



Striving to Develop Partnerships Rooted in Trust and Flexibility

Introduction

Recognizing that the voices of young people in Nepal were often ignored, Visible Impact, a youth-led Nepalese organization, has strived to work with the government and other key stakeholders to ensure that adolescents and youth sexual and reproductive health needs are not overlooked. With support from YOUAccess, Visible Impact has used its platform to elevate the voices of young people to influence health policies and commitments.

Program Description

To break down the traditional funder-grantee relationship, PAI and Visible Impact endeavored to work together in a way that was rooted in trust and flexibility and addressed the power dynamics. As part of its partnership with PAI, Visible Impact aimed to influence the government of Nepal's FP2030 commitments and a provincial health bill. Visible Impact took the lead on creating its advocacy strategy, while PAI provided advocacy technical assistance and strategic guidance.

Allowing Visible Impact to identify and address the opportunities it believed to be most important — rather than being told by PAI, the funder, what to do — was the first step in creating a trusting relationship. As Visible Impact and PAI continued to work together, they established regular communication, each sharing their reflections on the work. PAI supported Visible Impact as the organization implemented its advocacy strategy, helping it address challenges and find new avenues for reaching key stakeholders.

Building this rapport was especially helpful when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The work that Visible Impact initially planned was stalled. In-person meetings stopped, and government priorities shifted. Because Visible Impact and PAI had spent time building their relationship, they could have an honest conversation about what was needed as both organizations faced new ways of working. Visible Impact requested to revise its work plan and use the remaining funding to be able to assist in its pandemic response. Because PAI and Visible Impact spent time building trust, PAI was happy to provide the flexibility needed to help Visible Impact navigate the uncertainties of the pandemic.

As the world began to reopen, PAI offered additional funding to Visible Impact for its advocacy work that had stalled. Together, Visible Impact and PAI discussed how best to move forward: Did it make sense to continue the advocacy work that was underway in 2019 or take advantage of new opportunities? Utilizing the relationships that Visible Impact had made with government officials, key stakeholders and young people, it could build off its previous advocacy activities and expand its work into new areas.

“PAI has always been very flexible and adaptive to the situation, and they allow us to make modifications and changes as per our need, which not only is great, but also unique to the current world of grantee-partner relationships. As the situation is so dynamic, and the change is inevitable ... I feel like there is a very supportive environment within YOUAccess, and we can share any problems, issues or challenges with the YOUAccess team honestly and freely.”

— SHILPA LAMICHHANE, VISIBLE IMPACT

Results

Building trusting relationships helped Visible Impact and PAI successfully navigate their work when priorities shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even when work shifted, Visible Impact quickly prioritized new activities, knowing that PAI trusted Visible Impact to make decisions that were best for the organization and the work.

PAI's support helped Visible Impact access spaces previously unavailable, and Visible Impact was asked to be the Youth Focal Point for FP2030 in Nepal.

Lessons Learned

Central to achieving a trusting partnership is recognizing power dynamics and creating space for each partner to share their thoughts and experiences without fear of ending the relationship.

Building a flexible partnership takes time, effort and recognition of each partner's strengths.

Trusting each other leads to a successful outcome.



Visible Impact envisions creating a visible impact on the lives of every girl, every woman and every youth by unleashing the social and economic leadership of girls, women and youth through beneficiary-partnered innovative interventions. More information can be found at www.visim.org.

PAI works with policymakers in Washington, D.C., and our network of global partners to advocate for accessible, quality health care and advance the sexual and reproductive rights of women, youth and at-risk communities. More information can be found at www.pai.org.

YOUAccess provides financial and technical support to youth-led organizations to advocate for increased funding and improved policies on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights in low- and middle-income countries. More information can be found at www.pai.org/projects/youaccess.