PYD LEARNING AGENDA CONSULTATION

NOVEMBER 5, 2019 MEETING REPORT

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Introduction

YouthPower Learning, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), developed a global learning agenda to provide collective guidance to address evidence gaps and invest in evidence-building activities related to Positive Youth Development (PYD) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). A learning agenda is a set of broad questions directly related to the work that an agency conducts that, when answered, enables the agency to work more effectively and efficiently, particularly pertaining to evaluation, evidence, and decision making. Once the questions are identified, a learning agenda also prioritizes and establishes a plan to answer short- and long-term questions of the highest value across relevant program and policy areas.

The PYD Learning Agenda aims to stimulate both learning and action to build the evidence base about how, when, where, and for whom PYD works. Building upon the findings of the Systematic Review of PYD Programs in LMICs, this agenda was developed in consultation with youth-serving and youth development practitioners, researchers, evaluators, and funders to define priority questions in the field of PYD and provide guidance for potential ways to answer those questions. The main audiences for the learning agenda are those who design, implement, and evaluate youth programs. While developed by YouthPower Learning with funding from USAID, anyone who works with youth in LMICs can respond to this learning agenda and advance the PYD field. Currently, the PYD Learning Agenda prioritizes five themes to serve as anchors to guide future research on PYD programs in LMICs:

- understanding how PYD activities achieve positive impact in LMICs,

- cross-sectoral impact of PYD activities,

- measurement of PYD constructs,

- PYD for vulnerable or marginalized populations, and

- youth engagement in PYD activities.

Since the launch of the PYD Learning Agenda, YouthPower Learning has created opportunities for sharing resources and knowledge as well as fostering collaboration. Activities include collating and curating resources on the latest research and programming on www.youthpower.org, developing partnerships with youth-focused organizations, working with the YouthPower Learning Communities of Practices to integrate a gender lens, and summarizing evidence through a YouthPower Task Order review.

YouthPower Learning convened a one-day consultation on Tuesday, November 5, 2019 in Washington D.C. The consultation brought together program implementers who made up 54 percent of attendees, researchers who made up 27 percent, and funders who made up 19 percent. Discussions focused on the lessons learned in positive youth development research and programming and sessions were designed to:

- Share and learn about up-to-date evidence on PYD in LMICs.

- Understand achievements in advancing the PYD Learning Agenda globally and moving the field forward.

- Identify gaps in the evidence base on PYD and implementation challenges.

- Develop cross-collaborations and action steps among evaluators, researchers, program implementers, and funders.

This document is a synthesis of that meeting.

How are We Using the PYD Learning Agenda?

The meeting started with introductory remarks by Cassandra Jessee, the Director of YouthPower Learning. She outlined the mission of YouthPower Learning, which is to generate and disseminate knowledge about the implementation and impact of PYD and cross-sectoral approaches in international development. YouthPower Learning advances the goal laid out in USAID's Youth in Development policy, which seeks to improve the capacities and enable the aspirations of youth, allowing them to contribute to and benefit from more stable, democratic, and prosperous communities and nations.

Following introductory remarks, Cassandra moderated a panel on exploring thematic areas within the PYD Learning Agenda, featuring Nancy Taggart from USAID, Holta Trandafili from World Vision, and Kristin Brady from YouthPower Action. Nancy shared how the PYD Learning Agenda supports USAID's Youth in Development Policy goals and aligns with various bureau strategies, particularly those recently launched from E3. She further emphasized how it provides a key opportunity for implementers and researchers to contribute to gaps in the PYD knowledge base and enables everyone's work to have a larger platform to generate knowledge and connect beyond one's individual work.

Next, Holta gave insight into World Vision's views on the agenda. She explained that World Vision has a genuine desire to build and use evidence across the organization, however, the prevailing approach to evidence building and research has been siloed (e.g., working within one's sector, or subdivision of the organization, disaggregating M&E from Research and Learning,). Adopting a global research agenda on PYD brings broader alignment across sectors within World Vision, but also alignment across donors and other peer organizations. The agenda also brings together actors from different sectors and fields to examine the evidence gaps jointly. Holta articulated that the practical benefit of this agenda is that YouthPower Learning invested the time and resources in a rigorous development process based on a systematic review, which is not easy for many organizations to undertake. She also relayed World Vision's enthusiasm in engaging globally with a shared learning agenda that helps them to strategically invest resources thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their programming. She went on to explain their process. World Vision made several practical steps in engaging with the PYD Learning Agenda, including mapping their programs targeting youth funded by World Vision US. World Vision is a federation of interdependent national offices therefore it may be difficult to know all the youth programming across the organizations. After the mapping exercise, sector teams outlined the existing learning questions embedded in the proposal/project implementation and its relevance to the five PYD Learning Agenda themes. They also assessed if the project does not have a learning agenda whether their M&E data could contribute to the PYD Learning Agenda. The hope was to make a commitment to YouthPower and contribute to the existing evidence base.

Kristin Brady, Project Director for YouthPower Action and Director of the Youth and Learning Practice at FHI 360, discussed how YouthPower Action's work has focused on implementation of youth-focused programs. YouthPower Action developed the Youth Programming Assessment Tool (YPAT) to help youth-serving civil society organizations reflect upon their own internal programming and institutional practices and identify areas for improvement. Kristin emphasized that the PYD Learning Agenda created greater structure in defining PYD and best approaches to implement, design, and measure programs for and by youth. YouthPower Action also conducted a systematic, comprehensive review of youth programs that integrate sexual and reproductive health and workforce development in order to identify the features of effective programs.

YouthPower2: Learning & Evaluation (YP2LE), the follow-on project to YouthPower Learning, is designed to advance the PYD Learning Agenda and other youth-related learning agendas through research, analysis, and dissemination of evidence, best practices, guidance, and practical tools for youth

development practitioners and stakeholders. The PYD Learning Agenda is a living document that will identify key PYD research topics to be explored and be refined annually.

Key Takeaways

- **The PYD Learning Agenda facilitates sharing of evidence across organizations, breaking down silos across sectors.** This agenda is a pathway to increase people's awareness on PYD, engage in intentional efforts to implement cross-sectoral PYD programs, and distill commonalities that are useful across multiple sectors. The agenda also helps to synthesize learnings across sectors and test new models, advancing the evidence base.

- **The PYD Learning Agenda is aligned with and has informed other USAID youth-focused work.** Some examples are youth engagement, youth capacities, cross-sectoral learning, and scaling and systems.

- **To achieve its full potential, the PYD Learning Agenda needs to have champions.** Champions within the organization can help keep the focus on priorities, while doing the work of mainstreaming a PYD strategy.

- **YP2LE will build on Youth Power Learning's work.** The PYD Learning Agenda and the learning network are critical components to this next iteration. YP2LE will help make the case going forward for more impact evidence from projects that build youth-focused research and M&E into their activities.
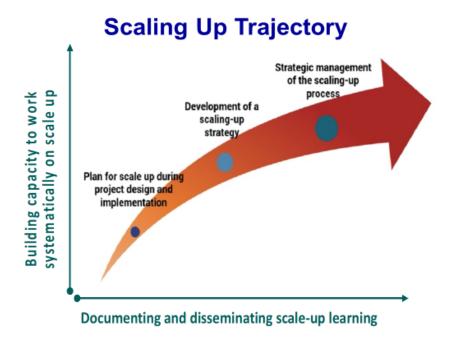
Presentation on Considerations for Scaling PYD

Laura Ghiron, ExpandNet

Following the panel discussion, Laura Ghiron, a member of the Secretariat for ExpandNet, presented on considerations for scaling PYD programs. ExpandNet, a large, informal, and global network of public health experts seeking to advance the science and practice of scaling up, was the result of a much needed change to ensure small-scale projects were achieving their promised potential and information on how to scale up was made available. The University of Michigan and the World Health Organization conducted extensive literature reviews and convened individuals with experience in scaling up to assist. Nine steps for developing a scaling-up strategy is part of a set of ExpandNet materials that document what has been learned about scaling up successful pilot innovations and provide systematic guidance on how to plan and manage the process.

What is Scaling Up?

Ghiron defines scaling up as making "deliberate efforts to increase the impact of innovations that are successfully tested in pilot or experimental projects to benefit more people and to foster policy and program development on a lasting basis."

Scaling Up Trajectory

Youth-focused programming has some special considerations that differ from when one is trying to reach the population at large. Sometimes cultural and religious biases against giving information to youth exist, they are unable to participate over long periods of time, or they lack access to resources or transportation, impeding them from participating in youth-focused programs. From a scale up perspective, this makes meeting their needs that much more complicated.

Compounding these complexities are the fact that most people working on youth programming have not been trained on the type of management, institution-building, policy, political, and systems-thinking approaches that are required to ensure that scale up succeeds.

Ghiron discussed the four types of scaling up:

1. vertical scaling up — Enabling the policy, political, legal, regulatory, budgetary, or other systems changes needed to institutionalize an innovation at the national or sub-national level.

2. horizontal scaling up — Expanding or replicating the innovation in different geographic sites or extending to serve larger or different population groups. Expansion of innovations requires making strategic choices about how the innovation will be disseminated to new areas or to different population groups, how expansion is to be organized, how resources will be mobilized, and how the process, outcomes, and impacts will be monitored and evaluated.

3. diversification scaling up — Testing and adding a new innovation to one already being implemented.

4. spontaneous scaling up — Diffusing the innovation without deliberate guidance.

The scale-up strategy also provides a conceptual framework to guide the process and to weigh the potential trade-offs between increasing scale and the need to maintain quality, local values, local relevance, and sustainability. Scaling up is a process that requires systematic use of evidence and it is essential that data from monitoring and evaluation are linked to decision making.

- ExpandNet scaling strategies provide guidance organized around a framework that offers a roadmap for scale up. The two most important types of scaling up are horizontal and vertical. Horizontal expands an innovation's reach to different populations and vertical, also known as institutionalization, focuses on political, institutional, and legal systems to bring the innovation to a national or sub-national level. **Working on both of these types at the same time means you are more likely to achieve sustainable scale up.**

- **Adolescents have less political voice.** Their views are often overlooked by decision makers, so they play an important role in advocacy for the establishment and scale up of adolescent-friendly reproductive health services. Consideration for scaling up must take into account challenges of retaining adolescents.

- **Keep interventions as simple as possible to ensure that they are scalable**. There is a critical relationship between the complexity of the intervention package and the relationship to the amount of resources that are available to support the scale up process – not only financial but also technical and human. These are then related to the pace that you can expect to expand with reasonable quality.

- Regardless of how complex the project is, **each component must be designed in the most scalable way.** Mobilizing the existing system rather than creating parallel structures is most efficient. At minimum, scale up should be conducted with the people who are supposed to scale it. Sometimes there is support for scale up for one piece of a larger package, leaving behind other components that may be critical for scale up. **We need to advocate for the scale up of the comprehensive package,** if that is what is really creating the impact.

- **Examine sustainability prior to scaling up**. Do not scale up unless you make sure that sustainability is in place to a degree that is acceptable for the intervention package.

- When thinking about gender and social norms while scaling up, **you must be cognizant that you do not change the project too much so that it stops having the intended outcomes.** Stay faithful to the outcomes and include a robust M&E process during the project scale up.

Measurement of PYD Constructs

Presentation by Pia Campbell and Elizabeth Kim, International Youth Foundation (IYF)
Facilitated by Martie Skinner, University of Washington

KEY LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS ON MEASUREMENT:

- *What processes or strategies are critical for adaptation of reliable and valid PYD tools to different contexts?*

- *How do we best measure the implementation of PYD approaches at the program, system, or agency level?*

Presentation about IYF's Lessons Learned in Soft Skills Measurement

Pia Saunders Campbell, IYF Director of Assets, Strategy and Knowledge, and Liz Kim, IYF Manager of Measurement, Evaluation, Research, and Learning, discussed the processes and strategies used to validate a new tool to measure soft skills. IYF conducted a search of internal resources that included retrospective surveys, pre-post life skills questions, and employer surveys. They also conducted a desk review, which included existing literature, USAID reports, the YouthPower Action Inventory of Soft Skills Measurement Toolkit and the RAND Education Assessment Finder. In developing the items for the soft skills tool, inclusion criteria were: 1) easy to understand and interpret; 2) suitable for participants in different age groups and contexts; and 3) sensitive to change over time. Critical steps noted in tool development included grounding in theory (i.e., What do we mean by these definitions and these constructs?), triangulating quantitative and qualitative data for validation, refraining from deleting items from existing surveys, and consulting country teams to discuss the adaptation of the tool (i.e., meaning and interpretation of items). Next steps for IYF to develop the tool include content, review, pretesting with youth and adaptation to different contexts.

Pia and Liz also discussed helping systems to become youth-inclusive and responsive, a focus of IYF. Their presentation noted that the benefits of measuring, evaluating, and disseminating systems change learning at the program, system, or agency level include understanding why change has occurred, informing strategy and operations, influencing policies, and promoting systematic changes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **IYF has a repository of external tools.** They recommend measurement tools be grounded in theory and validated using quantitative and qualitative methods.

- Systems change, helping systems become youth-inclusive and responsive, has three main indicators: strengthened capacity, partners that demonstrate a change in system behavior, and new or adjusted practices adapted by system actors.

- **We need more evidence**. We need to better understand how these interventions and approaches are working in different contexts (e.g., different levels of investment, engagement by private sector). In addition, **we need to continue the PYD Learning Agenda level of convening and sharing**.

- There are many evaluation approaches but ones that work in complex environments are critical. **The Adopt, Adapt, Expand, Respond Framework (Springfield center) can assess systemic change.** This framework examines the ecosystem and assesses the degree the actors have responded to change.

- All of the PYD Learning Agenda are domains interconnected and the indicators should be connected too.

Discussion About What We Learned in PYD Measurement?

In her opening remarks, Martie Skinner, Research Scientist at the University of Washington, reminded participants that there is no evidence without measurement. While this is common knowledge, a large evidence gap existed due to programs not utilizing validated measures of PYD constructs. This gap resulted in the PYD Measurement Toolkit developed by YouthPower Learning.

In 2017, YouthPower Action published a review and inventory of soft skills and life skills that serves as a valuable resource that identifies existing measures, applies a set of criteria to each, and highlights the

wide range of available measures as well as the need to match the measurement tool to the purpose. The same measure that is great for informing implementers about program adaptations might not work for demonstrating program efficacy or be generalizable to a wider population, if that is your purpose. Recent work related to theme one – understanding how PYD programs work – includes cross-culture psychometric work on the Developmental Assets Profile and a work on social norms measurement:

Developmental Assets Profile (DAP)

- P. C. Scales, Roehlkepartain, E. C., and Shramko, M., Aligning Youth Development Theory, Measurement, and Practice Across Cultures and Contexts: Lessons from Use of the Developmental Assets Profile. 2017.

Social Norms

- B. Cislaghi, and Shakya, H., Social Norms and Adolescents' Sexual Health: An Introduction for Practitioners Working in Low- and Mid-income African countries. 2018.

- E. Costenbader, Cislaghi, B., Clark, C. J., Hinson, L., Lenzi, R., McCarraher, D. R., McLarnon-Silk, C., Pulerwitz, J., Shaw, B., and Stefanik, L., Social Norms Measurement: Catching up With Programs and Moving the Field Forward. 2019.

Related to the second question, there has been a large step forward with the launch of the Youth Programming Assessment Tool (YPAT). FHI 360 in collaboration with USAID recently published an assessment toolkit designed to help youth-serving organizations to examine their programming and practices to identify areas for improvement.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Small group discussions focused on PYD domain answered the following questions: *What else have we learned about measurement? What should be the next steps?*

- Challenges remain with measurement. We need to go beyond self-reported data and measure PYD life skills and longer-term outcomes.

- Consolidate our efforts by looking back at youth programs that have been implemented in one region and harvest outcomes across programs to identify results.

- We need to identify best practices for measurement of agency, since it is difficult to measure because it is fluid and develops over time. Some areas to explore are individual goal setting, self-esteem/confidence, perseverance, resiliency, voice, choice, and critical thinking. The complexity lies in the lack of strong self-reporting tools or non-self-reported information.

- We need to identify and review existing tools.

- We need to understand how we can best measure resilience.

- We need to create more safe spaces where girls can develop agency skills.

- **We need to understand** how we can apply current decision-making movements focused on adults to youth.

- **A top priority is the advancement of a good self-efficacy tool.** There are some good tools on self-esteem and regulation although we still need to create awareness around regulation as a construct.

- Resources we should make sure are included:

- Young Lives

- Global Early Adolescent Study (GEAS) Girl's Empowerment Measures

- ICRW's Decision Making and Young Girls

  - We should develop a brief that showcases the program examples and the indicators across all the sectors to define what agency looks like as applied in different sectors. This will be important as we consider going to scale.

  - How do we find the link between and measure contribution as a process and an outcome?

  - We should figure out how to capture and encourage changes in intergenerational relations and support.

  - Process evaluation and qualitative research may be more important than quantitative data.

  - Increased investments need to measure how systems can support and use actors in systems to improve programs.

Understanding How PYD Achieves Impact

Judi Aubel, Grandmother Project, Change through Culture
Discussion facilitated by Martie Skinner, University of Washington

KEY LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS ON UNDERSTANDING IMPACT:

  - *Do PYD programs in LMICs achieve their longer-term/sectoral outcomes by effecting PYD outcomes?*

  - *How can PYD programs that have proven to be effective be adapted to different contexts?*

Presentation on the Intergenerational Approach of the Grandmother Project

Judi Aubel presented on the Grandmother Project, which implements a grandmother-inclusive and intergenerational approach involving elders, parents, and adolescents (both male and female). This approach contributes to positive change in various aspects of girls' holistic development as it relates to girls' education, child marriage, teen pregnancy, and female genital cutting. In many LMIC contexts, the family refers to a broader social unit inclusive of aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and other relatives that often take on pivotal roles in adolescents' transition into adulthood. Judi emphasized that elders can serve as advisors for younger generations and play decisive roles in influencing the attitudes and practices of youth as they have cultural authority, the ability to influence relationships and behavior at the family and community levels, and are considered critical resources in passing on social norms, indigenous knowledge, and cultural values. The Grandmother Project seeks to move social norms for girls through engaging three generations of women (i.e., grandmothers, mothers, and girls). Critical elements for promoting change include involving the right people; building on cultural values, roles, and influence in non-western collectivist cultures; and strengthening intergenerational communication within relationships.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Impact is achieved by working with the combined constructs of **girls + family + community + cultural system.**

- Impact can be achieved through cross-generational communication with the involvement of the key influencers (i.e., grandmothers, aunts, uncles, etc.). Building upon cultural values and roles is important as is strengthening communication in relationships to promote change for PYD.

Discussion on Understanding How PYD Achieves Impact

There is a growth in the evidence base on PYD constructs, but many programs do not self-identify as PYD. Consequently, they do not measure how they are linked to more distal outcomes. We start on the outcomes we are trying to get then work backwards.

Small group discussions organized by PYD Learning Agenda domains discussed the following questions: *What else have we learned about PYD impact? What should be the next steps?*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Understanding cultural context and youth development is critical. It is critically important particularly in collectivistic cultures to understand the role of the community context within positive youth development. Youth may be at the center of PYD but their community and culture influences development. Community assets and cultural values (i.e., role of elders, respect, key influencers within trusting relationships, etc.) can create supportive environments that provide youth with opportunities to engage, develop, and demonstrate competence. Having a deep knowledge of the communities allows us to achieve more positive outcomes.

- We are missing evidence that links programs to PYD constructs to outcome. Although generally we have some evidence that PYD is linked to outcomes, demonstrating that changes in PYD constructs leads to changes in outcomes is more difficult. Programs need to be intentional in measuring PYD constructs and may need to revisit the PYD toolkit.

- Transparency around challenges and failures in programming is needed.

Cross-Sectoral Impact

Presentation by Elana Pollak, Educate!
Facilitated by Cassandra Jessee, YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International/International Center for Research on Women

KEY LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS ON CROSS-SECTORAL IMAPCT:

- *Do PYD programs have significant positive effects on outcomes in multiple sectors?*

- *What are the best ways to design and implement PYD programs with cross-sector outcomes in LMICs?*

Presentation on Educate! Cross-Sectoral Impact of PYD Program in East Africa

Educate! addresses youth unemployment by partnering with schools and governments to reform what schools teach and how they teach it, so that students in Africa have the skills to attain further education, overcome gender inequities, start businesses, get jobs, and drive development in their communities. The key components of the program include skill building, clubs, feedback loops, and mentoring for teachers. The skills lab is a simple lesson-planning structure to allow students to practically engage with curriculum content. The structure follows a three-part format (i.e., Build, Practice, and Present), which helps shift teachers' pedagogy from theory-based to competency-based. Randomized control trial results show that toward the end of secondary school, graduates of the program earn nearly double the income of their peers. A follow-up RCT found that four years later, participants demonstrate large and durable shifts in skills coupled with significant improvements in educational and gender-related outcomes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Educate! RCT results showed greater impact on income, business, and community leadership for girls than for boys. Perhaps due to the catch-up effect.

- Changes in outcome included: improved transferable/soft skills (i.e., grit, creativity, persuasion, self-efficacy); higher educational attainment, particularly young women (virtually closing secondary gap and increased tertiary across); enrollment in higher-earning majors (especially women); improved gender-related outcomes (including delayed family formation, reduced gender-based violence, and attitudes towards women at work).

- Economic outcomes are not yet available as most of the students still attend university courses yet evidence suggests that improvements in these outcomes are strongly correlated with long-term labor market and income success.

- Looking at the impact of teaching soft as compared to hard skills, initial results are showing that soft skills increase self-esteem, negotiation, and persuasion, yet income and entrepreneurship appear to have similar outcomes.

Discussion on Cross-Sectoral Impact

Less is known about the short- and long-term effects of PYD programming in LMICs due to the lack of rigorous studies and the fact that most evaluations focus on sector-specific outcomes (e.g., HIV, sexual and reproductive health, workforce development) rather than outcomes across multiple sectors. PYD is a holistic approach, the features of which include strengthening the environment (communities, schools, families) as well as the individual assets, agency, and contribution of young people. There is potential for such foundational supports to have positive impact on a broad range of outcomes with benefits lasting across a lifetime. However, more research is needed to understand the short and long-term effects of PYD on cross-sectoral outcomes in LMICs. Fortunately, several rigorous evaluations were published over the last two years, and we have more evidence now.

Small group discussion organized by PYD Learning Agenda domains discussed the following questions: *What else have we learned about cross-sectoral impact? What should be the next steps?*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- PYD programs can impact multiple outcomes across sectors, therefore it is important that programs find ways to ensure cross-sectoral indicators are included at the design stage. Donors can also identify indicators that should be measured in program evaluations.

- There is an increasing body of knowledge on the impact of changes in gender and social norms on gender equity and improved outcomes across education, health, violence prevention, and livelihoods sectors for adolescent girls and young women. Far more can be done to address gender in PYD programming in addition to or beyond the traditional approach of including women and girls only.

- More data collection is necessary to understand some of the unintended spillover effects of programming across sectors.

- More research is needed to understand the level of impact of a single sector approach versus an integrated approach.

- We should look at successful and scalable domestic in U.S. youth programs to learn from and change how we think about youth globally. More research is needed globally to understand the essential components for scaling to ensure sustainability.

PYD for Vulnerable and Marginalized Populations

Presentation by Sapida Barmaki, Sahar
Facilitated by Chisina Kapungu, International Center for Research on Women and WomenStrong International

KEY LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS ON THEME 4:

- *What are the barriers to and facilitators for including vulnerable or marginalized populations in universal PYD programs?*

- *How effective are tailored PYD programs at serving the needs of vulnerable or marginalized populations?*

Presentation on Sahar's Holistic Approaches to Afghan Girls' Education

Sapida Barmaka from Sahar, a Seattle-based nonprofit dedicated to building schools and educational programs for girls in Afghanistan, presented on engaging men as partners for change. Sahar provides programming focused on teacher training, early marriage prevention, male engagement, and digital literacy. Sahar partners with the Ministry of Education, community members, religious leaders, and principles to implement holistic programming. The Men as Partners in Change program is focused on increasing knowledge and awareness of legal rights and human rights for girls; improving perceptions of women's economic empowerment; and breaking down ideas of gender stereotypes. Creating a space for men to have safe and open discussions about gender norms and masculinity is a critical component of the program. Other topic areas include awareness about women's rights and religious rights, promoting behavior change, conflict resolution, mental health and trauma, and physical health. Community and youth engagement projects are also conducted.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- By engaging both older and younger men, they have been able to break down the perceptions of women's economic empowerment.

- Creating a safe space for men to engage in topics that are typically considered taboo is important.

- Role models are essential for girls to understand possibilities of achievement and change attitudes.

- Curricula needs to be less dense to allow for full understanding and absorption.

- When working with older generations it is critical to understand the level of education and literacy.

Discussion on PYD for Vulnerable and Marginalized Populations

Chisina Kapungu reviewed the latest evidence on vulnerable and marginalized populations (VMP) and evidence gaps. More investments need to be made in identifying what works and what does not for VMP, particularly people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex youth; very young adolescents; and first-time parents. There is also a need for additional research and programming on the impact of involving parents, caregivers, and families in PYD programs and the best strategies for engagement. School- and community-based interventions have been most effective for youth in trauma. Although evidence is available on the effectiveness of promotive and preventive interventions for adolescent mental health, many of the studies have important methodological limitations, thus further highlighting the need for more high-quality research and programming in this area. Interventions should cover social and emotional learning, which may include components such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, mindfulness, assertiveness, and stress management. Universally delivered psychosocial interventions have been found to promote positive mental health, prevent and reduce suicidal behavior; mental disorders (i.e., depression and anxiety); aggressive, disruptive, and oppositional behaviors; and substance use. A multi-sectoral approach including a range of stakeholders (e.g., health, education, youth protection, and others) and implementation of coordinated and multifaceted interventions is important.

Stepping Stones is an example of a multi-sectoral HIV prevention program that has been adapted with several VMP. Recognized by WHO, UNAIDS, and USAID, it is one of the few global interventions to reduce intimate partner violence (IPV). The aim of the interventions is to improve sexual health through building stronger, more gender-equitable relationships with better communication between partners. Intentionally addressing gender and power should be considered a key characteristic of effective sexuality and HIV education programs. Preliminary data suggest increased treatment adherence in some children, increased family cohesion and support, increased equitable gender attitudes, and reduction in Herpes Simplex Virus Type 2 (HSV-2) and IPV.

Small group discussions organized by PYD Learning Agenda domain discussed the following questions: *What else have we learned about VMP? What should be the next steps?*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The VMP thematic area is under-researched. Targeted investments in research and programming is critically needed.

- Many research and program gaps exist on targeting very young adolescents and first-time parents as well as involving parents and caregivers in PYD programs.
- Some upcoming publications on vulnerable and marginalized populations include:
  - Creative Associates' work on youth who are at risk of joining gangs.
  - World Vision's cost-benefit analysis of its Youth Ready program which focuses on life skills and employment. Results reinforced that working with out-of-school youth is more cost effective.
- Barriers to designing interventions for VMP include:
  - Lack of gender-sensitive training and self-reflection on bias among program implementers,
  - Lack of focus on VMP in USAID procurements,
  - Discomfort among program implementers to talk about VMP, and
  - Lack of representation from VMP in key positions within the development field.
- What do we need to do better to make progress?
  - Grassroots organizations are implementing PYD programs globally and the development community can be more intentional in understanding what does and does not work in the Global South.
  - We need data from impact evaluations with cost-benefit analysis.
  - More qualitative research needs to be conducted in order to ensure that PYD programs are culturally appropriate and are targeting the risk and protective factors within communities. Qualitative research will help to distill the community assets and cultural values that can support youth development.

Youth Engagement

Presentation by Cate Lane, Family Planning 2020 (FP2020)
Facilitated by Laura Hinson, International Center for Research on Women

KEY LEARNING AGENDA QUESTIONS ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- *What strategies are effective in enabling meaningful youth engagement?*
- *What are the best ways to measure and evaluate the impact of various levels of youth engagement on intended PYD indicators and program outcomes?*

Presentation on FP2020's Approach to and Lessons Learned about Meaningful Youth Engagement

In the original FP2020 plan, very little attention was paid to youth's use of contraception. The current plan employs a rights-based approach with a focus on youth and young people. Forty-seven countries, who are part of FP2020, recommitted to specific youth-focused steps in 2017. Some youth-led organizations have increased their commitments of contraceptive use.

Since 2017, FP2020 has taken a number of steps to advance its commitment to and understanding of meaningful youth engagement, which fall into three categories:

- youth-focused communications that document the efforts of youth-led organization and youth leaders,
- youth participation in FP2020 governance and implementation, and
- direct support to youth-led organizations.

Youth-Focused Communications

- FP2020 mapped over 400 youth-led organizations worldwide and encourage FP2020 partners to in turn partner with youth-led organizations. The map can be found on the FP2020 website (https://www.familyplanning2020.org/ayfp).
- FP2020 contributed to a generation of global consensus statements and calls to action that draw attention to the sexual and reproductive health of youth and the value of youth partnerships with young people.
- FP2020 is supporting a youth-led accountability mechanism to the Meaningful Youth Engagement that was launched at the end of December 2019.

Youth Participation in FP2020 Governance and Implementation

- In 2016, FP2020 created a seat for a young person on FP2020's high-level reference group, made up by Ministers of Health and the heads of major sexual and reproductive health organizations and donors.
- FP2020 appointed "official" youth focal points in all 47 FP2020 countries. They also coordinated brief workshops prior to regional meetings that orient the young focal points to their roles and responsibilities, helped adult focal points accept and build professional relationships with the youth focal points, actively monitors the engagement of the youth focal point in FP2020 activities, and promotes FP2020 youth focal points as local and global experts.
- The partnership is piloting a year-long online mentoring program for six youth focal points in francophone countries, connecting them with a regular series of skills-development activities and virtual mentors.

Support to Youth-Led Organizations

- FP2020 has a small grants mechanism that has awarded approximately ten grants to youth-led organizations ranging from 50,000 to 80,000 USD.
- The partnership hosted two webinars on how to develop winning proposals, attended by 100+ young people. A third webinar was also hosted on how to source and use available data and understand the meaning of various indicators to assist in advocating for and designing better adolescent sexual and reproductive health programs.
- FP2020 is exploring supportive services including enhanced guidance and support in the proposal development process, providing dedicated funds for organizational development, or creating linkages between youth-led organizations and experienced non-governmental organizations for mentorship.
- They also worked with Restless Development to conduct an assessment of the Secretariat's efforts to incorporate meaningful youth engagement into its day-to-day work. Recommendations for action included developing a more equitable country representation structure that goes

beyond having one youth focal point per country, tracking commitment-makers efforts to incorporate meaningful youth engagement activities, and mainstreaming meaningful youth-engagement efforts into all Secretariat staff job descriptions.

Lessons Learned on Measuring and Evaluating Impact of Youth Engagement

- Right now, FP2020 cannot report statistically significant effects as a result of their efforts to facilitate youth engagement as they only report on a couple of indicators. They are actively working to ensure greater attention to and measurement of meaningful youth engagement in the future.

- Although they do not directly implement programs because of their partnership approach, they are well positioned to advocate with donors to incorporate principles and measurements of meaningful youth engagement in their solicitations and grants; to promote meaningful youth engagement approaches and platforms with our government colleagues; and, through grant making, to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and youth-led organizations to implement quality meaningful youth engagement approaches that move away from tokenism towards partnership.

  YouthPower Learning provides FP2020 with a platform to advocate their position that meaningful youth engagement is not just a programmatic enhancement, but an important acknowledgement of the rights of young people and an essential aspect of advancing accountability to the health and wellbeing of a country's young people.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- FP2020's youth focal points are beneficial to both youth and adults. The overall focal point structure in FP2020 appreciates efforts to inform, support, and strengthen the technical capacity of focal points to more intentionally and meaningfully engage and partner with youth and to implement evidence informed programming for youth.

- Adult focal points appreciate the perspective and observations that young people bring to the movement to ensure young people can adopt healthy and positive behaviors, and youth focal points value the receptivity of adults to their ideas and inputs.

- Youth focal points recognize and appreciate the opportunity and visibility that comes with being an FP2020 focal point and cite a range of skills, networks, and partnerships they have been able to develop.

- There needs to be more investments on reporting on indicators, especially around to what degree partners are adapting metrics on youth engagement.

Discussion on Youth Engagement

Laura Hinson facilitated a discussion focused on the three key questions: *What are we learning? What is missing? What is next?*

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Engaging youth is important, but hard. We must incorporate youth throughout the entire process, from conceptualization through M&E.

- Youth need adult mentors and adults who value youth engagement.

- There are gaps in the utilization and understanding of technology for youth engagement both in terms of leveraging its use to scale and understanding the unintended consequences of using technology for youth engagement.

- Measuring results or outcomes related to civic engagement of youth continues to be a gap. We need funding to identify opportunities for civic engagement for youth and to learn from those opportunities about what works and does not work. Current examples from Kenya show youth attitudes towards community was improved and government identified the need to incentivize youth engagement.

- Peer-based approaches (i.e., peer-to-peer approaches or approaches that use individuals of the same ages or life stages of beneficiary youth) for youth engagement are under resourced and can impact sustainability.

- Identify funding mechanisms and structure that will allow the resources for meaningful youth engagement.

- There is a need for global indicators that track youth civic engagement as we currently do not have a means to track those levels.

- Social media should be utilized for youth engagement and to share stories with a youth perspective.

Where Do We Go from Here? Next Steps and Moving Forward

Christy Olenik, Director, YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation, Making Cents International

As the Director for YP2LE, Christy Olenik confirmed that the follow-on project will build upon the work of YouthPower Learning and the PYD Learning Agenda will continue in the new project. YP2LE will tap into the Learning Network to expand upon the current agenda and conduct further research within the PYD Learning Agenda theme areas. Additionally, the new project will continue to manage and update YouthPower.org and YouthLead.org as core activities. Work with Missions and youth-led and youth-servicing organizations will continue in order to disseminate actionable and practical resources and tools globally.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- A lot of work remains for **PYD for Vulnerable and Marginalized Populations**. We need to better understand the composition of this population, what their needs are, and how to overcome our own biases surrounding them. Ways to achieve that are:

  - Inclusion of vulnerable/marginalized populations as staff,

  - Gaining knowledge from local organizations working with these populations,

  - Additional support and resources for capacity-strengthening activities,

  - Donor support for these populations, and

  - More impact evaluations/cost-benefit analysis to determine who is benefiting from programs.

- **We need to conduct a deeper dive in PYD programs,** focusing on the features of the programs, how to create impact and connect programming to outcomes.

- **Youth as partners** will be critical to ensure greater impact and collaboration across sectors and age groups.

- **Greater focus on cross-sectoral PYD programs** will be important as we measure for impact and consider integrated programs as well as identifying funding streams.