

Board of Trustees
03-04 March 2021

Refers to
agenda item 3

Agenda Item:

Summary:

Empowering young people in the realization of their sexual and reproductive health and rights is a strategic priority for IPPF. As we approach the end of the current strategic framework period, it is important to reflect on key learnings and initiatives to ensure young people have a space to lead and partner in all areas of IPPF's work.

This paper presents examples of good practices implemented across the Federation in meaningful youth participation (MYP) including a case study from IPPF Member Association in Uganda (RHU). Feedback from reviews and consultations with young people is also included as well as some of the interventions planned to build on existing learnings and bring an organizational cultural shift whereby young people can engage at all levels; including Secretariat and MA programming, management and governance.

Action Required:

The Board to note the report and provide inputs into future interventions to ensure MYP in IPPF.

1. IPPF Youth Engagement –Overview of Progress To Date

IPPF's Strategic Framework (2016-2022) identifies young people and their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as a high priority. This was further supported by the Business Plan which identified three initiatives – increasing access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), establishing a Youth Social Venture Fund and strengthening youth leadership – all led by Member Associations (MAs). As we approach the culmination of the Strategic Framework period, it is important to reflect on the key learnings over the past five years and specifically on strategies to ensure young people have a voice and space to lead and partner in all areas of IPPF's work including in governance and decision-making processes.

Several tools which underpin IPPF's commitment to a youth-centre approach have been developed and widely disseminated internally and externally. In 2017, IPPF produced the '[Young People at the Centre](#)' guide to ensure young people are at the heart of implementing IPPF's Strategic Framework.

Based on the learnings from 'Young People at the Centre', IPPF European Network (EN) created a [YCA Toolkit](#) which served to improve the confidence and capacity of young people and adults to expand youth participation and a youth-centred approach in MAs. The YCA Toolkit has been adapted by other regions seeking to improve their youth centeredness; specifically the module which is aimed at EDs, Board Members, staff managers and anyone in an organization who is involved in the coordination of youth programming.

At the General Assembly in December 2019, youth representatives launched a new IPPF Youth Manifesto. The Manifesto summarized the responses from an open online consultation with over 16,000 young people from around the world, reflecting the concerns and needs of young people. The Manifesto aims to be a rallying document for youth engagement calling for “Nothing for Us Without Us”.

Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) has also been central to the success of programmes implemented globally, regionally and in many MAs. At the core of MYP is ensuring that young people are central to the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives and equal partners in decision-making. Examples of this have been MA and regional youth networks such as the youth advocacy movements (YAMs) in Africa or the YSAFE network in EN.

- In Benin and Central African Republic, high-level Youth-led advocacy as part of Jeunes S3 has resulted in better prioritization of young people’s SRHR at the community and district levels, including through budget allocation for ASRHR by municipal authorities. This initiative has provided an entry point for increased youth participation which saw a total of 561 young people meaningfully involved in planning, implementing and evaluating the projects in both countries. In addition, MA YAMs in Africa have partnered with AfriYan to advocate for the prioritization of young people and their SRHR needs during the COVID lockdown.
- From 2018 – 2020, MAs in EN have expanded their work on youth participation and youth-centred approaches. Despite the pandemic restrictions, YSAFERS (EN’s Youth Network) have been hard at work over the past few months, writing and recording a pilot series of their first ever podcast, exploring different aspects of sexuality through the central idea of sex positivity. This has been developed, by young people, for young people. YSAFE also worked on a capacity-building initiative on advocacy. In Tajikistan, 26 members of the MA youth group received training on advocacy skills from their core participant. Young people also played a role in the MA’s efforts to secure permission from the domestic Ministry of Education to conduct sexuality education sessions.
- Other examples include a regional Youth Forum held in July 2019 by East-South East Asia & Oceania Region (ESEAOR) to address challenges and opportunities for young people’s SRHR in the Region. In the Arab World Region (AWR), a regional youth network was established in June 2020, aimed at reinforcing youth leadership and capacities in the region. The newly created network has 30 young leaders from across the region, who are active “agents of change” in their respective communities and MAs. The network is composed of young people who are members of MA boards and holds regular (virtual) meetings where young people discuss issues related to their role and participation in their MAs and other general SRHR and youth issues.

2. Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU): A MYP Case Study

RHU has put the principles outlined in the YCA and Manifesto into practice as follows:

a) Governance and Youth Engagement Strategy

RHU is governed by a volunteer body whose constitution is based on a bottom-up approach. Key structures include (i) the National Council where young people are represented by 22 people (4 youth); (ii) the National Executive Committee (NEC) with a composition of 9 people of whom 2 are young people; (iii) the Programs and Finance Committee; (iv) the Branch Executive Committees; and (v) the

Youth Action Movement (YAM). These structures are established in all 18 branches, with at least two young people's representatives on each committee. These structures are responsible for policy formulation as well as providing oversight. In addition, gender equality is mandatory across all committees.

The YAM is a vibrant committee which acts as an umbrella structure comprised of youth volunteers between 10-24 years old who are responsible for coordinating youth activities in the different RHU branches. As a member, a young person is able to access different services such as training, participating in youth camps, etc. RHU actively invests in building young people's capacity in the areas of teamworking, collaborative participation, leadership and management. Every three years, elections for different YAM leadership positions are held where any young person can stand for elected office.

b) Programming and management

RHU's Gender & Youth department oversees the mainstreaming of young people's participation and is headed by a Manager who works with youth officers and youth counsellors across all the different RHU branches. This administrative structure supports the flow of information from the volunteers to management and vice versa and has been instrumental in ensuring effective youth-centred decision making within RHU.

Young people are directly involved across RHU's programme cycle as follows:

- (i) **Membership:** RHU has built partnerships with universities, secondary schools and youth organisations to attract young people as interns, volunteers, YAM participants, or as full members of staff.
- (ii) **Programme planning and resource mobilisation:** Young people are involved in different planning processes from community, to district and national processes including in the development of Annual Programmes and Budget (APBs) and branch level implementation plans. The YAM develop action plans which are directly supported under RHU institutional core grant as "Strengthening Adolescent Services (SAS).
- (iii) **Implementation and Monitoring:** Young people support peer-education or peer-provision, and more recently virtual programmes, focusing on disseminating SRHR information and direct service delivery. Community health entrepreneurial programmes have been established to build the capacity of young people and equip them to provide essential medicines including short acting contraceptives. RHU has established youth advisory committees (YACs) comprising of youth volunteers and YAM members to track implementation of programmes with specific focus on ensuring youth-centredness. Their feedback and recommendations inform organisational decision-making.
- (iv) **Communication and advocacy:** Young people are involved in advancing the SRHR agenda through supporting RHU's communication and advocacy efforts. They create youth-led documentation of salient SRHR issues and organize events within their communities. In addition, young people have been trained in youth-led social accountability where they directly hold duty bearers accountable to take actions aimed at improving adolescent SRHR including policy formulation or programmatic operations.

Some of the key lessons from RHU's work in MYP include:

- (i) **Continuous capacity building of staff in youth-adult partnership is critical for supporting MYP:** RHU just like other organisations experience staff turnover while also relying on staff with various professional backgrounds. This, therefore, calls for regular capacity building in

- youth-adult partnership among staff as a means of reinforcing open and respectful relationships and interactions with young people.
- (ii) **Attaining meaningful youth participation with adequate gender representation requires a deliberate effort:** RHU has learnt over time that to attain meaningful youth participation in its operations requires purposeful action including youth equitable policy formulation, designation of resources, designation of human resource to monitor and track institutional performance on indicators of young people and capacity building rather than it being left to happen organically.
 - (iii) **Young people have the ability to perform if they are, empowered, trusted and given space:** In all its operations, the MA has come to appreciate that once young people’s capacity is built, and they are trusted and given space to implement their ideas, they can perform. This has been evident at times when young people have designed and effectively led implementation of some IPPF projects. It is critical for their needs and perspectives to be recognised and included. As a result of young people’s involvement in RHU, the MA’s interventions are more relevant, acceptable and sustainable over the longer run. They are also culturally relevant, and more dynamic in addressing their aspirations.
 - (iv) **Young people are not homogeneous.** The way young people can be involved depends largely upon their levels of exposure, level of education, their expectations and their values, motivations, as well as their level of gender socialization. This in turn affects the way the interventions should be designed and carried out.
 - (v) **Gender, age and other vulnerability considerations are important in MYP:** It is critical to acknowledge the effect and influence of gender, age as well as other possible vulnerabilities on interventions, and these should be factored into any successful intervention
 - (vi) **Partnerships** with likeminded CSOs, youth led community organisations, government and development partners are essential for sustainability.

3. IPPF as a Youth-Centred Organisation – Where next?

As we can see in the earlier sections of the paper, much has been done across IPPF in strengthening YMP; and MAs, like RHU, have shown what can be achieved through strong organisational commitment. Yet, we haven’t been able to bring these experiences together into a cohesive and Federation-wide approach; leveraging these to create a real cultural shift whereby young people can engage at all levels including Secretariat and MA management and governance.

In 2019 an [independent consultant](#) was hired to review IPPF’s current progress towards achieving a youth-centred approach, based on the IPPF “Youth at the Centre” framework which is at the heart of implementing IPPF’s Strategic Framework. This included field visits to two of IPPF’s offices – in London and ESEAOR. In summary, the review found that:

“IPPF has made some notable progress in disseminating the YCA - particularly related to the widespread language and knowledge about IPPF’s policy on youth representation on boards. However, there is a need for transitional support and recognition for youth volunteers/ staff for when they turn 25+ to ensure they do not feel obsolete. This could pave the way for a pipeline and or more formalized mentorship program. There is a need for to prioritize YCA implementation in terms of investment with both financial and human resources”.

An additional recommendation included making the YCA framework more accessible, to ensure that various staff and volunteers know how to answer the question ‘how does this apply to my work?’. This is an area which needs to be strengthened, from HR to Programmes.

Some key interventions/initiatives planned include:

Youth Forums (YF)

Discussion around the YF has been ongoing in 2020 in connection with Regional Forums. Feedback collected from young people have highlighted requests for:

- A collective youth-led space in IPPF's new governance structure;
- Meaningful engagement in IPPF's strategic direction & priorities; and
- Holding IPPF to account on youth & youth priorities.

IPPF Business Plan Solution 3.3 – IPPF Youth Networks

Solution 3, initiative 3 is to build funded IPPF youth networks that will engage young people to create a supportive environment for meaningful participation in programmes, advocacy and decision-making processes within and outside MAs. This work was tendered out in 2019, with FHOK awarded the leadership of this work

Between November 2019 and March 2020, FHOK started the process of setting up the Youth Participation Centre. Due to the suspension of FHOK, DLT agreed that, rather than a new tender process, funds would support existing networks to consolidate their actions into a youth movement that will shape youth leadership in IPPF. Work is currently underway to identify the mechanism for this and a focus group discussion with young people will be held in early March 2021 to ensure they design and drive the entire process.

Youth staffing, internships and opportunities

Recruitment for a Youth, Global Lead is in process with more than 300 applications received and interviews planned for March 2021.

Under the scope provided by the Business Plan and reform process, work has started on the development of a youth internship programme in line with the YCE approach across the Federation. In this regard, policy documents and terms of reference have been developed for IPPF youth interns and professional youth programmes have been established with the overall aim of empowering young people in SRHR, leadership, advocacy, and programming. These will contribute to the Federation's transformation into a fully sustainable youth-centred organization. This initiative will be piloted at the Africa Regional Office and in two MAs in 2021.

The Arab World will also assist MAs in developing youth recruitment policies (including youth internships as well as partnerships with universities and research centers), to develop a training module on youth empowerment and engagement in governance targeting all MA volunteers (including young people), and to reinforce youth participation in IPPF forums.