

*Practical Guidance Resource  
to Operationalize the Global  
Consensus Statement on  
Meaningful Adolescent and  
Youth Engagement (MAYE)*



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# Acronyms

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INGO: International non-governmental organization

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MAYE: Meaningful adolescents and youth engagement

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MEL: Monitoring, evaluation and learning

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NGO: Non-governmental organization

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PGR: Practical Guidance Resource

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PMNCH: Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health

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SRHR: Sexual and reproductive health and rights

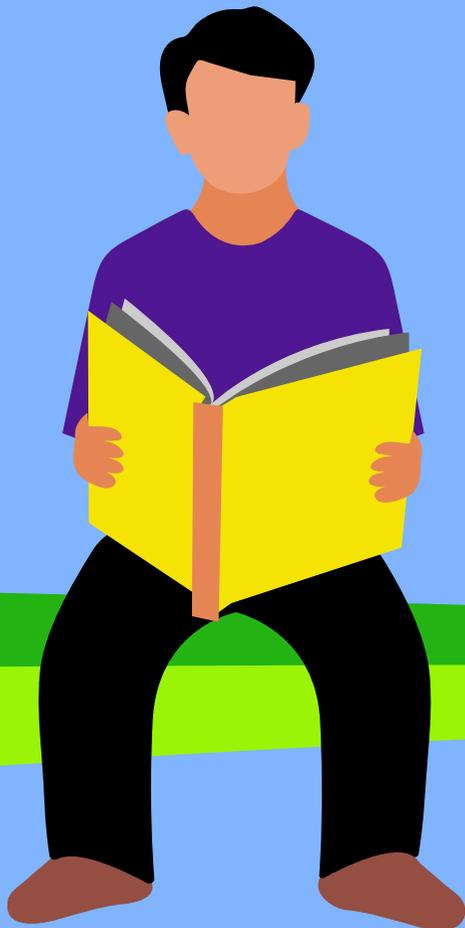
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TA: Technical assistance

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WCAH: Women's, children's and adolescents' health

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# Background on the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE



In 2018, PMNCH and partners spearheaded the development of the [Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement \(MAYE\)](#),<sup>1</sup> which was very helpful in:

- defining meaningful adolescent and youth engagement
- outlining key principles and checklist criteria
- showcasing resources on MAYE that can be used for implementation.

The Global Consensus Statement includes a checklist of ten practical strategies for meaningful adolescent and youth engagement which agencies, policymakers, civil society, health practitioners and all others who seek to work with young people in an inclusive and equitable way can implement. The checklist criteria and additional resources provided in the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE are evidence-based and align with internationally agreed resolutions and policies.

Since the launch of the Global Consensus Statement, 250 organisations have endorsed and pledged to implement the MAYE principles and participate in accountability mechanisms to monitor progress on implementation. By endorsing the statement, all signatories reaffirm their commitment to protect and promote the rights of all young people, and to ensure they are central in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies, programmes and initiatives that affect and protect them. They also recognize that adolescents and youth have a fundamental right to actively and meaningfully engage in decision-making processes, especially those that affect them.

In line with the pledge to monitor progress, PMNCH with partners embarked on establishing an Accountability System and a MAYE Task Force to oversee the development of a MAYE accountability report which was published in 2021.

The [MAYE Accountability Report](#)<sup>2</sup> was based on an analysis of 100 respondents among the 250 signatories. The overall finding of the report highlighted that although several documents exist that focus on making the case for MAYE, there is no comprehensive guide to accompany the MAYE principles and checklist criteria.

Based on the feedback from the survey conducted with signatories about their progress with MAYE, and further consultations with PMNCH Adolescent and Youth Constituency (AYC) members, there was a common agreement on the need to strengthen accountability on MAYE and provide more detailed guidance to organisations on how to improve MAYE implementation. It was therefore decided that PMNCH should invest and support the development of a **Practical Guidance Resource (PGR)** that will offer guidance on how to operationalize MAYE, including how to address gaps and critical issues highlighted in the Accountability Report.

## How to use this document

As with any guidance, this document is not a silver bullet, but rather is meant to guide different stakeholders towards the highest standards of meaningful adolescent and youth engagement. Stakeholders are starting at different points. All have different priorities / agendas / mandates for focusing on MAYE. All come with different considerations, resources (human and financial), and capacities for doing this work. All have different histories of working with adolescents and youth. This diversity is one we mean to celebrate in this document while recognizing that it poses a challenge to creating a resource that is everything to everyone. Additionally, there are no globally-agreed technical standards on MAYE to guide this work, especially as it relates to the ten items included in the Global Consensus Statement checklist. This means that while this guidance will point stakeholders and signatories in the same direction of good practices, there are no standardised targets and indicators that would allow PMNCH and partners to track successful MAYE implementation thoroughly and consistently, especially on a global level.

Further, the audience for this document is broad and includes [all constituencies within the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health](#) and any signatory to the Global Consensus Statement. One document cannot speak to the needs of the full range of stakeholders with the level of detail needed to truly map out integrated and systemic change within the institutions that define adolescents' and young peoples' lives. This document is meant to serve as guardrails while stakeholders ask themselves hard questions; are honest about their current work on MAYE; determine their priorities, boundaries and limits; establish their value system; and chart a course of action, which includes comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.

This document has three parts that encourage stakeholders to answer some of the following key questions:

- **Part 1: Introduction and Background.** What is the history of MAYE? What is this PGR building on? What values and principles are important for stakeholders to keep at the centre of their minds while reading this resource and planning accordingly?
- **Part 2: Practical Guidance.** What questions can organizations ask to determine where they are on their MAYE journey? What concrete steps can different stakeholders take on in each key area of the Global Consensus Statement? What other resources are out there to support this process?
- **Part 3: Per Stakeholder.** What role can each stakeholder play in the implementation of MAYE? What specific considerations should they take as they work towards MAYE?

Part 2 reviews each checklist item in detail, pulling out the key elements and inviting stakeholders to walk through a three step process:

- **ASSESSMENT:** Each checklist item includes a set of questions for each stakeholder to ask themselves to determine where they are on their MAYE implementation journey;
- **GUIDANCE:** Following the assessment, each checklist item includes a set of recommendations for how to ensure that MAYE implementation efforts are given proper resources (time, funding, capacity, skills, etc.);
- **RESOURCES:** Each checklist item is supported by an annotated list of resources that bolster each checklist item, and / or provide additional / more detailed guidance on each specific item.

While it is recommended that stakeholders start with the assessment tool to determine where they are in the MAYE process, the PGR is designed to be useful no matter where each stakeholder is on their MAYE journey. Some information will be new to some and really basic to others, so each stakeholder is encouraged to start with the assessment and work through each checklist item in order. Many of the resources linked and listed in this PGR appear in multiple places, depending on the checklist item topic or stakeholder-specific section.

Additionally, this document centres adolescents and youth as equal partners rather than focuses on them as beneficiaries. Any organization that is working to *serve* young people or respond to their various needs through programming specifically may use the PGR to ensure that principles of engagement are built into every aspect of the programme lifecycle -- from inception and design to monitoring, evaluating and reporting. While this document may be helpful to programme implementers, this is not a technical guide for programmers specifically.

# PART 1:

## Introduction



Adolescents and youth are best positioned to inform policies, programmes, and processes that affect them. They have not only substantial but essential contributions to make in global efforts to better understand the nature of their lives, the challenges they face and potential solutions to our world's biggest crises. ***Beyond this, it is young peoples' right to participate.***

Today, building on more than 30 years of work since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified, much progress has been made in articulating, advocating for, and resourcing meaningful adolescent and youth engagement (MAYE). From grassroots organizations to global platforms, young people's voices are being heard and space is being made for their meaningful engagement.

Several initiatives have cropped up in the last few years to build robust, safe, and meaningful partnerships between youth and their allies, and to tackle some of our biggest challenges around MAYE. From the [YIELD Hub](#), which aims to transform the field of Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); to the [We Trust You\(th\) Initiative](#), which seeks to end systemic inequities that currently undermine relationships between youth-led organizations and youth-focused donors and NGOs; to the [Adolescent and Youth Constituency within PMNCH](#), which seeks to ensure that the perspectives of adolescents and youth are integrated into PMNCH's mandate. There are [conceptual frameworks](#)<sup>3</sup> and [ladders of participation](#),<sup>4</sup> with various articulations of the concept of engagement and participation, such as a [lattice](#)<sup>5</sup> or a [flower](#).<sup>6</sup> There are [theories of change](#)<sup>7</sup> and [indicators](#).<sup>8</sup> There is work happening at every level to try to get it right for adolescents and youth. There are communities of practice, such as [Youth Power](#), and consortia, such as the [GAGE Consortium](#). There are [youth policies](#)<sup>9</sup> and [youth strategies](#),<sup>10</sup> and [tools developed by youth](#)<sup>11</sup> to support meaningful and youth-responsive strategic planning.

But challenges remain and young people everywhere, especially younger adolescents, fall through the cracks when it comes to the sustainable implementation of youth-centered and youth-led initiatives.

Discriminatory attitudes towards adolescents and youth; an unwillingness to give up power and privilege, especially as it relates to decision-making roles; and a lack of systemic and equitable approaches to engagement are still major barriers to young voices being heard and fully respected.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, adolescents and youth still lack consistent access to political, social and economic channels of power, making it difficult for them to break through to seats of influence. Adolescents in particular, in all their diversity and intersections, are often not recognized as agents of their own lives and/or are further marginalized. Even where there are adult-led spaces for adolescents and youth, there is often a lack of supportive systems, institutional spaces or meaningful opportunities for full, consistent and sustainable engagement and participation. Lack of explicit mission statements, engagement policies, staff time, robust budgets, comprehensive training and accountability, supervision, and monitoring hamper any sustained efforts to embed a culture of respect for the views and perspectives of adolescents and youth.

**Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement is and has always been about power**, and young people are demanding that those in power move over, make space and share in decision-making equally. Data on adolescents and youth, [while not complete](#), are starting to show what challenges young people are facing, especially as the world works towards the SDGs. Initiatives like the [Global Action for the Measurement of Adolescent Health \(GAMA\)](#) are designed specifically to establish a better understanding of, and effective interventions for, the state of the world's adolescents. The Global Consensus Statement focuses primarily on the relationships between institutions that engage with adolescents and youth as partners, rather than those who target adolescents and youth as beneficiaries from the perspective of programmers, service providers and advocates.

This document, the Practical Guidance Resource (PGR), is meant to provide guidance to signatory and youth-led organizations on how to implement MAYE by addressing the knowledge gaps and critical issues highlighted in the MAYE Accountability Report. It provides guidance for each element of the MAYE consensus checklist, as well as provide good practices, additional resources, and concrete examples (case studies) of MAYE.<sup>13</sup> This document also includes relevant assessment and implementation tools, such as checklists, scorecards and worksheets where appropriate.

This document builds on decades of advocacy from adolescent- and youth-led organizations and their allies, who have pushed various institutions to conduct research, develop evidence and systematize promising practice. These efforts have yielded countless tools, frameworks, communities of practice, intergenerational dialogues, guidelines and standards as it relates to the principles of MAYE. As to avoid reinventing the wheel, this PGR attempts to reference the fullest scope of this existing work in each section as to guide MAYE stakeholders to useful resources. Some, but not all, resources are specifically health-related; others come from other sectors depending on which checklist item is being referenced. Additionally, **all checklist items are cross-cutting and reinforce one another, and should be viewed as such.** While neither a thorough landscape assessment nor systematic literature review was part of the methodology to develop this document, it seeks to bring this work together in one place, organized around the Global Consensus Statement checklist items.

This document is not a practical guidance on all of the reinforcing principles that support MAYE, such as intersectionality, inclusivity, human rights-based, decolonization, etc. They are referenced here to acknowledge their importance for any MAYE work. All institutions working on MAYE implementation are encouraged to strengthen their alignment with these principles.

The PGR will be widely disseminated to partners around the world, including through digital channels and social media, to support them to practically consider and operationalize MAYE recommendations in policies and programmes serving adolescents and youth.

## Definitions

The following definitions are meant to anchor our understanding of MAYE and key terms and principles in mutual language.

### **What is MAYE?**

**Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement** is an inclusive, intentional, mutually-respectful partnership between adolescents, youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued. Young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programmes, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms and organizations that affect their lives and their communities, countries and world.

### **Core values of MAYE**

For engagement and participation to be meaningful they need to be anchored in principles of intersectionality and inclusivity. This approach means recognizing that young people's identities are crossed by their different social, cultural and economic positionalities. Therefore, any effort to engage them in a meaningful way needs to recognize this diversity of backgrounds and work towards transforming the structures that actively exclude adolescents and youth.

**Intersectionality** is a term that explains how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create systems of inequality. These identities can be based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other. This is a dynamic concept since different forms of discrimination intersect to create unique dynamics of discrimination and privilege.<sup>14,15</sup>

**Inclusion** can be defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people or groups that have been historically marginalized, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for their right to participation.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, the following principles guided the endorsement process for the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE and serve as pillars in our ongoing efforts to meaningfully engage young people; value their expertise, work and input; and nurture their talents to maximize their potential:<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Rights-based** – Young people are informed and educated about their rights and are empowered to hold duty bearers accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling these rights;
- 2. Transparent and informative** – Young people are provided with full, evidence-based, accessible, age-appropriate information which acknowledges their diversity of experience and promotes and protects their right to express their views freely. There is a clear and mutual understanding of how young people's information, skills and knowledge will be shared, with whom, and for what purpose;
- 3. Voluntary and free from coercion** – Young people must not be coerced into participating in actions or expressing views that are against their beliefs and wishes and must at all times be aware that they can cease involvement in any process at any stage;
- 4. Respectful of young people's intersecting identities** – Young people will be encouraged to initiate ideas and activities that are relevant to their lives, and to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. Engagement will actively seek to include a variety of young people according to the relevant needs or audience. Engagements will be culturally sensitive to young people from all backgrounds, recognizing that young people's views are not homogeneous and they need to be appreciated for their diversity, free from stigma;
- 5. Safe** – All adults and those in positions of authority working directly or indirectly with young people in relation to issues at every level have a responsibility to take every reasonable precaution to minimize the risk of violence, exploitation, tokenism, or any other negative consequence to young people as a result of their participation.

We reiterate that adolescents and youth have a right to participate on equal terms with other stakeholders on matters which impact their lives.<sup>17</sup> This includes the development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and initiatives. Ensuring that young people are afforded trust and acceptance in their role of decision-making ensures that we all benefit from true partnerships, opportunities for intergenerational dialogue, and strengthened ability to tackle issues which affect young people's lives.<sup>18</sup>

The principles of meaningful adolescent and youth engagement are reaffirmed in several international legal and normative frameworks:

1. **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** Article 12 of the CRC highlights that participation is a substantive right of all individuals up to 18 years old, inclusive of adolescents.<sup>19</sup>
2. **1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD):** Action 6.15 notes that young people should be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities that have a direct impact on their daily lives.<sup>20</sup>
3. **2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS:** Paragraphs 21, 30, 64(b) note the importance of the meaningful involvement of people most at risk of and affected by HIV, highlighting that they should enjoy all human rights and equal participation in civil, political, social, economic and cultural life, without prejudice, stigma or discrimination of any kind.<sup>21</sup>
4. **2006 African Youth Charter:** Article 16 notes that States have a responsibility to secure the full involvement of youth in identifying their reproductive and health needs and designing programmes that respond to those needs.<sup>22</sup>
5. **2012 Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration:** The declaration identifies issues and priorities facing young people within the context of population and development, noting recommended actions for the outcome report of the [ICPD +20] review and for the post 2015 United Nations development agenda. It highlighted the importance of putting young people's rights at the heart of development.<sup>23</sup>
6. **2013 Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development:** Chapter B, priority 8 guarantees the existence of mechanisms for the effective participation of adolescents and youth in public debate, in decision-making, and in all stages of policies and programmes, particularly those that directly concern them, without any type of discrimination, by strengthening institutional mechanisms for youth.<sup>24</sup>

Through the process of signing onto the Global Consensus Statement and reviewing this Practical Guidance Resource, partners and signatories are moving beyond the recognition and identification of young people solely as beneficiaries and towards engaging them as equal and valuable partners in initiatives that are led, co-led and centred around adolescents and youth.<sup>25</sup>

## ***What do we mean when we say 'engagement' and 'participation'?***

These terms are often used interchangeably. Different organizations, initiatives and collectives use them in different ways according to their strategic plans, histories and objectives. However, defining these terms is important to give specificity to the scope of our work and to make explicit the difference between participation and engagement.<sup>26</sup>

Within this guide, we will use the following definitions:

**Participation** can be understood as a civil and political right. For instance, when we talk about participation in political elections. Similarly, it is also an economic, cultural and social right. For example, participation in the design and implementation of development agendas.<sup>12</sup> Participation is a broad term that includes specific actions such as: expressing ideas, taking a role in policy or programme implementation, or being informed and consulted on decisions concerning public interest. Participation is a core element of adolescents' and youth people's civic and public life. It is much more than having a voice. It is about being informed, engaged and having an influence in decisions and matters that affect one's life – in private and public spheres, in the home, in alternative care settings, at school, in the workplace, in the community, in social media and in broader governance processes. There are many degrees of participation, according to [Hart's Ladder of Participation](#).<sup>4</sup>

**Engagement** can be understood as an expression of adolescents and youth as social and political actors when they exercise their right to participation.<sup>27</sup> Engagement includes young people's involvement in all phases of a project, programme, initiative, campaign, etc. From agenda-setting and design to implementation, and through the monitoring and evaluation phase. Engagement involves feedback mechanisms that actually create meaningful change based on young people's feedback. For engagement to be meaningful, young people should: be clear about their roles in the engagement; have ownership over the process and outcomes; have opportunities for capacity-building as defined by them and their needs; have access to a range of pathways to participation; be represented in all of their diversity, including race, differing abilities, language, sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **A note on age**

Different UN agencies, organizations and governments have varying definitions on the age ranges for childhood, adolescence and youth. For the purposes of this document, **adolescent** refers to all people aged 10-19; **youth** refers to all people aged 15-24 years;<sup>28</sup> and **young people** refers collectively to both groups. However, it is recognized that some youth-led organizations work with those up to 29 years, as this broader group provides meaningful contributions and expertise to policies and programmes for young people. In this document, all references to young people include adolescents and youth under 29 years old.

Sections of the PGR that refer specifically to youth can also be applied to adolescents. However, when referring to adolescents and their individual development and autonomy, it is crucial to consider their **evolving capacity**, which takes into account the way that each young person gradually develops the ability to take full responsibility for their own actions and decisions.<sup>29</sup>

Organizations or institutions that are working specifically with adolescents under the age of 18 are encouraged to establish their own **child protection and safeguarding** policies. This PGR does not give specific guidance on how to do this, as any mention of adolescents through the lens of this PGR is assumed to build on already existing child protection and safe-guarding best practice. Organizations like UNICEF,<sup>30</sup> Plan International,<sup>31</sup> and Save the Children<sup>32</sup> all offer resources and best practice on safeguarding and child protection. For specific resources on engaging adolescents, please refer to UNICEF's adolescent participation resources.<sup>33</sup>

## Decolonization and equity

All human rights issues today are located within a history of colonial oppression, inequality, gendered societal norms and exploitation, and the movements born out of those oppressions. While this PGR specifically highlights power differentials that stem from age specifically, they must be situated within current global conversations about privilege, colonization, and systems of oppression that are rooted in capitalism, patriarchy, systematic racial violence and injustice. Young people are often at the [forefront of global liberation movements](#),<sup>34</sup> working to end oppression in its many forms, including at times of worsening climate crises, pandemics, humanitarian crises, protracted conflicts, statelessness and apartheid. This leadership from young people representing marginalized groups is especially crucial, including (but not limited to) young people living with HIV, young people with disabilities, young indigenous people and young migrants.

In addition to assessing contributions or shortfalls when it comes to MAYE, it is recommended that organizations interested in deepening their MAYE work also **commit to examining their own role in decolonizing development**. Organizations must recognize that rights-based, intersectional frameworks must be rooted in justice and equity. While this goes beyond the scope of this document, there are several tools and resources available to encourage this journey, such as PATH's [Equity in Programming Benchmarks](#),<sup>35</sup> the [strategic framework on just redistribution of resources](#)<sup>36</sup> by FRIDA Young Feminist Fund, and analysis from [Population Works Africa](#).<sup>37</sup> Just as we can imagine equitable partnerships between youth and adults, we can work towards a world order that [divests from oppressive socio-political and economic systems](#).<sup>38</sup>



## PART 2: Practical guidance



This section goes through each item in order of the Global Consensus Statement checklist, noting that they are all cross-cutting and interlinked. You may see some items multiple times, as we would rather items were reiterated and repeated rather than missing completely or only viewed from one lens.

In this section, the terms organization and institution are used interchangeably, given the diversity of stakeholders who will engage with this checklist. As previously noted, the use of terms such as youth initiatives and youth partners should be understood to also include adolescents.

### A note on collaboration and partnerships with young people

Young people's involvement and leadership in decision-making spaces is crucial to any MAYE effort. Regardless of their specific role within a programme or project – for example, whether they are core partners, subgrantees, or coalition partners – the voices of adolescent- or youth-led initiatives must hold equal weight to other partners or grantees. If adolescent- or youth-led initiatives are core partners, their core costs must be integrated into the project or programme budget to ensure that they are able to be full and sustainable partners. This respects the reality that their existence is crucial; that they have legitimacy in the community and among their peers that your organization may not (especially if an organization isn't based at the community or national level); and that their volunteer and / or low cost labour is often a strategy for keeping a budget low. If working with youth initiatives was a requirement of the grant, ensure youth-responsive funding.

Before taking the step of reaching out to a youth partner and bringing them into your organization's decision-making structures, it's important for your organization to be very clear about its own objectives and the integrity of the process you intend to follow as you implement MAYE.

What is your value system around partner engagement? What is the change you seek to create by working with young people specifically? Whether for a short-term engagement or a long-term partnership, youth partners must be a part of decision-making.

Beyond setting these strategic priorities for your organization or institution, what do young people need from you? Have you asked them? And further, have you asked them in the context of your own decision-making spaces? What do you do with the information you share with them? In order to do MAYE work that isn't extractive, it must also benefit the young people who are taking their time to shape your work with you, or work that you will do together as partners.

A few tips for collaboration when it comes to supporting youth decision-making:

- **Memorandum of understanding:** When engaging with youth initiatives to involve them in decision-making, or deepening the youth partnership you already have, define the terms of your engagement together with youth partners, including decision-making and leadership roles. This applies to informal partnerships, as even if there are a few terms jotted down between partners, it helps to provide clarity and avoid confusion between partners, and sets up everyone to succeed.
- **Information-sharing opportunities about the collaboration:** Identify opportunities for youth partners to be the ones representing the partnership, especially in decision-making spaces. Ensure they are able to speak safely about their experiences with you and any other partners involved in the collaboration.
- **Capacity-building for adults:** Ensure that everyone on your team who shows up as an adult ally is also really clear about the basic definition of MAYE and what that means about their work with young people. Your organization can offer training and hold discussion fora to ensure that your team has full capacity when it comes to MAYE. Determine what baseline / foundational information your organization needs to provide before bringing in young people to do the capacity-building with / for your organization.

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 1: Supporting youth leadership in decision-making

*Support young people's leadership by facilitating opportunities for them to be part of the decision-making in all stages of programmes and initiatives. This includes working with adolescent and youth-led organizations as a core partner, creating and/or supporting projects, establishing an advisory group of young people with a clear structure for influencing the direction of the organization or initiative, and reserving spaces for young people on planning and decision-making groups. It also includes ensuring that these roles are clearly defined and young people are adequately supported in every way to ensure that they can influence decisions.*

#### ESTABLISH / MAINTAIN / INVEST IN YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS

- Does your organization work directly with any youth-led organizations, initiatives, coalitions, networks, movements in a sustained partnership?
- Are these partnerships equally defined / shaped by youth partners and their priorities, and resourced accordingly?
- Are youth partners able to access core funding as a result of their engagement with your organization? Are their overhead and personnel costs covered as a component of this partnership?
- Is your organization as accountable to them as they are required to be to you? Are you displaying radical transparency / dynamic accountability?

#### SUPPORT YOUTH PROJECTS

- Does your organization specifically fund / resource / support any youth-led projects, where young people are setting the agenda from the beginning of your engagement all the way through the project life-cycle?
- Have you considered a small grants or technical assistance mechanism for your organization to offer to youth-led projects?
- Does your organization support a youth-led mechanism that directly informs decision-making?
- Does their input hold equal weight to other stakeholders in decision-making and governance roles?

#### ESTABLISH / FUND YOUTH DECISION-MAKING ROLES / BODIES

- Is this advisory group given resources to meet regularly, strategize and plan together, and review relevant materials involved in the engagement?
- Is there a specific mandate to ensure that marginalized youth voices are included, especially girls / young women?
- What formal opportunities do adolescents and youth have to make decisions within your organization from start to finish along the project / programme life-cycle?
- Does their input hold equal weight to other stakeholders in this decision-making body?
- Are they given adequate resources to engage meaningfully in the decision-making structure?
- Are they given adequate time to consult with young people in their networks to ensure that their voice is representative and meaningful?

## GUIDANCE

#### ESTABLISH / MAINTAIN / INVEST IN YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS

- Conduct a comprehensive mapping of youth-led initiatives who may already be doing the work you seek to refine or strengthen, including organizations, coalitions, networks, movements in all spaces, sectors, geographic locations, etc.
- Define all aspects of the partnership directly with youth initiatives, ensuring that their needs within the partnership are articulated from the beginning and prioritizing the elements of the engagement that would set them up most to succeed.
- Water the roots; not the leaves. Ensure that youth partners are able to cover core operating costs as a part of your engagement, including overhead, personnel, office space (as needed), etc., and not just direct costs associated with the project or programme.
- Maintain the youth budget if cuts are required in the process of planning for a partnership. Do not make the assumption that the first thing that can be cut is their funding, as it's likely that they have already reduced their budget as much as they possibly can at the time of engagement.
- Ensure your institution engages in radical transparency and dynamic accountability in these partnerships, sharing lessons learned, mistakes, budgets, etc.

#### SUPPORT YOUTH PROJECTS

- Conduct a needs assessment with the young people you seek to partner with before you design a proposal or programme, as many may be implementing projects already.
  - (Within this step, ensure that the approach is agile and responsive to youth needs, avoids unnecessary bureaucracy and isn't too formal or structured.)
- Identify budget and capacity within your organization and on your team to provide technical support to youth-led projects that stems from your / your organization's expertise. The question to youth partners should be: "What do you need from us to succeed?"
- Locate opportunities within current grant funds to call for youth partners to implement their projects through small grants and technical assistance that advance the mission of the project / programme.

## ESTABLISH / FUND YOUTH DECISION-MAKING ROLES / BODIES

- Develop and sustain an adolescents / youth advisory group with a specific governance mandate in your organization.
- Centre youth priorities in the process of articulating and designing their group engagement, including: preferences regarding ways of working; realities and contexts (such as work schedules, childcare responsibilities, school priorities, etc.); communications norms; compensation for their time and engagement; definition of safety; what it means to succeed.
- Ensure that they interact with other decision-making stakeholders and advisory groups at the organization, for transparency and accountability.
- Ensure adequate budget, staff capacity and time for the group to meet regularly, strategize and plan together. This includes a budget for them to implement activities that come out of the planning period.
- Provide relevant materials and allow adequate time for youth partners to review and comment on them.

- If decision-making opportunities arise, give adequate time (without gatekeeping their engagement) for the youth representatives to consult with one another as well as their constituency or the population they represent.
- Ensure that at least one youth representative is given a meaningful role in the organization's decision-making structure that is aligned with the young person's skills, interests and background.
- Ensure that the youth representative is supported with information, context, and technical assistance in their role.
- Members of your board, advisory group, etc. are in that seat likely because they represent an organization that likely pays them a liveable salary. Most times young people are joining your board / group as a part of an organization they volunteer with; If they bring a meaningful voice to your organization's conversation, compensate them for the time and expertise they are contributing.
- Compensate this youth representative not just for their direct costs of participation.

## RESOURCES

The following list provides a collection of resources that bolster this checklist item around supporting youth in decision-making spaces.

- [Education Plus Initiative \(2021-2025\) Empowerment of adolescent girls and young women in Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (UNAIDS)
- [Adolescent and young key populations \(AYKP\)](#) (Children and Aids)
- [The Flower of Participation](#) (Youth Do It)
- [Youth leadership, participation and accountability 2.0](#) (UNFPA / Restless Development)
- [Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 — End Inequalities. End AIDS](#) (UNAIDS)
- [The Global Alliance to end AIDS in children](#) (UNAIDS)
- [Child and Youth Councils: Guidance to support meaningful participation](#) (UNICEF) - *forthcoming*

## CASE STUDY

### UNAIDS: Strategic focus on young people

*Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement and leadership in the HIV response remains critical to its efficacy and sustainability, yet is under supported. This was recognized by the 2021-2026 Global AIDS Strategy (GAS) which established, for the first time, a strategic result area on young people (SRA7) with evidence informed and rights-based priority actions, with a strong focus on youth leadership.*

*Young people in all their diversity participated in the GAS development process through dedicated surveys, focus groups discussions, country and regional consultations and in-depth interviews. Young people were also represented in the GAS adoption process through the participation of a youth delegate in the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, a unique governance model in the UN system that includes community representatives as well as other UN agencies and Member States. A priority of UNAIDS has always been to engage the most affected by HIV communities in decision-making spaces, including adolescents and youth belonging to key populations.*

*Youth's right to health, education and participation are further embedded in the UNAIDS Budget, Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF), which operationalizes the GAS and establishes specific Joint Programme outputs on treatment and prevention access for children and adolescents living with HIV, comprehensive sexuality education, the scale up of youth-led HIV responses and reduction of new infections among young people.*

*To ensure that UNAIDS was fit to respond to the new GAS, an **organizational alignment was conducted**. This process reaffirmed the presence of dedicated staff working on community and youth engagement issues at all levels, to complement the existing expertise in youth-related issues related to prevention, treatment and policy.*

*One of the most important lessons learnt from the past 40 years responding to the HIV epidemic is the dire need of placing communities at the centre of all efforts to end AIDS. For youth communities most affected by HIV, this has resulted in the interest of strengthening youth engagement across the response and increasing the support to HIV youth-led responses. Key to this has been to ensure that **adolescents and youth in all their***

*diversity* are engaged in the HIV response, and not just one network or one group being utilized to represent adolescents and youth as a homogeneous group.

*As part of the process to create a conceptual and accountability framework to measure youth-led responses, UNAIDS supported The PACT, a global coalition of youth-led organizations from the HIV and SRHR movement, to undertake a **global consultative process** to agree on a standard definition of youth-led organizations and youth-led responses in the context of the HIV response. These definitions will help us measure progress towards global targets related to increasing HIV services delivered by communities. This process was totally led by The PACT, a coalition where the entire leadership and governance body is under 30 years old, and crucially, **compensated all young people engaged** in focus group discussions and final ratification process, as well as those leading the process. This constituted the compensation of over 80 young people as a way to recognize the contributions of young people as experts of their own reality.*

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 2: Agree upon the roles, responsibilities and expectations

*Make a commitment to discuss and agree upon the roles, responsibilities, and expectations together with young people, preferably in a written agreement. These discussions should explore the aim, goal and purpose of engagement with young people to ensure mutual accountability. Before engaging, young people should be involved in determining how their participation will take place, its scope, purpose, and potential impact, and how or what they would like to contribute. After engagement, young people should receive clear feedback on how their participation has influenced outcomes, and be given opportunities to participate in follow up processes or activities, including monitoring and evaluation of young people's participation and its overall impact.*

#### CO-CREATE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH YOUTH PARTNERS

- Does your organization design MOUs directly with youth partners?
- Is the nature of your partnership with youth initiatives spelled out clearly in your MOU?
- Is your role versus the role of the youth partner clearly articulated?
- Is there a clear breakdown of the timeline, objectives, scope of work, etc. of your partnership?

#### CO-CREATE A YOUTH POLICY WITH YOUTH PARTNERS

- Does your organization have a youth strategy, with clearly articulated objectives about how youth partnerships will be set up?
- Does your procurement team have any special policies in place for establishing the terms of a youth partnership?
- Have these policies been checked and validated by your youth partners?

#### INVOLVE YOUTH PARTNERS IN MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

- Are young people clear to whom they are accountable?
- Are young people leading the design of your partnership with them?
- Are they given space to spell out their values, boundaries, dreams and limitations?
- Are they defining the measurement of success / MEL metrics?
- Are there comprehensive processes for offboarding after a project is completed?
- Does your organization have a formal review process that can be applied equitably to youth partnerships?
- Can youth partners meet with your MEL team to review how their impact is being reported and communicated?

#### ESTABLISH FEEDBACK MECHANISMS FOR YOUTH PARTNERS

- Are youth partners able to review documents that are submitted to the projects' / programmes' donors?
- Are youth partners able to use that reporting to showcase their own work to their own donors and partners? Are they given support to do this?
- Are there capacity-building opportunities on reporting, MEL, communications, etc. available at this stage of the partnership that can be formalized / made available to youth partners and their networks?
- Are youth partners able to share critical feedback about their experience with your organization's team?

## GUIDANCE

When working with adolescents and youth, as with any meaningful and equitable partnership, it is important that everyone involved is clear about their contribution to the partnership. This doesn't mean that the terms are set when you reach out to adolescent- and youth-led partners, but rather that roles, policies and agreements are co-created. This will require you and your team to understand what it means for young people to lead (refer to the flower of participation in resources below) and how to think about measuring success.

#### CO-CREATE A WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH YOUTH PARTNERS

- Prior to establishing any type of partnership, sit down with youth partners and co-create the terms of your partnership.
- Ensure that this agreement includes clear terms and schedules for payment.
- Design a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with youth partners at the beginning of your engagement. If they have a template they use with partners, start there. If you have a template at your organization, open it up to comments from youth partners and then draft it together.
- In this MOU, spell out roles, articulate timelines, enumerate partnership objectives, draft a scope of work together, etc.

#### CO-CREATE A YOUTH POLICY WITH YOUTH PARTNERS

- Prior to establishing any type of partnership, sit down with youth partners and articulate policies if none exist.
- Ensure that this agreement includes clear terms and schedules for payment.
- If none exists, discuss drafting a youth strategy for the organization that references the policies you put in place with youth partners. This strategy should have clearly articulated objectives about how youth partnerships will be set up.
- Work specifically with your procurement team to ensure in advance that there are no policies in place at your organization that would make it more difficult for youth partners to comply or qualify for the partnership. If it's possible for procurement to write policies directly with youth partners, that's a bonus!
- Young people are not just involved but are in the lead when it comes to designing their participation in the partnership.
- Young people are given space to spell out their values, boundaries, dreams and limitations as it relates to the partnership.

## INVOLVE YOUTH PARTNERS IN MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

- Young people are defining the measurement of success / MEL metrics / indicators of impact.
- Design a comprehensive offboarding procedure for the project, if none exists.
- Ensure that young people are clear about reporting and know to whom they are accountable. Clear norms around communication are articulated at the beginning of a partnership and regular calls are scheduled to check in on the progress of the project.
- If your organization has a formal review process (including a performance review), determine if it can be applied equitably to youth partnerships.
- Create opportunities for youth partners to meet with your MEL team to review how their impact is being reported and communicated.

## ESTABLISH FEEDBACK MECHANISMS FOR YOUTH PARTNERS

- Ensure that youth partners are able to review documents that are submitted to the projects' / programmes' donors.
- Make any reporting available to youth partners to use in order to showcase their own work to their own donors and partners. Further, if you have a communications team or department in charge of this, offer their technical assistance to the youth partner (who likely does not have this resource).
- Provide capacity-building opportunities on reporting, MEL, communications, etc. available at a stage of the partnership that can be formalized / made available to youth partners and their networks.
- Enable youth partners to share critical feedback about their experience directly with your organization's team.

## RESOURCES

- [The Flower of Participation](#) (Youth Do It)
- [Youth engagement community of practice](#) (Youth Power 2)
- [Meaningful youth participation position paper](#) (Choice for Youth & Sexuality)

## CASE STUDY

### *Save the Children: Adolescent engagement in SRH programming*

*Save the Children is a child-centred organization and engages young people in all of its programming. One programme that exemplifies this commitment is Growing Up GREAT (GUG), a sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programme for very young adolescents (VYAs) aged 10-14 years in Kinshasa, DRC that aims to improve SRH and gender-equitable knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, and promote a more positive normative environment for adolescent SRH.*

*Under Growing Up GREAT, we engaged adolescents and youth meaningfully and continuously through a number of interconnected approaches. During the programme design phase, Save the Children worked closely with both in-school and out-of-school adolescents to adapt evidence-based materials from other contexts and to develop new materials addressing issues important to them. During pilot implementation, VYAs were trained and supported to act as peer facilitators of school-based health clubs exploring topics and norms related to puberty, SRH and gender. Peer facilitators were paired with teachers who had also been trained on GUG and could provide support for challenging content or club dynamics. This mentoring relationship greatly improved the confidence and skills of VYA facilitators, while also shifting teachers' ideas about what young people are capable of doing.*

*GUG also created a formal Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to monitor, evaluate and advise on programme implementation. The YAC was composed of VYA peer facilitators, older adolescents from school governments and other youth-focused projects, and youth researchers from a local youth-led organization. YAC members accompanied government and project representatives on joint supervision visits, attended select learning meetings and consultations with the multi-sectoral Technical Advisory Group, and*

*conducted two participatory evaluations of GUG, one during pilot and the other during scale-up. The GUG Monitoring and Evaluation Officer who supported these activities was also a young person.*

*The YAC has also presented the findings of their studies at international, national and local levels. A VYA member of the YAC presented at the 2018 International Conference on Family Planning and others will present a youth-led panel on participatory youth evaluation at the 2022 ICFP. The group also presented at meetings of the GUG national Technical Advisory Group in Kinshasa. Finally, they held several Open Door days in communities where the research was conducted to share information about their role and accomplishments as YAC members, as well as the results of their research. The YAC has established a presence on multiple social media outlets to allow for continued interaction with peers and communities, as well as to share updates. They are currently pursuing registration as a formally recognized entity in DRC.*

*One of the challenges faced in the adolescent engagement journey was the need for additional accompaniment of such young adolescents. Save the Children developed a number of strategies for addressing this need, some through trial and error. For example, the evaluation team found that the youth-friendly research methodologies used for the first youth evaluation were still too complex for younger adolescents, so they further adapted them into a new visual tool that used both drawings and words to capture data. VYA facilitators sometimes had difficulty managing school club dynamics, especially if disagreements arose, so teachers trained on the national Family Life Education curriculum were tapped to attend, observe and support club meetings as needed. Finally, giving VYAs the opportunity to present results internationally required extra resources to ensure a parent or chaperone could attend. These lessons learned are valuable as they provide evidence on how to work with younger adolescents, a group less frequently engaged by projects.*

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 3: Establish a clear method for addressing and responding to feedback

*Regularly discuss with young people whether or not their views and ideas are being heard, and how meaningful engagement of young people can be improved.*

#### FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH PARTNERS

- Does your organization value feedback from young people in trying to improve its partnership?
- Is specific attention paid to young people's safety as they share critical feedback with your organization?
- Are there commitments made at the beginning of a partnership for which young people can hold your organization accountable?
- Does your organization have a formal safeguarding policy?
- Further, if your organization works with adolescents, do you have a child protection policy?
- If young people need to file a complaint with human resources, are they given clear instructions on how to do that?
- Are young people safe from any potential backlash if they report issues or concerns?

#### MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

- When a partnership is designed with success metrics, are young people invited to participate in the evaluation?
- Is there a feedback survey or offboarding process at the end of a partnership that specifically focuses on MAYE?

## GUIDANCE

Young people's views are at the crux of MAYE. If a partnership isn't serving young people, it isn't meaningful. Any meaningful partnership or engagement ensures that these views, experiences, and priorities are at the heart of any activity planning, implementation, and evaluation. It's incredibly important that young people are able to give feedback about

their experiences at every stage of the partnership, but especially if something is wrong or unsafe for them. If a partnership becomes unsafe, young people will disengage. Further, they are likely to share their experience with other youth initiatives to help them avoid having a negative experience.

Beyond asking young people about their priorities and to help your institution to assess MAYE, it's important to take a remedial approach to any negative feedback that may come from youth partners. What happens when young people state that they aren't being heard, or their views aren't being respected? Is an action taken? Is it safe for young people?

#### FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH PARTNERS

- Ensure that there is a clearly articulated value about gathering feedback and recommendations from young people within your organization.
- Pay specific attention to young people's safety as they share critical feedback with your organization.
- In any partnership with young people, articulate a commitment to transparency, accountability and critical analysis at the beginning of the engagement.
- Throughout the partnership, provide touchpoints that allow for all partners to reflect on whether they are being heard.
- Identify a clear process for logging complaints in the partnership. This includes a process for alerting human resources if they feel someone has been abusive or threatening.
- Ensure that young people will be free from retaliation or backlash if they raise concerns about the partnership.

#### MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

- When a partnership is being evaluated, ask young people questions that review MAYE principles within the partnership.
- In any offboarding process at the end of a partnership, create a survey or feedback process.

## RESOURCES

- [Youth involvement and engagement assessment tool](#) (youth.gov)

## CASE STUDY

### *Restless Development: (Beyond) Transparency*

*Restless Development is committed to dynamic two-way accountability<sup>39</sup> in all it does – from publishing salaries, board reports and policies to sharing reports, evaluations and research pieces on our [transparency page](#). An essential part of Restless Development's values, transparency is leveraged through a dynamic accountability approach to increase programme effectiveness by bringing in young people, partners, donors, communities, staff and volunteers to help shape strategy, oversee performance and to adapt work for greater impact. As early adopters Restless Development are fully compliant with the [International Aid Transparency Initiative \(IATI\)](#), and are members of [Accountable Now](#) and [Bond](#). They received the [2017 Bond Transparency Awards](#), and received recognition from [Accountable Now's independent review panel](#) of their commitment to dynamic accountability and young people.*

*Restless Development implemented concrete changes to its organizational structure to be more responsive and involve deeper listening to the communities they work with. For one, they have committed to shifting a higher proportion of roles to the Global South (accelerated over the last couple of years especially during pandemic). This engagement with the localisation agenda was commended by Accountable Now. They have also piloted a new leadership structure to ensure greater transparency and learning from young people as partners. Three rotating positions for youth leaders are now part of our Leadership Team, the highest decision-making body for the global agency. Youth representatives play a key role in influencing the strategic direction – from programmatic, partnerships to budgetary – of our organization with two-way mentorship throughout their terms. Restless Development also seeks consistent and regular feedback from stakeholders outside of the organization; for example through the Youth Collective and Annual Leaders surveys which invites youth across our programming to share feedback on how youth-centred the organization is. At the national level the agency also conduct annual reviews with community members that inform yearly strategies and plans.*

*Restless Development is also committed to sharing power in governance by ensuring that all national and global boards have at least two young members as well as in management and leadership of initiatives within the agency. This unique approach ensures that young people are fully empowered to lead in all parts of the project management framework rather than as beneficiaries or token partners, as is common in most multi-country initiatives at scale.*

*Restless Development's [youth-led research](#) and [youth-led accountability](#) models give young people ownership of the insights and data they generate, and put them in charge of setting the priorities that they share with decision-makers. The agency is also strategically committed to transferring power, resources and ownership to youth civil society through the Youth Collective, a global community for youth-led organizations that engage with influencing and educating donors, elevating youth priorities for advocacy and capacity building of youth civil society.*

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 4: Create and identify opportunities for young people

*Create and identify opportunities for young people and support them to advocate for issues and causes of their choice, and to safely share their experience and knowledge as experts by connecting young people with key population networks, mentoring young people to speak at advocacy events, and hiring young people as members of staff.*

#### CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Is your organization involved in coalitions or networks where youth issues are discussed, where you can recommend a youth partner to join?
- Are youth partners able to shape key messages according to their values and priorities?
- Are youth partners able to tell their stories from their own perspective?

#### YOUTH ISSUES ARE A PRIORITY

- Are you able to determine issue-specific alignment and similar values with your youth partners?
- Are youth partners gagged from speaking about key issues when they engage in a partnership with your organization, such as abortion or sexual rights?

#### YOUNG KEY POPULATIONS ARE REPRESENTED

- Do youth partners have time and resources to engage with young key populations about issues that are affecting them?
- Does your organization have materials that explain clearly what type of engagement you are seeking from young key populations, and where their feedback is going?
- Do you use communication channels that are user-friendly for young key populations to engage safely and confidentially?

#### MENTORING YOUTH SPEAKERS BEFORE AND AFTER A MAJOR EVENT

- Does your organization provide support – from logistics and administrative support to developing talking points and making connections – to youth partners and speakers at major events?
- Is there a specific role on your team to support youth speakers and spend time with them to determine their needs?

#### HIRING YOUNG PEOPLE AS STAFF

- Are young staff provided with meaningful and relevant capacity-building opportunities?
- Are young staff provided with meaningful and relevant networking opportunities?
- Are all young professionals who work with your organization, including young researchers, youth speakers, and youth consultants, remunerated adequately for their work?

## GUIDANCE

If your organization is committed to MAYE as a principle and value, rather than just as a tool that contributes to the advancement of your organization's mandate, it is reflected in the opportunities that are created for young people even when there isn't a direct benefit to your organization. This means that opportunities for youth are actively sought and created where none exist, but also ensuring that opportunities are meaningful when they are created (rather than tokenistic).

Additionally, youth partnerships that center on young people's issues, experiences, and priorities are crucial to MAYE. What do young people care about and what do they see as the solution? How can your organization support them to advance their own agenda first?

Here are some examples of how to do this on a practical level:

- When your organization is invited to speak at an event, especially about adolescents or young people, give up your speaking spot to a young person.
- When inviting a young person to speak, they must have time to consult with their peers.
- If you are inviting a young person to participate in an event, spend time working with them to ensure that they feel prepared. Hold a phone call to walk them through the agenda, ask if they need support preparing a presentation or talking points, and understand what barriers there are to their participation. Ensure that they have met other participants or panellists. If this is an event where they have a speaking role, pay for their participation, including an honorarium for their time.

### CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- If your organization is involved in coalitions or networks where youth issues are discussed, but where there may not be robust youth representation, invite your youth partners.
- Within the context of your partnership, allow young people to shape the key messages, priorities and approaches to key issues.
- In addition to being engaged as experts, ensure that there are opportunities for young people to tell their stories and bring in stories from their peers.

### YOUTH ISSUES ARE A PRIORITY

- Before a young person or youth initiatives comes in as a partner, determine issue-specific alignment and similar values.
- Ensure youth partners aren't gagged from speaking about key issues when they engage in a partnership with your organization.

### YOUNG KEY POPULATIONS ARE REPRESENTED

- Ensure that youth partners have adequate time and resources to engage with young key populations, given some of the challenges and concerns they may have about confidentiality, representation, and transparency, etc.
- Provide materials that clearly explain what type of engagement you are seeking from young key populations, and where their feedback is going.
- Provide user-friendly communication channels for young key populations to engage safely and confidentially.

### MENTORING YOUTH SPEAKERS BEFORE AND AFTER A MAJOR EVENT

- Provide support, from logistics and administrative support to developing talking points and making connections.
- Spend time with the youth partner, determining what they need from you to be successful in the event.
- Ensure that youth participants who are sharing potentially traumatizing information or speaking on a human rights violation have the support (including psychosocial support and safe space to share their feeling after the event) they need. This could include doing a risk assessment beforehand, especially if they are expecting backlash.

### HIRING YOUNG PEOPLE AS STAFF

- Provide young staff with robust capacity-building opportunities.
- Provide young staff with robust networking opportunities.
- Remunerate young people, including young researchers and youth consultants, adequately for their work.

## RESOURCES

- [Building effective youth-adult partnerships](#) (Advocates for Youth)
- [Working with young people from marginalized groups. Unofficial handbook](#) (UNFPA / Restless Development)
- [Principles of youth engagement, specifically engaging young people with lived experiences](#) (Schoolhouse Connection)

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 5: Support sustained engagement and ongoing relationships

*Support sustained engagement and ongoing relationships between young people and the communities they represent. This may include providing young people with enough time, space and other necessary resources for meetings with community members to multiply their impact and reach within their community, including before, during and after major events.*

#### YOUTH PARTNERS STAY CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY

- Is your organization seeking diverse perspectives from young people (not just the urban elite)?
- Does your organization provide adequate time for youth initiatives to consult with their peers before signing onto a process or advocacy document?
- Does your organization provide adequate time for youth initiatives to consult with their peers before speaking on behalf of young people in their community at a major event?
- Are youth partners able to elect a young person from their group to speak at an event based on their internal process?
- Does your organization provide funding for young people to meaningfully engage with their community?
- Does your organization provide support for youth partnership to report back to their peers?

## GUIDANCE

Any engagement with youth initiatives or attempts to establish youth partnerships must support young people to remain connected to the communities they represent. While global conference opportunities and meetings will benefit MAYE work, the work that young people do at the community must be protected while also releasing young people from the responsibility of representing the full diversity of young people's lived experiences. Young people also need time to make sure they are able to reflect their peers as adequately, fully and accurately as they can on any global stage, and they need time to conduct meaningful consultations where appropriate.

- Offer opportunities for community and national-based youth advocates to engage at regional and global levels.
- Provide adequate time for youth initiatives to consult with their peers before signing onto a process or advocacy document.
- Provide adequate time for youth initiatives to consult with their peers before speaking on behalf of young people in their community.
- Ensure that youth partners are able to elect a young person from their group to speak at an event based on their internal process.

## RESOURCES

- [Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement and partnership in sexual and reproductive health programming: A strategic planning guide](#) (Family Planning High Impact Practices)
- [Guidelines on recognizing value contribution and remuneration of young people engaged by PMNCH](#) (PMNCH)

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 6: Build skills and knowledge

*Build skills and knowledge of young people and the adults working with them. Young people may need help to develop their ability to engage other stakeholders and specific training on a variety of topics and to ensure their successful involvement. Additionally, adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate young peoples' engagement effectively. This may include training adults to listen to, work jointly with and engage young people effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities.*

#### PROVIDE TRAININGS FOR YOUTH PARTNERS

- Are there capacity-building opportunities for young people who work in partnership with your organization?
- Have young people defined these capacity-building needs directly through dialogue with your organization?
- Are these trainings offered at times that are convenient for young people, on platforms they can easily access?

#### PROVIDE TRAININGS FOR ADULT ALLIES

- Does your organization offer training opportunities for adult staff on MAYE?
- Are these training opportunities designed with / facilitated by / with leadership from youth partners?
- Does your organization ensure that any adult allies working within youth partnerships are fully aware of MAYE principles and practice?

## GUIDANCE

The assumption is often that young people are the ones who benefit most from trainings simply because of where they are in their career. However, establishing a learning partnership with youth initiatives will be mutually beneficial, as it will ensure that learning happens in both directions and may change the perceptions of key adult gatekeepers about MAYE. While many youth partners welcome training and capacity-building opportunities, they are at the point in their lives and careers where they are learning many new skills all at once. Trainings must therefore be based on and tailored to their expressed needs and be delivered in formats that work best for them.

- Ask youth partners what type of capacity-building opportunities they need, rather than assuming your organization has what they need.
- Provide creative informal learning opportunities (such as a brown bag lunch meetings) between members of your organizations' team, who may be able to give youth partners information about key issues like management, fundraising, communications, etc.
- Ensure that capacity-building sessions are based on need directly articulated by youth partners. This means asking young people before you design a training for them. For adolescent partners, provide a menu of options that they might choose from in terms of training as they may not have experience in formal training settings and may not know their options.
- Co-create learning opportunities alongside youth partners aimed at strategic members of your team, who may not truly understand MAYE principles and their role in supporting (or detracting from) MAYE.

## RESOURCES

- [Tips for working with adult allies](#) (Advocates for Youth)

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 7: Use language and communication methods that are understandable, respectful and accessible to everyone

*Use language and communication methods that are understandable, respectful, and accessible to everyone by avoiding overly technical language and jargon, developing material for disabled young people, and providing translation support to those who should require it.*

#### USING USER-FRIENDLY AND PLAIN / NON-JARGON LANGUAGE

- Does your organization have a working list of abbreviations and jargon in the sector?
- Are you able to determine at what point youth partners are starting in their professional journey, assessing their familiarity with key terms, institutions and actors, and provide training to ensure they are prepared?
- Is it a part of your partnership to sit down and ensure that youth partners know the language, the actors, the systems?
- Does your organization offer options for communicating with youth partners on more informal channels that may work best for them, like WhatsApp or Facebook?

#### RESOURCES FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE / IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

- Does your organization curate resources specifically for young people with a range of disabilities?
- Are young people with disabilities able to offer feedback on the accessibility of different resources and events?
- Does your organization offer simultaneous translation during its major engagement points with young people?
- Does your organization include resources in other languages besides English?

## GUIDANCE

Every sector has its jargon and terms of art. It can take decades to become familiar with the lexicon of certain sectors.

- Create a working list of abbreviations and jargon in the sector and spend time breaking it down with youth partners.
- Determine at what point youth partners are starting in their professional journey, assessing their familiarity with key terms, institutions and actors, and provide training to ensure they are prepared.
- Offer resources in multiple languages.
- Offer resources that respond to the range of special needs, including Braille, captioned audio in videos, etc.

## RESOURCES

- [Accessible design for users with disabilities](#) (Nielsen Norman Group)
- [Making content usable for people with cognitive and learning disabilities](#) (World Wide Web Consortium)

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 8: Provide young people sufficient support and resources

*Provide young people sufficient support and resources, including financial resources, in a timely manner. This includes giving appropriate priority to funding and officially partnering with adolescent and youth-led organizations. It also includes heightened transparency and diversity in funding arrangements by allocating funds to young people in an equitable way and ensuring sufficient funds are available to guarantee that participation is truly accessible for a range of young people. Within culturally appropriate boundaries, young people will be compensated for their participation in recognition of their skills, expertise, and time.*

#### PROVIDE SUFFICIENT FUNDS IN A TIMELY MANNER

- Does your organization adequately compensate youth partners for their contributions?
- Does your organization provide payment up front, rather than reimbursement models, for youth partners?
- Does your organization require youth partners to go through extensive paperwork processes to receive funding, including being reimbursed?
- Does your organization establish official partnerships with adolescent- and/or youth-led initiatives?
- Does your organization provide technical support to youth partners when it comes to implementing your organization's procedures and policies?
- Do you have open and honest conversations with youth partners about funding? Do they know how secure their funding is?
- Do youth partners know the terms of their funding arrangement with your organization?
- Establish official partnerships with youth initiatives, rather than asking them to join voluntary spaces, where their engagement is compensated.

## GUIDANCE

Youth initiatives, especially feminist and adolescent-led initiatives, are often the most under-resourced organizations. This means that, unless your organization is partnering with a youth-led initiative directly, they are likely showing up as volunteers or with very little pay. Unlike other partnerships, where adult-led participants are usually showing up in their professional (and paid) capacity, and their staff time to participate is covered, many youth participants are volunteers or not fully compensated for their time.

- When partnering with youth initiatives, assume that they will not be able to pay up front for project expenses and then be reimbursed. Submit funds in advance, and ask for receipts (if needed).
- Avoid cumbersome paperwork procedures for youth initiatives; If your procurement / bids team requires paperwork, provide technical assistance to youth partners from that team to lighten the administrative load.
- In the acknowledgement section of any publication with youth partners, acknowledge the names and roles of young people who contributed.
- Develop proposals and budgets alongside youth partners, ensuring that they are a part of your organization's process and are also able to weigh in on how the project, programme or initiative is being funded.
- Provide information about reporting requirements up front, and give youth partners the opportunity to give feedback on the feasibility of those requirements. Obviously, hash out the non-negotiables, but if there is room to flex on some aspects of reporting, identify them early so that the reporting process is user-friendly.

## RESOURCES

- [Guidelines on recognizing value, contribution, and remuneration of young people engaged by PMNCH \(PMNCH\)](#)
- [Maximising benefits: A recommended framework for volunteerism and compensation for young people \(Bacalso C, Moxon D\)](#)
- [Brief guidance on compensation for young people's participation \(UNICEF\) - forthcoming](#)

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 9: Provide enabling environments

*Provide enabling environments and ensure that adequate time and resources are made available to young people so that they are prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to participate in decision making. These approaches should be mindful of the differing levels of support needed, based on the age and evolving capacities of young people, and acknowledge that the expertise and participation of some young people may draw from adverse personal experiences that could trigger emotional trauma that may require the provision of psychological support.*

#### PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE TO WORK WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Are young people set up to succeed when they engage in a partnership with your organization?
- Are young people given enough time, resources, and funding to engage meaningfully in whatever space they are invited to with your organization?
- Are young people supported to share their story in a way that is comfortable for them, non-extractive, and surrounded by supportive team members?

#### PREPARE YOUR ORGANIZATION TO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- Are adult allies in your organization trained on MAYE?
- In every project / program / engagement / initiative involving young people, is there someone engaged who is familiar with MAYE best practice?
- Does your organization have a mechanism that allows young people to flag or 'whistleblow' mistreatment or bad MAYE practice?

## GUIDANCE

The quality of adolescent and youth engagement is only as good as the enabling environment that you are working in.

- Ensure that any young people and youth partners you engage with are set up to succeed, by whatever metric is established.
- Young people are supported to share their stories in ways that are comfortable for them, non-extractive, and surrounded by supportive team members.
- Give young people enough time, resources and funding to engage meaningfully in whatever space.

## CASE STUDY

### *African Health Budget Network (AHBN): Capacity-building for Nigerian youth*

*African Health Budget Network (AHBN) promotes transparency, accountability and sustainability of innovative health financing and accountability for Africa. This is done through budget monitoring and analysis, as well as strategic advocacy, engagement and building partnerships. AHBN enables CSOs, media and young people to meaningfully influence initiatives, policies, state actors, and any investment that has the potential to improve overall health and wellbeing.*

*Aside equipping CSOs and media with necessary skills and knowledge, AHBN has a peculiar interest in supporting young people not only to be programme beneficiaries but part of decision-making processes and project implementation experts at subnational, national, regional and international levels. AHBN ensures representation of this constituency in all meetings, trainings and initiatives.*

*AHBN has been in alignment with the Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement over the years. For example:*

- *More than half of the staff in AHBN are young people who are deliberately nurtured to become experts in their various fields. AHBN had supported several youth groups and*

- *Recognize that young people are not a homogenous group and that their needs, experiences and priorities are diverse.*
- *Provide safety and care, with specific attention paid to the fact that the expertise and participation of some young people may draw from adverse personal experiences that could trigger trauma that may require the provision of psychological support.*

## RESOURCES

- *Guidance on consultation with young people (UNICEF) - forthcoming*

*coalitions since 2017 both at national and subnational levels by building their capacity in terms of knowledge of the sector and trends, advocacy and negotiation skills, as well as budget tracking and analysis skills. The Nigerian Youth Champions for Universal Health Coverage (NYC4UHC), National Coalition for the Advancement of Adolescent and Youth Health in Nigeria (NCAAYH), Youth Society for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases & Social Vices (YOSPIS) Kano State and Niger State Youth Network.*

- *In 2021, AHBN supported the National Coalition for the Advancement of Adolescent and Youth Health in Nigeria (NCAAYH) in developing an Adolescent and Youth Health Financing Scorecard by training youth advocates on budget tracking and analysis as well as development and printing of the scorecard.*
- *In 2021, AHBN created a platform for donors, CSOs and young people to meet with the Federal Ministry of Health, its agencies and other related government departments on a quarterly basis at quarterly executive lunch meetings with development partners. The aim is to enhance alignment with government priorities on health – including reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, adolescent and elderly health plus nutrition – and galvanize support and actions, as well as provide a platform where the government gives updates on their various programmes and initiatives.*

## ASSESSMENT

### CHECKLIST ITEM 10: Promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women

*Promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women in all processes. This includes implementing gender-sensitive measures to facilitate the engagement of girls and young women in participatory governance. By meaningfully engaging women and girls, we will transform gendered social norms by legitimising their engagement in decision-making arenas.*

#### **GENDER SENSITIVE / GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE INTERNAL POLICIES**

- Does your organization apply a gender-transformative lens to adolescent and youth programming?
- Does your institution have a specific mandate to target and engage adolescent girls?
- Does your organization ensure that adolescent girls' voices are highlighted in different speaking engagements, panels, fora, etc.,

#### **EMPOWER GIRLS AND WOMEN THROUGH PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE**

- Does any advisory group or youth board within your organization include an approach that ensures equal gender representation?

## GUIDANCE

This section recognizes that there are entire coalitions, initiatives, technical guidance, working groups and global frameworks that outline best practice around gender equality and adolescent girls' engagement. Given the depth and breadth of this guidance, it is recommended that stakeholders review the resources below for guidance based on their capacity and needs. An annotated list is provided here to help stakeholders choose based on their specific mandate.

## RESOURCES

- [Tools and resources for girl-centered programming](#) (Population Council)
- [Girl-centered program design: A toolkit to develop, strengthen and expand adolescent girls programs](#) (Population Council)
- [Girl Effect: It's your move](#) (Girl Effect)
- [Gender with age marker \(GAM\)](#) (IASC)
- [The Adolescent girls investment plan](#) (AGIP)
- [Adolescent girl friendly spaces toolkit](#) (Save the Children)
- [Envisioning gender equality for the next generation 2022-2024 strategy](#) (Save the Children)
- [Global girlhood report 2022: Girls on the frontline](#) (Save the Children)

## PART 3: *Per stakeholder*



PMNCH brings together over 1350 partner organizations across 10 constituencies. Members collaborate through PMNCH to advance sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health. PMNCH constituencies align objectives and resources for effective policies, financing and service delivery to advance the agenda on women's, children's and adolescents' health and well-being, leaving no one behind.

Many constituencies were not included in the drafting of the PGR as this document could not go into the depth that was required to capture all nuances of all constituencies' engagement with adolescents and youth. For example, it was determined that for this PGR to be useful to 193 governments, it had to go through an entirely separate process that falls outside of the scope of this document.<sup>40</sup> However, this document is designed to be useful in some capacity to whoever engages with it, regardless of whether they are framed as a target in this section. For that reason, any and all PMNCH constituencies and stakeholders are welcome to review all sections of Part 3, even though this section focuses primarily on the following five constituencies:

- **Adolescents and Youth Constituency (AYC)**
- **Academic, research and training institutes (ART)**
- **Donors and foundations (DF)**
- **Non-governmental organizations (NGO)**
- **United Nations agencies (UNA)**

### Academic, research and training institutes (ART)

The Academic, Research and Training Institutions (ART) Constituency is composed of 189 member organizations from over 45 countries. ART members play a leadership role in identifying, reviewing and packaging knowledge and evidence to inform PMNCH-led advocacy efforts on women's, children's and adolescents' health (WCAH) and well-being. The ART constituency also has a key role in supporting the uptake of evidence in advocacy for better policies, better service delivery and better financing for the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents.

Academics and researchers are often in the position of working with students and young researchers, especially on topics and issues that most affect them, such as: adolescent access to contraception; child, early, forced marriage and unions (CEFMU); and youth civic and political participation, to name just a few. Beyond the direct capacity-building opportunities that become available for young people when working with researchers and/or in an academic setting, the research is richer because young people can ask different questions.

Here are some additional resources for researchers and academic institutions who seek to engage adolescents and youth in research:

- [Explore toolkit for involving young people as researchers in sexual and reproductive health programmes](#) (Rutgers / IPPF)
- [Research practice partnerships](#) (Anne E Casey Foundation)
- [Youth-led research](#) (Restless Development)

### Donors and foundations (DF)

The Donors and Foundations Constituency is composed of bilateral donors, national governments and foundations that have provided, currently provide or explicitly intend to provide grant funding for the delivery of PMNCH workplans. Other entities, not meeting the grant-funding criteria – but which provide grants supporting evidence-based action for sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child or adolescent health – are eligible to become observers in the constituency.

Donors play a major role in the global realization of MAYE, as often they are in a position to support larger grantee partners to invest in MAYE as a part of their funding arrangement as well as have the potential to encourage partners to design, implement, and evaluate programs in accordance with MAYE. Additionally, donors are able to support research initiatives that generate evidence on MAYE, which is crucial, since a human rights based argument for MAYE is often not enough to encourage robust engagement.

#### Further reading:

- [Funders' toolkit for child and youth participation](#) (Elevate Children Funders' Group)
- [Enhance and prioritize community philanthropy](#) (Global Fund for Community Foundations)
- [Centering pan-African philanthropies amid the shifting global socio-political and economic order](#) (Trust Africa)

## Non-governmental organizations (NGO)

Members of the Non-Governmental Organizations Constituency are non-profit organizations that are actively engaged in women's, children's and adolescents' health (WCAH). These organizations help improve WCAH by generating and disseminating evidence, and by advocating for policies that reflect the realities of the communities and populations that they represent. They also advocate for improved financing for health and hold governments and development partners accountable for delivering on their commitments.

Within the global conversation about equity lies the role of international NGOs (INGOs) in either uprooting or further entrenching systems of white supremacy and colonization. Since so many (especially big) INGOs have so many different potential touchpoints with young people – as staff, beneficiaries / targets of programmes or services, fellow advocates, or as a partner or coalition member – it's very timely and relevant that they would be trying to understand their MAYE journey. INGOs can play multiple roles, for example as donors, technical assistance providers or fiscal hosts.

Most of this PGR is written with INGO–youth partnerships in mind, and may make assumptions about the nature of the INGO that are worth unpacking further, such as their history of working with youth partners and the policies they have in place for engaging with youth.

#### Further reading:

- [Creating meaningful youth engagement](#) (Plan International)
- [The rights of the child during Adolescence: Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 20 \(2016\) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence](#) (Save the Children)
- [Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement and partnership in sexual and reproductive health programming: A strategic planning guide](#) (Family Planning High Impact Practices)

## United Nations agencies (UNA)

The United Nations Agencies (UNA) Constituency harnesses the collective normative, implementation and advocacy strengths of UN agencies to advance the Global Strategy and support national leadership and action for women's, children's and adolescents' health and well-being (WCAH). The constituency enhances alignment and synergies among its members to enable joint advocacy and accountability actions at the global, regional and country levels to achieve greater impact for women, children, and adolescents.

All UN Agencies offer their own resources, strategies and policies and are provided here for cross-reference across all agencies.

#### Further reading:

- [System-wide action plan on youth](#) (United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination)
- [Youth 2030](#) (UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Youth)
- [Together we decide: Strengthening child participation in UN processes](#) (Save the Children)

- [UNICEF Adol Participation Resources.docx](#) (UNICEF)
- [Child and Youth Engagement Guide](#) (UNICEF)
- [UNFPA strategy on adolescents and youth](#) (UNFPA)
- [Youth participation and leadership](#) (UNFPA)
- [Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 — End inequalities. End AIDS](#) (UNAIDS)
- [Unified budget, results and accountability framework \(UBRAF\)](#) (UNAIDS)
- [The Global Alliance to end AIDS in children](#) (UNAIDS)
- [Education Plus Initiative \(2021-2025\) Empowerment of adolescent girls and young women in Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (UNAIDS)
- [The Pact](#) (The Youth Pact)
- [Adolescent and young key populations \(AYKP\)](#) (Children and Aids)
- [Documents on the High Level Meeting on HIV 2021](#) (The Youth Pact)

## A note on the Adolescents and Youth Constituency (AYC)

PMNCH's Adolescents and Youth Constituency (AYC) is composed of over 100 youth-led organizations and networks that have been leading or implementing sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health projects at national, regional or global levels for at least two years. Each organization appoints one main and one alternate delegate, aged 10–30 years, as its representative in the constituency.

The PGR is meant to be useful as AYC members work in partnership with adult ally organizations, and as they advocate for MAYE in their day to day work. This PGR recognizes the burden that youth-led organizations, initiatives, coalitions and networks carry as they try to implement their own activities while also strengthening MAYE (which may or may not be a part of their official mandate).

# Conclusion



The goal of this PGR is to support organizations and institutions at any stage of their MAYE journey to take at least one step further towards more meaningful, impactful and effective adolescent and youth engagement. While no institution is expected to tick every single box on the assessment tool, implement every aspect of the guidance provided, or review every resource, it is the ambition of this document to at least provide one or two opportunities.

For adolescent- and youth-led organizations: This resource is meant to help you work with partners and stakeholders to ensure that the partnerships that you are a part of are right for you and meet your standards of engagement. The PGR also acknowledges the specific guidance and resources provided for the following constituencies:

- **Academic, research and training institutes (ART)**
- **Donors and foundations (DF)**
- **Non-governmental organizations (NGO)**
- **United Nations agencies (UNA)**

The work on MAYE continues as part of PMNCH's broader efforts to reach and work in partnership with adolescents and youth, under the umbrella of the 1.8 Billion Young People for Change campaign. For more information, please visit [1point8.org](https://1point8.org).

As part of the campaign, PMNCH will host a Global Forum for Adolescents in October 2023, which will serve as a major milestone in the journey to ensure partners commit and invest in this population. At the Global Forum, PMNCH will launch the second MAYE accountability report that will track partners' progress on improving MAYE in their respective organizations.

PMNCH will continue to collect tools and resources to expand the existing repository on MAYE. Partners are encouraged to share resources to the PMNCH Secretariat at [pmnch@who.int](mailto:pmnch@who.int).

If you have any questions or comments regarding this tool or the 1.8 Billion Campaign, please contact the PMNCH secretariat at [pmnch@who.int](mailto:pmnch@who.int).

# ANNEX 1:

## Resources



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39. For detail of how this works in practice: <http://wearerestless.org/2017/03/14/why-would-you-want-to-publish-that/>
40. Though governments are not being given specific guidance in the context of the PGR, there are several tools that arose during the research for the PGR that may be useful: [OGP Toolkit](#), [Meaningful Youth Participation - Practical Toolkit \(English\)](#).



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## PMNCH

c/o World Health Organization  
20 Avenue Appia, CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

[pmnch@who.int](mailto:pmnch@who.int)  
[www.pmnch.org](http://www.pmnch.org)

