

## ACTION LEARNING CYCLE #5

# Compensating Youth Work

## Recommendations from Action Learning Group Members

It is inappropriate for young people to spend their personal pocket money on the work they do for Donors and INGOs. The eight organisations who participated in the YIELD Hub’s 5th Collective Action Learning Cycle agreed with this and affirmed their commitment to advancing youth partnership by compensating young people for their work. They acknowledge that young people bring essential knowledge and lived experience to improve Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHR) work and must be compensated fairly. Recognising fair compensation helps establish trust and accountability between volunteers/young people and their allies.

*“Whenever we think about different opportunities that we create for youth advocates, which is what we call the volunteers, we think critically about what kind of work it is. If it's the same thing that a staff member would be doing, we try to push for a budget for the young person to be compensated.” - Action Learning Cycle 5 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 support and improve their work on youth compensation.

**CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality:** Engaged their network of stakeholders which includes INGOs and youth-led organisations, using journey mapping to illustrate the importance of providing youth-friendly funding/compensation to enable meaningful and inclusive youth participation.

**Restless Development:** As part of a new youth strategy, their team is developing a comprehensive and institutional approach to compensating their youth volunteers. The strategy will also include a capacity development assessment needs of youth to ensure continuous and sustainable career support for young volunteers working across all Restless Development projects.

**Paediatric-Adolescent Treatment Africa:** Established a new youth task force that surveyed and identified the priorities of young people regarding compensation. The outcomes of this survey have informed further engagement with their donors and specific government-funded projects to ensure that upcoming budgets and activities factor in compensation for their work.

**REAL JUSTICE+:** Currently implementing a training program for REAL JUSTICE country coordinators to enhance their capacities and skills, measurable through a skills development assessment. Also, securing additional funding to support their programmes, which includes compensating the work of the youth coordinator and volunteers.





**Young Women in Action:** Successfully developed a policy guideline for youth compensation and secured the approval of the organisation's board to ensure all future projects and activities factor in compensation for all youth volunteers working with the organisation.



**SERAC-Bangladesh:** Initiated the process of engaging their current donors to emphasise the importance of compensating youth work, aiming to secure extra flexible funding that can support capacity development and fair compensation for their youth volunteers.



**Engender Health:** Identified and motivated youth volunteers and peer educators, connecting them to professional opportunities that can help them advance in their careers, and putting in place guidelines to compensate youth for their work within the organisation.



**Plan International** is on a journey of becoming a youth centred organisation. As part of this internal transformation Plan is reviewing all policies and procedures to ensure that there are supportive policies in place that recognise, support and value young people's contributions.

Beyond their institutional action learning goals to improve youth compensation within their work, the group members also identified some field-wide gaps when it comes to compensating youth work.

**The group has identified the gaps and challenges that hinder the fair compensation of youth work in the broader youth engagement field.**

## The Gaps

### Lack of Support for Overhead Costs



Donors often undervalue the expertise of young individuals, providing funding only for specific project outcomes. This neglects the overhead costs of running youth-led organizations and compensating youth staff or volunteers. Investments should prioritize growth and development beyond individual projects and promote fair compensation. The results of youth work should be intentionally highlighted to donors.

### Lack of Standards and Guidelines



The absence of guidelines for youth work compensation is problematic. With no clear direction on effective compensation methods, whether it should always be financial, or how to plan for it, organisations struggle to find the best approach. The lack of a unified strategy makes determining the optimal compensation strategy challenging.



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

## Recommendations

### A. Develop Compensation Guidelines & Implement Policies

Effective youth work compensation requires clear internal policies and guidelines. These should define compensation, outline methods, and consider legal and cultural contexts of the countries where these young people work. These policies must be approved and operational at the organisation's highest level.

### B. Adopt Diverse Compensation Strategies

Organisations should reward youth contributions with diverse strategies. This includes remuneration for skilled tasks, allowances for project support costs, offering skill training opportunities, covering online course costs, providing career growth mentorships, and linking youth to scholarships and professional development programs.

### C. Collective Advocacy

Youth work compensation should be a joint effort of donors, INGOs, implementers, and youth-led organisations. All should advocate for youth compensation as a key principle in meaningful youth participation and partnerships. Part of this advocacy includes measuring the impact of "meaningful youth work" and compensation, highlighting their effect on overall impact.

*"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."*

- Action Learning Cycle 5 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 compensate youth work fairly.

