



Measuring Meaningful Youth Engagement for AYSRH

AYSRH Office Hours Webinar Series Q&A

January 28, 2020

Judy Amina/Kenya SRHR Alliance:

1. How has MYE increased the uptake of contraceptives in Kenya?

Response: *The GUSO programme in Kenya works with peer educators and youth advocates who understand the sexual and reproductive health issues of their peers. Therefore, the peer educators who are meaningfully engaged in the programme have been able to share SRH information and refer their peers to youth friendly centres to access SRH services and commodities. This has in-turn improved the uptake of contraceptives in the areas where GUSO is implemented with availability of youth friendly services (YFS). It has also improved their knowledge on the different contraceptive methods available.*

2. For the Kenya project, was there any backlash within communities about young people being involved in the research?

Response: *There has been backlash from the community since the inception of the GUSO programme. From both the baseline and endline MYE research, young people shared that they are considered immoral because of the SRH issues they openly speak about. Despite the backlash in the community, the young people are still passionate to share information with their peers and have a supportive environment to be able to do it. To address the backlash some of the young people organize community dialogue sessions where they speak with their parents and other community members on the SRH issues affecting them and why they should be allowed to access SRH information and services.*

3. What is exactly the role of the youth country coordinators in the projects? Are they (paid) youth staff?

Response: *The youth country coordinators are part of the secretariat of the 7 country Alliances. They are part of the staff in their countries with elaborate job descriptions and benefits like the rest of the staff who are adults.*

4. Are these school-aged youth involved in the GUSO project? If so, how do they reconcile school work/responsibilities with GUSO project needs?

Response: *The GUSO programme has one outcome area that focuses mainly in providing SRHR information and education. This outcome area targets young people who are in school through CSE curriculum delivered to them through trained teachers and out of school youth are reached through community dialogue forums and outreaches. Aside from that many outreaches and community dialogues are usually done during school holidays to accommodate and reach a wider group of young people.*

5. Are the adults interacting with Youth also provided Training on supporting and enabling Youth Engagement?

Response: *Both the adults and young people working for the GUSO programme have received training on MYE to enable a healthy partnership among them. This has helped in building trust between the adults and young people and created space for healthy interactions.*

Anna Page, Rosalijn Both, Miranda van Reeuwijk/Rutgers:

GUSO Program Design:

1. How did you define "structural" engagement?

Response: *By structural engagement, we mean when young people's engagement is included in the design of the programme and there are structures established to facilitate and monitor youth engagement. So in the case of GUSO, that means that youth engagement is included in the theory of change, in the programme interventions and in the monitoring and reporting framework.*

2. How were you able to attract young people and what platforms did you use in reaching out to young people?

Response: *Working with young people has enabled the Alliance to become flexible in their communication and activities. Active and interactive Social media platforms have been an innovative and attractive way to reach more young people with SRHR information and RH service referrals. With the support of young people, the Alliance as well publishes newsletters and brief materials on SRHR for young people which are easily understandable. Working with Young people and meaningfully engaging them in itself has been the biggest attraction to young people as they can easily relate to them as their peers.*

GUSO Results:

1. What explains the low perception/involvement of young people in advocacy, including a very slight change over time?

Response: *Different reasons may play a role here. The percentages shown during the webinar were percentages from the seven countries together. One reason may be that as the GUSO programme developed, the ways that young people engage in the programme have become more diversified. This means that sometimes advocacy activities have been assigned to a specific, smaller group of youth who have been capacitated specifically on advocacy work.*

2. Were all these findings similar in relation to the in-school YPs, vis-a-vis the out of school? Was there any age disaggregation, and related findings?

Response: *We did not collect data on whether young people were in school or out of school. We did collect data on age, however the reports are still being finalised so we are not yet able to share results.*

3. How does religion serve as facilitator or barrier to YP involvement across the countries?

Response: *Religion can sometimes make it more difficult to implement sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes, particularly in more conservative contexts. This can affect young people's engagement in programmes and research, as they may face opposition to their engagement from parents, religious leaders or peers because they are working on a sensitive or taboo topic. Some young people involved in programmes may receive remarks that their work is sinful. However, working with faith-based organisations can also be a facilitator to youth*

engagement, as we can work with religious structures and networks to engage and support young people.

- 4. I am interested in how you/youth defined/measured "participation in decision making". Substantial work was done in the 1980s on the "degrees of participation in decision making" at household level (Lynn Bennett). How has this been applied in such program analyses? ie contribute, decide, object etc.**

Response: *The GUSO programme and our other work on youth engagement are informed by the CHOICE Flower of Participation <https://www.youthdoit.org/themes/meaningful-youth-participation/flower-of-participation/> which draws on previous academic work including the work of Bennett. Within GUSO we recognize that the most appropriate form of youth participation will be different in different parts of the programme and in different contexts. The Youth Country Coordinator has a role in identifying how young people can best be involved and what support they need to enable this. In order to understand the different forms of participation, we asked about it in the baseline and endline survey, and in focus groups. We also explored how participation was working through informal feedback and learning exchanges.*

- 5. Were the researchers able to help identify whether the young people themselves would be a barrier to MYP (values and attitudes)?**

Response: *Certainly. We found that for example within some of our partner youth organisations, there were quite strong power relations that resulted in older young people phasing out in favor of younger people. In other words, young people who climbed the ladder within their own youth organisation sometimes found it difficult to then share that power with others or make space for younger youth when they became older. Furthermore, we found that Youth Adult Partnerships that are mutually beneficial are based on mutual respect and complementary skills. If young people disrespect the experience or knowledge of the adults in the program, or prioritize their own wishes over evidence-based strategies, this can undermine the effectiveness of a program.*

- 6. Do the outcomes interact with one another? For instance, it is reaffirming to see that the MYE output/outcome indicators stand on their own and contribute to overall success of the GUSO program. Is it possible to see that success in Outcome 2 (MYE) has contributed to Outcome 4 (YF SRH services)?**

Response: *MYE has played a role in all the outcome areas, so we can argue that MYE has contributed to all outcomes. For example, activities under Outcome Area 4 on access to health services included youth engagement in social accountability interventions. Outcome Area 5 on the enabling environment included a lot of youth advocacy. We would not have achieved many of the programme outcomes without the youth engagement.*

- 7. What countries from GUSO have done best in youth programs and what strategies have they used to target and reach young people? Alternatively, What were the key factors determining the youth engagement across the seven countries with different contexts?**

Response: *We do not compare countries in terms of 'best performance', because the contexts are so diverse. E.g. you cannot compare the number of young people reached with contraception in rural Malawi to urban Jakarta. We do analyse barriers and enablers for MYE, we have listed them in this article: (<https://ojs.library.carleton.ca/index.php/cjcr/article/view/1301>). Here are some of the most important factors we identified:*

- Mismatch in **expectations** btw yp- adult staff
- **Time/exposure/experience** to learn MYP/YAP
- Hierarchy and **Power dynamics** heavily influence level of involvement of yp in decision making
- Degree of YP in positions of **responsibility and trust** → *high drop out when instrumental*
- Systems in place for training up new young people to deal with **challenge of turn-over**
- Degree of regular, transparent and open **communication**
- Degree of **fairness**, friendliness, support and guidance

Addressing these factors in your program helps to create conditions for successful, meaningful, ethical and effective MYE.

8. Could you please share if there is a significant difference between girls and boys engagement in the 7 countries?

Response: *We haven't measured it in this way, but from observations we see an equal number of both girls and boys in advisory positions in each GUSO country. Perhaps even slightly more girls. With regards to the endline survey, we also see participation of an equal number of boys and girls. At baseline there were slightly more boys who participated but that difference has been caught up with.*

Experience:

1. How can we connect MYE to other program outcomes - e.g., better communication skills, improved academic achievement, improved goal setting, teamwork, etc. how do we know that the MYE approach is better than a traditional adult-led interventions?

RESPONSE: *This is a bit tricky. For that you would need a comparative study with one program that only involves adults and another that engages young people. What we can do, and did, is to include MYE as part of the program Theory of Change, and make explicit certain assumptions (e.g. that beneficiaries will find it easier to approach another youth to get condoms than an adult service provider). Then we include testing of these assumptions in the program evaluation, and/or in operational research. In the article we published (MYP as a way of achieving success: <https://ojs.library.carleton.ca/index.php/cjcr/article/view/1301>) we bring results from our operational research on MYE together with the external program evaluation and argue based on these, how MYE contributed to achieving the impact we booked with the program on SRHR outcomes on beneficiary level.*

Note: This does not mean that all MYE approaches are better than adult-led interventions. But rather than investing in rigorous comparative research, we think it is much more interesting to analyse what it needed so that MYE is ethical, meaningful and can enhance positive results. What investments are most effective to achieve what results? What are the minimum conditions for success? What are the risks of engaging young people if you cannot provide enough support or guidance?

2. Do the presenters have insights/experience to share about measuring youth engagement with respect to ensuring accountability for quality of clinic services for youth?

RESPONSE: *Social accountability is one of the strategies in the GUSO programme on improving quality of and access to SRHR services for youth. In several GUSO countries youth-led social accountability initiatives are being implemented. In fact, one of the GUSO partners developed a manual on doing youth-led social accountability. Young people are capacitated to voice their opinions about SRHR services and do so via scorecards and interface meetings with service*

providers. We are currently starting an operational research that will look more closely at young people's engagement in these interventions. We expect to have a report on this topic within a few months from now.

- 3. So great to hear about this research and useful tools. Thank you so much for sharing! We are so lucky of late to be seeing a release of multiple MYE tools to guide, track and measure. One that comes to mind is the Measuring Youth Engagement Indicators Toolkit from USAID's YouthPower or the Youth Programming Assessment Tool. I am curious if you conducted a literature review of the tools that have been created thus far and found that there was a significant gap leading to this tool. Or in other words, could you help illustrate for us the benefits of using this tool and at what time this would best be applied?**

RESPONSE: *The Positive Youth Development framework is a very good and useful framework. In the inception/ development phase of the PYD we were part of the expert team and shared our tools, indicators and evidence as input for its development. The PYD is especially useful for measuring outcomes - so results of engagement (e.g. increased skills, confidence). Rutgers and our partners developed tools to help us monitor and measure the processes of engagement, such as the quality of youth-adult partnerships; participation in decision making about the program; trust; transparent communication; fair compensation etc. These help us to better understand what matters for young people and the adults working with them, and how to best support and facilitate the process of meaningful and ethical youth engagement.*

- 4. What I get from the presentation is that data are collected by the youth themselves and funded through the project budget. How could local governments possibly sustain these data collection efforts?**

Response: *You are correct, the data collection by young people was funded from within the GUSO programme budget. If local governments wanted to continue similar data collection, they would need to allocate some budget to achieve this. Young people may be willing to work as volunteers to collect data on youth engagement, but it is important to ensure that expenses such as travel are covered, and that appropriate support to enable them to carry out their role is available. Being able to cover these costs is important for the ethical engagement of young people.*