



**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP,
PARTICIPATION AND
ACCOUNTABILITY 2.0**

PART 3.

THE 'UNOFFICIAL' HANDBOOK



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These recommendations were developed by Restless Development, in partnership with UNFPA East & Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), following consultations with young people from across East and Southern Africa aimed at identifying how development agencies and young people can better work together to strengthen accountability for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and gender equality.

This participatory approach involved both online and offline consultation with over 80 young people and more than 30 development stakeholders.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AU - The African Union

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CESCR - UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

CPD - UN Commission on Population Development

CRC - UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

CSE - Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CSO - Civil Society Organisation(s)

CSW - The UN Commission on the Status of Women

EAC - East African Community

ESA - East and Southern Africa

FGM - Female Genital Mutilation

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICPD - International Conference on Population and Development

IMF - The International Monetary Fund

INGO - An international non-governmental organisation

IPPF - International Planned Parenthood Federation

NGO - Non-governmental organisation

SADC - Southern African Development Community

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

SRH - Sexual and Reproductive Health

SRHR - Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

UNAIDS - The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNFPA ESARO - United Nations Population Fund East & Southern Africa Regional Office

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WHO - World Health Organization

YWCA - The Young Women's Christian Association

This 'unofficial' handbook on youth leadership, participation and accountability is based on feedback from young people and development practitioners who have shared their reflections and experiences from the world of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender, and HIV & AIDS advocacy. The handbook is dedicated to their triumphs and challenges in the quest to ensure that young people can fully and meaningfully participate in different advocacy spaces.

Each section is packed full of practical advice, helpful tips and tools, and perspectives that will encourage even the most experienced advocates to stop and think about their approaches to advocacy and engaging young people.



1. ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MARGINALISED GROUPS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for 'no one to be left behind', providing a strong mandate for young people - and especially those who might be more vulnerable and marginalised* - to inform and advocate for progressive policies that will benefit them and their communities. Particularly in SRHR, gender equality and HIV & AIDS advocacy work, development practitioners might find themselves working with young people who have experienced (or are still experiencing) discrimination, trauma and stigma. Young people who are prepared to bring a very personal insight to high-level advocacy platforms can have an incredibly powerful impact by speaking their truth, sharing their experiences and transforming abstract policy discussions into a lived reality. However, it is crucial to ensure these vulnerable young people are fully supported in their participation and their willingness to share their often very personal stories. Development practitioners and young people shared with us some important recommendations to consider when supporting potentially more vulnerable youth participants to engage in advocacy activities:

Try to avoid labels:

Labels such as 'at-risk,' or 'marginalised' are strong words and have implications and repercussions for how we treat young people and how they see themselves. While there may be contexts where these labels are appropriate or necessary, it is important to take time to consider how your organisation embodies these labels internally and externally.

Take the time to build trust and understanding:

Young people living in post-conflict affected countries, for example, are often just trying to manage their day-to-day realities. These young people can need considerable time to begin to trust development organisations and to first understand what advocacy is and how it can be done, before engaging in any external influencing activities. In some cases, this process of gaining trust can take years. Training and mentorship are key to working with these affected young people; to support them to start questioning the systems that are perpetuating the injustice they experience and to work through what the solutions might be to address this.

Create safe spaces:

It is important to think about the safety of the spaces young people are advocating in. It might be more difficult for vulnerable youth to feel comfortable in seemingly safe spaces due to their experiences of exploitation or harm. Always make them aware of resources before they have to ask, for example, if lunch and transit fares are paid for, and they should feel able to re-arrange meeting spaces as some may not want to sit with their back to the door. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) uses a safe space model that establishes support groups during training and for advocacy engagements where young people come together to mentor and share and help build a young advocate's confidence.



However, it is crucial to ensure these vulnerable young people are fully supported in their participation.



More than one way to communicate a message

Engaging in high-level advocacy, such as presenting on a panel or speaking during a roundtable discussion with decision makers, can be particularly intimidating for more vulnerable young people; especially if there is an expectation for these young people to share their personal stories. In these situations, it is important to remember that it is for the young person to decide the story that they want to tell, and not for development practitioners to decide what they want to be shared. There are also different ways vulnerable young people might feel more comfortable to convey their advocacy messages and they should be given the power to decide how they want to share their message. For some, this might be through music or song, or perhaps via pre-recorded videos.

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I was once supporting two youth advocates to participate in a high-level media briefing. We had done all the prep we could to help them prepare before they came to New York. We were set. But when we got to the venue I realised there were no seats for their translators. When I questioned it, I was told - oh, don't worry as when they go to the microphone to speak their translator can join them to translate what they say. The event organiser had completely missed the point that when the young women sat back down, they would not be able to understand what the other panelists would then say. He didn't seem to think this mattered!

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- Development Practitioner



2. GETTING DECISION MAKERS ON BOARD

It is important to understand and acknowledge some of the concerns decision makers or event organisers may have when it comes to engaging young people in different high-level advocacy platforms. Ultimately, from their perspective, there are a number of risks and potential backlash when it comes to handing over a microphone to a young person to speak out on issues of gender equality, SRHR or HIV and AIDS. Only if time is taken to understand these perspectives will it be possible to develop effective strategies and approaches to address any concerns.



In Cameroon the problem is that “the old” decide and don’t have confidence in the youth, so when the youth come out with an advocacy plan or programme it is usually swept away because they don’t feel that young people have the experience.



- Youth Advocate

Here are examples of strategies deployed by some of the decision makers, development practitioners and young people interviewed for this report, to ensure that youth are given the opportunity to engage in high-level advocacy platforms despite any misgivings from event organisers:

Build trust:

If there is resistance from decision makers or event organisers to including young people in an event, try and establish a one-to-one meeting as a first step so the decision maker or organiser has the opportunity to meet the youth representative and better understand their approach, insights and perspectives.

Representation:

Be clear who is represented when a young person speaks. Governments have been known in high-level advocacy platforms to push back on the interventions from young people, stating that young people are simply voicing their own personal views and their inputs should not be taken seriously as they are not representative of a legitimate constituency. In situations where a young person is representing a network, organisation or coalition, they should be prepared to make this clear at the beginning of their intervention.



Insider/Outsider approach:

Find an accessible entry point within government, perhaps a young, junior civil servant who understands the value of ensuring that youth perspectives are heard and shared and who might be willing to help champion your cause internally. Consider also applying external pressure by calling for the participation of young people either through a public letter, campaign or targeted advocacy action.

Create the space:

Take back control and set up your own event – one that is designed and led by young people. Invite decision makers to come into this space to see for themselves how organised and articulate young people are, and how they know more about the issues that affect them than anyone else.



When organising an advocacy event and speaker briefings for government ministers or high-level decision makers, make it very clear in advance that they will be cut off after their allocated time and that going over their time is taking space away from the youth speakers. And then actively enforce this warning!



- Development Practitioner

3. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TOOL: GO WITH THE FLOW

Based on the insights gained through the interviews conducted for this report, and drawing on Restless Development's own experience, we have created a Go With the Flow diagram to help young people and their advisors navigate the sometimes complex and often unpredictable world of high-level advocacy.

We have also developed five key questions to ask yourself before creating a youth engagement opportunity, or for when reviewing a youth engagement opportunity that is presented to you in high-level SRHR or gender equality advocacy platforms:

- Which young person(s) are you engaging with and why them?
- What is the defined role and responsibility for the young person(s) you are engaging?
- What is the space within which the engagement will take place?
- What is the mandate that the young person(s) will have in this engagement and what is the result they can hope to achieve?
- What support and which spaces will you, as the development practitioner, be offering them?

Once you have answered these questions, take a look at our Go With the Flow diagram to help inform your approaches and strategies for ensuring that youth engagement in high-level advocacy spaces is as impactful as possible.

This diagram is not intended to provide detailed step-by-step guidance but rather to highlight key considerations before engaging young people in different advocacy events. For more in depth guides and checklist tools, take a look at 'Additional Resources and Guides' in this report.

Finally, remember: Not all opportunities are worth pursuing. If - despite your best efforts - it would appear that the young person is not going to be given a meaningful role, or - even worse - their presence smacks of tokenism, then it is sometimes best not to engage at all.



We have created a Go With the Flow diagram to help young people and their advisors navigate the sometimes complex and often unpredictable world of high-level advocacy.



- Is there enough time to adequately prepare a young person for this opportunity?

<p>YES</p> 	<p>NO - in the recruitment process, perhaps include one of the selection criteria is for a young person with experience engaging in high-level advocacy events?</p>
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- Is there enough time to do an open, fair and transparent recruitment process?

<p>YES</p> 	<p>NO - are there youth networks you are currently working with who you could reach out to directly for help to identify a young person to participate? Can you also reach out specifically to networks working with more vulnerable young people to ensure that there is representation from more diverse or underrepresented youth?</p>
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- Is there funding confirmed to cover all of the young person's participation costs?

<p>YES</p> 	<p>NO - if working with partners, share a clear budget of what meaningful participation will require and see if additional resourcing can be provided - or could you consider whether the number of days of participation could be reduced? (Though be sure not to cut down on important preparation and training days!)</p>
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- Is there funding to have a staff member or chaperone support them?

<p>YES</p> 	<p>NO - spend time understanding the experiences of the young person(s) and how comfortable they would be travelling or participating in events without support. Would it be possible to seek support or mentorship from other confirmed participants or young people who will be attending?</p>
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- Are young people being provided comprehensive information about their specific role and rights in the advocacy opportunity?

YES ↓	NO - can you follow up with the organisers with a specific request for this clarification and information, if it hasn't been provided? Or can you work with the youth participant to propose what their role and rights should be, to then share with the organisers?
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- Are the information, education and communication materials used easily understandable and attractive to young people?

YES ↓	NO - is there capacity in your organisation to help translate the materials and work closely with the young person(s) to understand fully the context of the event and their participation, and to prepare their engagement accordingly?
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- Have young people been supported to set clear and manageable advocacy objectives in advance of the event?

YES ↓	NO - try and spend at least several hours in your preparatory work with the young person(s) for the event setting clear objectives for their engagement, and after the event make sure there is time to regroup and assess whether these objectives were met.
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- Is the space accessible to young people - geographically, physically, and in terms of translation and accessible language for young people to meaningfully engage?

YES ↓	NO - are there measures that can be suggested to the event organisers to increase the accessibility, perhaps there are mechanisms to increase remote or online engagement of young people- or is your organisation in a position to help with translation, for example could the chaperone help with this translator role?
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- Is the space accessible to young people - geographically, physically, and in terms of translation and accessible language for young people to meaningfully engage?

<p>YES ↓</p>	<p>NO - are there measures that can be suggested to the event organisers to increase the accessibility, perhaps there are mechanisms to increase remote or online engagement of young people - or is your organisation in a position to help with translation, for example could the chaperone help with this translator role?</p>
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- Will there be access to relevant decision makers and influencers at the event?

<p>YES ↓</p>	<p>NO - is there a chance to create opportunities for access to decision makers and influencers outside of the event, for example through setting up bilateral meetings or attending other events where they might be present?</p>
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- Will there be an opportunity to continue to engage in the initiative beyond the event?

<p>YES ↓</p>	<p>NO - can you ensure outcomes from the event are shared with the young person(s) and find ways to engage them in your organisation's ongoing programmes?</p>
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- Are young people supported to set clear goals on how they will follow up on their engagement and to share back outcomes with their network, for example through blogs, webinars or community meetings?

<p>YES ↓</p>	<p>NO - after an event, organise a meeting with the young person(s) to debrief fully on their experience and gain insights on ways their participation could be strengthened for future events - as part of this debrief develop a strategy for sharing key outcomes, and offer support to help their follow up for example hosting their blogs on your organisation's website.</p>
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YOU MADE IT



**MEANINGFUL YOUTH
PARTICIPATION**



4. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND GUIDES

Choice for Youth and Sexuality and You Act: The Flower of Participation (2018)

The Flower of Participation is a tool that uses the metaphor of a blooming flower to describe the different forms of Meaningful Youth Participation and how it can grow and flourish. It can be used to distinguish between different forms of youth participation and explore whether they are meaningful or not.

The tool describes the core elements of Meaningful Youth Participation (the roots), the different forms of Meaningful Youth Participation (the leaves and the petals of the flower), non-meaningful forms of youth participation (the insects) and the preconditions of Meaningful Youth Participation (the water and the sun).

Choice for Youth and Sexuality and Get Up Speak out for Youth Rights: Checklists (2018)

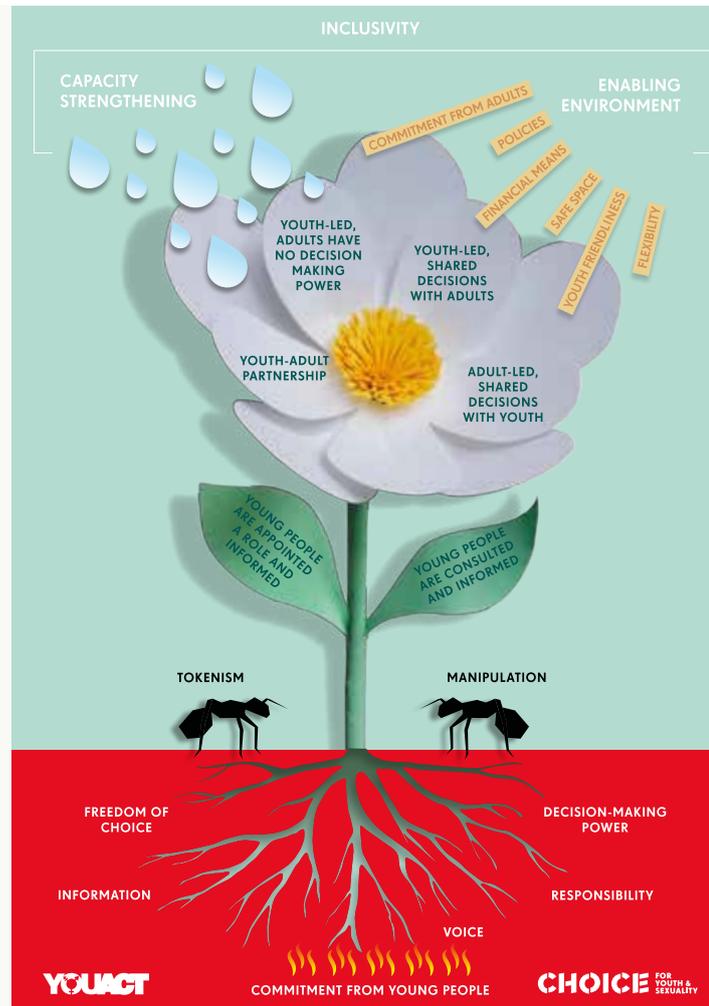
These checklists provide you with a handy overview of self-assessment questions, which will help you to reflect on the extent to which Meaningful Youth Participation is present in your organisation, programmes and advocacy work. They can also help identify areas of weakness that can be improved.

Global Consensus Statement and Checklist: Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (2018)

A series of recommended 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.



This toolkit was developed by young people, for young people, to be used by networks of youth-led and youth-serving organisations.



**PMNCH and Women Deliver:
Advocating for Change for Adolescents!
A Practical Toolkit for Young People to Advocate for Improved Adolescent Health
and Well-being (2018)**

This toolkit was developed by young people, for young people, to be used by networks of youth-led and youth-serving organisations to change the world! The toolkit will also be useful for others, including civil society groups, government departments and everyone concerned with adolescent health and well-being. The purpose of this toolkit is to guide the design, implementation and monitoring of an effective national advocacy action roadmap to bring about positive policy-specific changes to improve the health and well-being of adolescents.

**YouthREX:
Ten Ways to Meaningfully Engage Underrepresented Youth Fact Sheet (2015)**

This fact sheet provides valuable insights on how to work with underrepresented, marginalised youth so that you/your organisation can effectively develop, inspire and nurture youth leadership and engagement. Based on her extensive experience working with youth from diverse communities, Amy Hosotsuji, Coordinator of the Grassroots Youth Collaborative, and Duane Hall, Events Curator and founding member of Toronto-based grassroots youth organisation Spoke N' Heard, share 10 top strategies on this topic.



