



# Youth-Led Advocacy to Advance RMNCAH-N Access and Accountability

## EVIDENCE BRIEF

### SECTION 1

#### **The state of adolescent and youth health and well-being in countries that receive funding from the Global Financing Facility (GFF)**

Of the 8.1 billion people living today, 4.5 billion (55.8%) are under the age of 35.<sup>1</sup> This large youth population is disproportionately located in the Global South, with the youngest and fastest-growing populations located in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where 70% of the population is under 30.<sup>2</sup> As these populations continue to grow, substantial gaps remain in meeting the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of adolescents and youth. According to UNICEF, only one in two adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) worldwide had their needs for modern family planning methods met. In West and Central Africa, the percentage falls to only one in four girls.<sup>3</sup>

While there has been global progress in reducing adolescent birth rates, the two regions with the highest rates (SSA; Latin America and the Caribbean) also experienced the smallest reductions, resulting in 97.9 and 51.4 births per 1000 girls, respectively, in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, adolescents often face significant discrimination when accessing reproductive health services, which undermines their rights and well-being. This discrimination can manifest variously in judgmental attitudes from healthcare providers, restrictive laws requiring parental consent, and societal stigma surrounding adolescent sexual activity. Cultural norms and lack of confidentiality further exacerbate the problem, making adolescents feel unwelcome and unsafe in healthcare settings. Evidence-based, high-impact practices to address these issues include comprehensive sexual education, policy reform, and the sensitization of healthcare workers to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all adolescents.

At the same time, the Global South is also disproportionately affected by malnutrition, with more than 30% of children under five experiencing stunting across the countries of SSA and South Asia, most of which are GFF partner countries.<sup>5</sup> These shocking statistics reflect the enormous challenges facing youth across the sexual, reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, adolescent health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N) landscape.

Positive change is underway. The development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals<sup>6</sup> and global health initiatives related to SRH among young people have led to an unprecedented mobilization of youth at all levels. This includes initiatives from the GFF, a country-led partnership hosted at the World Bank that aims to advance the health and rights of women, children, and adolescents.

The global community increasingly recognizes the unique value of involving young people in the design and implementation of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) solutions. For one thing, directly involving young people ensures that related laws, policies, programs, and services are contextually responsive and appropriate. This is because youth bring innovative approaches and critical data about real-world youth needs and preferences and are essential to identifying where there are gaps in services or barriers to access. Youth are also critical to tracking progress on policy implementation to ensure investments reach young people themselves. This collaborative approach enhances the responsiveness and appropriateness of initiatives, ensuring they meet the real needs of young people, and fosters a more inclusive and effective policy development process overall.

Despite recent strides in promoting youth partnerships to shape policy, much more needs to be done. In many countries, insufficient youth participation leads to inappropriate or ineffective policies. This lack of involvement ignores the firsthand experiences and needs of young people, creating a gap between policy decisions and the realities that youth face.

SECTION 2

GFF’s CSO and Youth Engagement Framework and Priorities

In the GFF’s multi-stakeholder approach, youth engagement is essential for meeting country objectives through Investment Cases, which the GFF defines as a description of the changes that a country wants to see in RMNCAH-N as well as a prioritized set of investments needed to achieve these results. Youth movements play a key role in ensuring Investment Cases are evidence-based, responsive to community needs, and in alignment with their national health strategies and policies. The GFF’s Youth Engagement Framework entails:

- Strengthening engagement of youth movements in the multistakeholder country platforms to shape the Investment Case implementation through dedicated technical assistance, dialogue, and government incentives.
- Leveraging GFF Secretariat staff and systems — including Liaison Officers, existing GFF coalitions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG) — to support youth-led advocacy and independent accountability efforts.
- Bolstering youth-led advocacy and accountability efforts by providing catalytic small grants, customized technical assistance and learning opportunities to youth-led organizations (YLOs), defined as organizations led by people aged 35 or younger.

These strategies for supporting youth movements, alongside increased funding and collaborative efforts like the Joint Learning Agenda<sup>7</sup>, demonstrate the GFF’s commitment to empowering young people and fostering meaningful partnerships with them. By actively involving YLOs, the GFF aims to help them drive positive change at the local, national, and global levels, facilitated by streamlined governance and support structures.

PAI<sup>8</sup> supports the work of the GFF by acting as the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Host for its funding and initiatives.

What is a GFF Investment Case?

An investment case is the description of the changes that a country wants to see in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and nutrition, as well as a prioritized set of investments needed to achieve these results.

The objective is to have a nationwide, evidence-based, prioritized plan with a clear theory of change and focus on results over a three-to-five-year period. This can take the form of one or several documents which build on existing national planning processes.

Summary of GFF NGO Host’s Youth Engagement (2022-2024)

The GFF NGO Host at PAI strives to enable CSOs and YLOs to maximize the impact of GFF investments.

	NUMBER OF GRANTS	% OF TOTAL GRANTS	TOTAL INVESTMENT (USD)	% OF TOTAL INVESTMENT
YLOS	17	33%	\$814,164	30%
CSO’S WITH YOUTH FOCUS	8	16%	\$449,126	17%

From 2022 to 2023, the NGO Host provided grant assistance, technical accompaniment, capacity-building, and network-strengthening support to 17 YLOs and an additional 8 CSOs with youth-focused advocacy projects. These organizations were selected through a transparent and inclusive yet competitive process that was co-designed and co-led by the CSCG Steering Committee, which is comprised of representatives primarily from GFF partner countries. In the same period, 30% of all funding went to the YLOs and an additional 17% went to the CSOs with youth-focused projects.

With GFF funding, many YLOs were able to achieve greater youth involvement and leadership in the advocacy process, with youth identifying their priorities and sitting with decision-makers to negotiate for better access, equity, and inclusion of services and information. The investment also helped YLOs to strengthen their organizational systems and technical capacity as well as to increase their visibility, legitimacy, and credibility. It enabled them build relationships with decision-makers and influencers, and in some cases meaningfully shaped policy and budget decisions.

Collectively, GFF-funded YLOs made a measurable impact. They reported 18 significant policy wins across the following areas:

- **Shaping priorities, policies, and budgets** to ensure the unique needs and perspectives of young people are addressed. YLO involvement fostered relevant, effective, and equitable solutions, promoted youth empowerment, and enhanced the responsiveness and accountability of health systems to the younger population.

**“We want to change the narrative of youth as volunteers, sources of data, and beneficiaries. We asked health facilities, ‘How do you engage youth in planning?’”**

– Arafat Kabugo, Naguru Youth Health Network (Uganda)

- **Driving decision-maker accountability**, which helps to amplify young people’s voices and monitor progress towards strengthening the implementation of health policies. YLOs that advocated for transparency and accountability from authorities helped to improve mutual trust and ensure government initiatives effectively address youth needs.
- **Engaging in the policy or budget-making process** to enhance the visibility and prioritization of youth perspectives and needs. YLO involvement promoted inclusive, relevant, and sustainable policies and fostered civic participation, which led to more effective and equitable health outcomes.
- **Generating significant data from community-led monitoring** to provide accurate, grassroots, and age-disaggregated insights into local health issues. This data is vital for evidence-based advocacy, which ensures policies and programs are grounded in real-world needs and experiences.
- **Building political will to support RMNCAH-N** by working to position youth issues in policy agendas. YLOs that foster relationships with policymakers and mobilize their support can drive legislative changes, secure funding, and promote sustainable health initiatives.
- **Developing a collective agenda among stakeholders** to strengthen alignment and collaboration among key actors, which helps maximize impact and resource efficiency. A unified approach ensures that efforts are cohesive, comprehensive, and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- **Building the capacity of YLOs and their local partners** to enhance skills and knowledge that better enable YLOs to navigate political processes, present evidence-based arguments, and engage policymakers. The more credibility YLOs can build, the better able they are to advocate for the integration of youth perspectives into health policies and programs.

Feedback and Reflections from GFF-funded YLO Partners

According to GFF-funded YLO partners, the engagement of youth leaders, YLOs, and other groups in GFF partner countries varies significantly from context to context. While some GFF partner countries have invested in well-established, multi-stakeholder country platforms that facilitate intergenerational dialogue, planning, and monitoring for the GFF, such structures are not uniformly present across all GFF countries.



**“People think about youth at the national stage as the most important or influential. If you go down to the community level, you not only get better results, but also the issues they raise are unique to the local context. There are a lot of strategy documents at the national level that do not trickle down. You need to be physically there engaging with youth to create strong leadership.”**

– Otuck William, Managing Director, Young and Alive Initiative (Tanzania)

Moreover, the capacity and coordination among YLOs also varies considerably: while some GFF countries have robust youth coalitions that enable information-sharing and joint advocacy efforts among youth, others struggle due to fragmentation among groups and insufficient technical and/or organizational capacity. The effectiveness of these coalitions often hinges on the availability of external funding and technical support, as well as upon the health of the overall civil society climate, which is politically restricted in several countries.

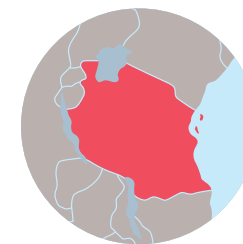
At the global level, there is a clear opportunity to strengthen youth-led advocacy for women’s, children’s, and adolescents’ health and for GFF resource mobilization. Despite notable progress, challenges persist with engagement, funding, and aligning global efforts with local contexts. Moreover, CSO and youth representatives in the GFF Investors Group — the global advisory board for the GFF composed of representatives of governments, UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, and other partners — still lack adequate capacity and resources, leading to limited representation of grassroots and non-traditional youth voices from the country level.

A common hurdle identified by YLO partners when conducting advocacy projects to improve RMNCAH-N outcomes for youth was the apparent lack of trust among governments, donors, and CSOs in youth leadership. Often, this was accompanied by the view that youth and adolescents were a problem to be solved rather than essential partners and stakeholders. YLOs have expressed that, while they are sometimes invited to meetings by the government or civil society, it is often to inform them of decisions that have already been made on what others have defined as “youth issues.” For example, while YLOs might be nominally engaged for work on teenage pregnancy or contraception, they may be entirely shut out of conversations around maternal mortality and nutrition, which are also relevant to their lives and contexts.

## SECTION 5

### GFF grantee spotlights

Key achievements from GFF-funded YLOs supported by the NGO Host at PAI include:



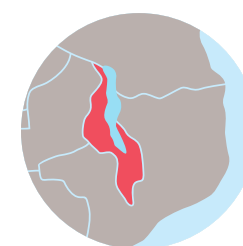
#### **YOUNG AND ALIVE INITIATIVE (YAI),<sup>9</sup> TANZANIA**

**Mobilized youth to collect and analyze data on health system services and created opportunity for youth to directly participate in shaping health policy at the sub-national level.**

In Tanzania, YAI engages youth to strengthen the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to advocate for scaling up youth-friendly SRH information and services.

With funding from the GFF, YAI identified and trained youth leaders to conduct advocacy, monitoring, and accountability activities across five regions. YAI and the youth leaders built relationships with health center staff and administrators, using a scorecard process to assess the quality of services and working together to analyze the data and highlight gaps. Their work was used to develop improvement plans for the facilities, which are currently being implemented. This process gave youth leaders legitimacy in their communities and created the opportunity for them to sit on health facility committees with the ability to influence services.

The youth leaders also held intergenerational community dialogues to challenge myths and misconceptions about contraception and to discuss gender and age dynamics that affect how, when, and who can access health services.



#### **RMNCAH-N YOUTH COALITION,<sup>10</sup> MALAWI**

**Increased youth group visibility and credibility for government actors, donors, and technical partners.**

Established in 2018, Malawi’s RMNCAH-N Youth Coalition has struggled to engage decision-makers due to limited capacity to participate in budgetary and policy formulation processes. In 2023, YICOD secured a pivotal GFF grant through PAI. To achieve three overarching goals: strengthen the coalition to lead evidence-driven advocacy in SRHR policy; bolster members’ proficiency in social accountability and policy dialogue to enhance service provision and resource management; and improve youth engagement in SRHR budgeting and policy determinations for the year 2024.

As a result, the RMNCAH-N Youth Coalition orchestrated a successful SRHR Dialogue with national authorities and pivotal stakeholders, amplifying awareness of youth reproductive health and securing governmental backing. Numerous partner CSOs sought out the coalition’s new budgetary analysis report for forthcoming collaborative advocacy initiatives. Additionally, the coalition presented a position paper and budgetary analysis to the Ministry of Finance during pre-budget consultations, signaling robust collaborative advocacy endeavors for fiscal year 2024–2025.

Through these efforts, the RMNCAH-N Youth Coalition not only heightened visibility on SRHR issues but also fostered a conducive environment for meaningful youth involvement in policy-making processes. The coalition’s proactive engagement with decision-makers and strategic alliances with partner CSOs solidified its commitment to effecting positive change in Malawi’s SRHR policy and service delivery landscape. By advocating for inclusive policies, securing resources, and building awareness, the coalition demonstrates how youth voices are integral to shaping a responsive and equitable SRHR framework.



**PAZ JOVEN,<sup>11</sup> GUATEMALA**  
**Supported adolescents and youth to develop their own training tools on issues that impact them.**

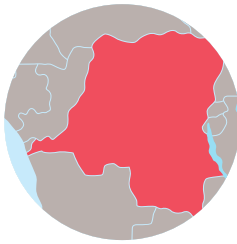
In Guatemala, where 61% of the population is under 30 years of age and where adolescents experience high pregnancy rates, Paz Joven engages young people to influence government policies impacting them at the local, regional, and national levels.<sup>12</sup> For context, data from Guatemala’s Reproductive Health Observatory revealed that in 2023, there were 60,017 recorded births for girls between 15–19 years old and an additional 2,289 for girls between 10–14.<sup>13</sup>

With funding from the GFF, Paz Joven began the process of updating its SRH training guide, developed by and for young people to provide comprehensive sexuality education. The guide, “I Inform Myself and Decide,” was updated using focus groups of young people, who shared their experiences and knowledge about how these issues are discussed and perceived in 15 municipalities nationwide. Ultimately, the YLO incorporated new modules on menstrual health and healthy masculinity into the training guide.

Paz Joven also coordinated with various actors, such as public educational centers; municipal offices for children, adolescents, and youth; women’s directorates; and health centers to train 388 young people from 14 municipalities in the use and validation of the new guide content.

**“In the past, we saw tokenism – just a picture saying that young people are involved without acknowledging their leadership and capacity for problem-solving. We find that there are no spaces for youth to set their own agenda in international spaces and big organizations. They decide what the agenda for youth will be.”**

– Innocent Grant, Young and Alive Initiative (Tanzania)



**YOUTH ALLIANCE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH,<sup>14</sup> DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (YARH-DRC)**  
**Improved coordination, alignment, and awareness of youth activities in the North Kivu province.**

YARH-DRC is a youth organization committed to advancing SRHR as well as the overall well-being of adolescents and young people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its area of operation in the North Kivu province is affected by ongoing conflict and is chronically unstable.

Using funds from a catalytic small grant provided by the GFF NGO Host at PAI in 2023, YARH-DRC has created a commitment framework to guide technical and financial partners in taking concrete steps to support the implementation of the provincial plan to scale youth-friendly SRH services in North Kivu. The framework is supported by a coalition of YLOs mobilized to track progress and hold commitment-makers accountable.

To better understand the local and regional organizational landscape, YARH-DRC completed a mapping of youth CSOs working in the reproductive health field. The mapping was strategically disseminated with several key stakeholders, including the provincial health authorities (Programme National de Santé de l’Adolescent in South Kivu) and its financial partners in North Kivu. These efforts improved coordination of youth activities, facilitated access to resources such as grants and training, strengthened advocacy capacity with concrete data, made reproductive health services more accessible, and fostered closer collaboration between CSOs and stakeholders.

The mapping initiative also helped YARH-DRC increase their visibility to donors and partners. As a result, YARH-DRC now enjoys stronger-than-ever credibility with the provincial Ministry of Health and excellent support from local authorities. It has been chosen to coordinate the adolescent and youth sub-committee within the provincial Family Planning Technical Working Group, as well as the provisional coordination of the working group.

## 5.1 GRANTEE IN-DEPTH SPOTLIGHTS

### IN-DEPTH SPOTLIGHT #1



**ALLIANCE NATIONALE DES JEUNES POUR LA SANTE DE LA REPRODUCTION (ANJ-SR/PF) (NATIONAL YOUTH ALLIANCE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH,<sup>15</sup> SENEGAL**

**Facilitated civic dialogue and budget monitoring and accountability initiatives to mobilize sub-national resources and support young people's health priorities.**

ANJ-SR/PF is a youth-led alliance based in Dakar, Senegal, that promotes SRHR for young people and vulnerable populations. Building on two previous successful projects funded by the PAI/GFF CSO Hub, ANJ-SR/PF received a third subgrant from the GFF NGO Host at PAI in 2022.

All of ANJ-SR/PF's GFF-funded projects have focused on the same municipalities, located in the priority regions of Sédhiou and Kolda identified in Senegal's Investment Case. The alliance's previous projects yielded notable outcomes, such as the development and implementation of the Youth Accountability Platform (YAP)—a tool allowing users to leverage data to identify issues and direct actions—in two districts. In 2021, ANJ-SR/PF received funding from the GFF CSO Hub to expand the platform to two additional districts in Senegal.

In practice, the YAP enables collection and analysis of data on the performance of youth and adolescent services using health system scorecards, which are then color-coded and published on the site. CSOs, YLOs, health providers, and other stakeholders can use the data to develop action plans to improve services in underperforming areas and measure progress made. The YAP health management team drives this process by regularly meeting with district partners to review data and develop interventions. Over the years, these efforts have led to meaningful and consistent engagement of youth in municipal accountability efforts and decision-making bodies. For example, eight young people now serve in formal, ongoing roles on municipal health commissions and health development committees.

Moreover, mayors from four communes have pledged budgetary allocations for youth health and nutrition in 2023. The municipality of Thiétty allocated 2,500,000 CFA franc (US \$3,700) in its 2023 budget to support services promoting health and nutrition for adolescents and young people. Thiétty allocated an additional 10,000,000 CFA franc (US \$15,000) to purchase two ultrasound devices, enabling local health facilities to provide services that pregnant women were previously forced to travel 40 kilometers (nearly 25 miles) to access. The municipality of Sédhiou allocated 4,500,000 CFA franc (US \$6,700) to support services promoting SRHR for adolescents and young people, including repairing toilets in a school identified by the female students as a menstrual hygiene management problem that negatively impacted their schooling.

Building on these advocacy wins, ANJ SR/PF's most recent project focused on youth-driven budget monitoring and accountability, which enables the youth alliance to advocate for timely disbursement of funds in connection with decision-makers' public pledges. The year-long initiative showed impressive results. ANJ SR/PF used project funds to train local authorities in the municipalities of Sédhiou and Thiétty on Senegal's Act of Decentralization. Then, each municipality devised and initiated its tax mobilization plan. In Thiétty, tax collection surged from 20% (2022) to 51.2% (October 31, 2023), surpassing the project's original 50% target. In Sédhiou, ANJ-SR/PF successfully secured funding disbursements from the municipality to build gender-inclusive bathrooms and enable girls at the Cherif Younouss Aidara school to experience menstruation with greater safety.

ANJ-SR/PF's experience demonstrates that advocacy outcomes benefit from sustained investment. By improving the credibility of youth advocates among local duty bearers, including on non-exclusively youth-related issues, the three consecutive GFF-funded projects fostered a more enabling environment for youth-led advocacy and accountability efforts. For example, the projects bolstered the youth alliance's technical capabilities by providing coaching for local authorities in fiscal space analysis and tracking tax mobilization across municipalities. Continued monitoring will be necessary to ensure timely disbursements from municipalities and transparent expenditure tracking.

### IN-DEPTH SPOTLIGHT #2



**NAGURU YOUTH HEALTH NETWORK (NYHN),<sup>16</sup> UGANDA**

**Established regional youth forums to foster local youth leadership and equip youth with the skills and tools to generate data on health service delivery and to engage directly with other stakeholders in decision-making spaces.**

Since 2018, NYHN has been working to organize young people aged 10–24 to advocate for high-quality SRH services in Uganda, where 78% of the population is under 30 years of age.<sup>17</sup> Over the last five years, NYHN has received a series of three grants that has allowed its team to develop and implement a community-led monitoring tool and to build a strong national and sub-national youth network that serves as a model for civil society in Uganda.

In 2019, NYHN led a three-district pilot of i-Report, an innovative tool that enables young people to develop key indicators and collect data on SRH service delivery, which advocates can use to engage decision-makers and improve service delivery. As a result, the GFF CSO Hub supported NYHN's larger 2021 rollout of i-Report in 10 districts across Uganda. During this project, youth monitors conducted more than 400 interviews with young people at 14 health facilities, and



worked with the facilities and other stakeholders to review client feedback, identify key issues or challenges in the data, and discuss how to address them. Together, they developed a joint action plan for improving the quality and accessibility of services provided. Within six months, three participating facilities had designated spaces for youth with dedicated health workers to support youth-friendly services, one facility began inviting youth to participate in monthly department meetings, and all 14 health facilities had committed to displaying a patient charter in the waiting areas.

In 2023, NYHN received a new GFF grant to build the capacity of Uganda’s national RMNCAH-N platform’s Adolescent Health Forum to support youth to engage directly with decision-makers at the district level. NYHN successfully operationalized subregional Adolescent Health Forums in three regions: Busoga (eight districts), Bukedi (seven districts) and Tooro (10 districts). NYHN engaged with health authorities in each district to establish meaningful, ongoing roles for youth leaders in District Committees on Adolescent Health (DICAHS). NYHN additionally provided youth leaders with training in leadership, advocacy, and governance so they can engage confidently as full members of DICAHS and advocate effectively for investments in adolescent SRH.

The Adolescent Health Forum has since become one of the most active and innovative forums of Uganda’s RMNCAH-N platform, leading to requests for capacity-building support from other forums to strengthen their structures and interventions. As the only national forum with subregional forums, the Adolescent Health Forum has also become a conduit for two-way engagement between CSOs working at the national level and local youth leaders and groups. Already, NYHN has worked with subregional Adolescent Health Forums to assess the uptake of postpartum family planning among young mothers and adolescents aged 15–24. An initial finding from NYHN’s work is that 60% of mothers accessing antenatal care were younger than 24 years old. The Adolescent Health Forums brought this information to the district health authorities, which have now committed to establishing youth corners in all health facilities to provide young people with access to youth-responsive postpartum family planning services and other health-related information and services.

SECTION 6

The Global Youth Platform (GYP) and Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG)

Following the launch of the GFF in 2015, CSOs and YLOs working in GFF countries identified the need for a global platform to coordinate engagement with the GFF and drive progress on RMNCAH-N issues at the local, national, and international levels. Today, the CSCG has more than 700 members from around the world, including all 36 GFF countries. In recognition of the importance of youth leadership and engagement, the CSCG is structured to ensure youth members share in the decision-making and goal-setting of the platform, including through a steering



committee with a minimum of eight youth members 35 years old or younger, including two youth representatives elected by the CSCG to serve in the Investors Group. The CSCG also reserves two seats for youth on its Independent Advisory Board, which provides strategic guidance and independent monitoring and oversight to the GFF NGO Host.

Despite efforts to engage youth in the early years of CSCG, there remained serious challenges in coordination among YLOs at the global level, which contributes to knowledge gaps around GFF processes and limited access to GFF funding to support YLO projects. In 2021, with the support of the GFF and NGO Host, youth from across Africa worked together to lay the foundation for the GYP, a structure for coordinating youth in global- and national-level GFF processes. Two co-chairs — one Anglophone and one Francophone — were elected and tasked with operationalizing and leading the platform. Achievements of the GYP include creating resources to enhance YLO knowledge of GFF and CSCG processes and building the capacity of youth advocates to engage with national coalitions working on RMNCAH-N and GFF Investment Cases.

In 2024, GYP began expanding the use of i-Report, developed by NYHN in Uganda, to all its members to improve youth-led, evidence-based advocacy. The GYP continues to work closely with the CSCG and holds seats on its steering committee and Independent Advisory Board. However, a lack of dedicated and sustained funding has slowed the GYP’s growth and hinders its ability to function as a fully independent entity comprised of youth, led by youth, and serving youth on the global stage.

SECTION 7

Key lessons learned

- Globally, YLOs can enhance advocacy and resource mobilization for health, but structures like the GYP require sustained technical support and long-term funding to avoid stagnation.
- CSOs and youth coalitions differ in capacity and coordination, often influenced by external funding and differing political and cultural environments.
- Country-level engagement of youth varies. While some GFF-funded countries have effective and inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms, others lack structured processes.
- In addition to supporting youth engagement at the global and national levels, investing in local youth leadership is essential for informing and sustaining interventions.
- Young people bring energy and innovation to advocacy that allows them to better engage their peers and build robust networks and tools that can serve as a model for CSOs.
- Youth should be the primary group determining their priorities and defining “youth issues.” Having external parties preemptively determine what issues affect youth risks ineffective interventions in areas where youth are important stakeholders but are excluded from decision-making spaces.
- When YLOs have access to international spaces and events, this signals a legitimacy that allows them to foster more equitable partnerships with national stakeholders than is possible when only engaging domestically. Youth working at the community level can similarly benefit from access to district- or national-level platforms that provide a higher entry point for them to engage with local officials and organizations.
- YLOs are particularly proficient at leveraging social media and digital tools to source data, spread awareness, organize events, and engage supporters efficiently, which helps drive rapid and impactful change.

SECTION 8

Recommendations

For the GFF:

- **Sustain multi-year investments in YLOs:** Make sustained, multi-year investments in YLOs for youth-led advocacy to achieve and sustain meaningful change in policies and programs and ensure interventions do not stall midway through.
- **Support capacity building for YLOs:** Invest in leadership and capacity-strengthening programs to enable YLOs and CSOs to effectively implement activities and hold governments accountable for their investment case commitments.
- **Endorse and raise the profile of YLOs:** The GFF should continue to validate the critical role that youth play in multi-lateral mechanisms, as well as domestic policy-shaping.
- **Maintain support for YLOs as they transition to CSOs:** As leaders in YLOs age out of the “youth” category, their work and leadership remain crucial for serving young people. To ensure continued support, the GFF should expand its focus to include both youth-led and youth-focused initiatives, which can prevent the abandonment of these vital organizations.

For the CSCG:

- **Provide more space for youth:** Expand opportunities for youth to engage with the CSCG and regularly participate in CSCG-wide meetings. YLOs want more opportunities for capacity-building training in areas like leadership development, strategic planning, fundraising, digital marketing, and advocacy.

For the GYP:

- **Expand and diversify membership:** Ensure the GYP is accessible to all YLOs and able to act globally, the platform needs to take intentional steps to strengthen inclusivity of youth representatives beyond Anglophone and Francophone regions
- **Strengthen member engagement:** There is a need to prioritize capacity-building engagements and knowledge-sharing at the county and international levels among YLOs.



**“Improving the capacities of local authorities in fiscal space analysis and planning is an urgent subject for RMNCAH-N, as you can see. Thus, these types of innovative and high-impact initiatives developed by young people are [...] initiatives to be documented and reinforced for scaling up.”**

– Aminata Badiane Thioye, Alliance Nationale des Jeunes pour la Sante de la Reproduction (Senegal)

## Endnotes

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