outcomes where the YIELD hub will have a direct influence and where it won't have an influence over.

Increase clarity of Theory of Change:

Interviewees identified areas in the ToC that did not have clarity and needed to be updated for ease of understanding. The suggestions they made were as follows:

- Create a one-pager that explains what the assumptions of the ToC are and hold periodic reviews update the assumptions;
- Provide an explanation of the different components in the ToC including the arrows, interacting elements and key terms;
- Explain what power-sharing means in practical terms;
- Reflect on the components that make youth engagement meaningful;
- Clarify the audience segments in the ToC;
- Integrate advocacy so that there is a linkage between the different actions;
- Add barriers/challenges more clearly in the document;
- Reflect the different categories of youth that are targeted in the ToC.

Improve content of theory of change:

In areas that did not have substantial content, partners made recommendations to strengthen the existing content in the ToC as follows:

- Change the language from youth participation to youth engagement or partnership to reflect on the need to move away from tokenistic engagement of youth;
- Include reference to young people enjoying and fulfilling their potential as one of the outcomes in the ToC, which may encompass educating and advocating in their communities;
- Include reference to organisations in the YIELD Hub being invited to define key terms as per their contexts.

Increase utility of Theory of Change:

The final set of recommendations from partners focused on increasing utility of the Theory of Change. Their suggestions were as follows:

- Share the ToC document and orient partners on it at the start of Action Learning Cycles. Partners will need to be given guidance on how to use it, and provided with support as they reflect/embed it in their work;
- The YIELD Hub should consider breaking down information on the ToC in different languages.

NEXT STEPS

The YIELD Hub team explored the findings of the interviews and resolved to adapt the recommendations to the context of the YIELD Hub's work. They appreciated the depth and breadth of insights shared but heeded caution to ensure that the team prioritised recommendations that had a direct relevance to the YIELD Hub's work going forward.

In operationalising the recommendations, the team agreed on the following steps:

- 1.** The **timeline of the Theory of Change** will be 1 year (short-term), 3 years (medium-term), and 5 years (long-term). The changes will be made to the Theory of Change document and in the list of sample indicators;
- 2.** A **draft Theory of Change** will be shared with partners for review and validation. The Theory of Change will be focused on the entire youth partnership field and not the YIELD Hub. The YIELD Hub team will build out engagement activities to raise awareness on and increase use of the Theory of Change.
- 3.** The YIELD Hub team will finalise the **revised list of sample indicators** with partners, with a focus on indicators that partners have the capacity to collect data on. The team will build out engagement activities to raise awareness and increase collaboration in the use of the sample indicators.