Status of meaningful adolescent and youth engagement (MAYE)

Summary report of the results of an accountability survey submitted by signatories of the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE











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> Credits

Spearheading organizations

- International Youth Alliance for Family Planning (www.iyafp.org)
- Family Planning 2030 (https://www.familyplanning2020.org/)
- The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (https://www.who.int/pmnch)

Data analysis and report writing consultant: Carles Pericas Escalé

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>> Foreword

The year 2020 saw the re-emergence of the black liberation movement, political transition and the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have sparked conversations at all levels on systemic inequalities affecting people globally, and on how existing development paradigms and ways of working help to perpetuate them.

In this context, the meaningful engagement of young people becomes even more critical. Young people are disproportionately affected by existing inequalities, and ensuring their engagement is a matter of social justice. At the same time, they are a fantastic source of innovation and action for the changes we all want to see.

The Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE) sets out an agreed definition of MAYE that has been endorsed by approximately 250 organizations working in global health and development worldwide. The Global Consensus Statement is a starting point for promoting and enhancing MAYE to achieve equity, dismantle power dynamics, address the inequitable access to financial resources, professional opportunities, build trust and promote the inclusion of perspectives from young people across the world. The 250 endorsing organizations are working together to enhance MAYE, and are committed to sharing their learnings and experiences in the process.

The idea for this report stems from numerous conversations about translating the definition and principles introduced by the Global Consensus Statement into actions, and finding ways of sharing progress with our community.

This report is based on analysis of over 90 responses to a survey of organizations which have endorsed the Global Consensus Statement. Of the organizations that agreed to share their efforts to enhance MAYE, approximately half of them completed the survey in full. We hope that future exercises will achieve broader participation.

The data and analysis presented in the following pages present the responses of endorsing organizations that responded to the survey, and are not intended to reflect the general status of MAYE around the world. It is instead a snapshot of a portion of those working with and for young people.

This Summary Report is part of the accountability system of the Global Consensus Statement. It serves as an initial building block for other efforts to implement the Statement in the following months. It describes the progress achieved, challenges and the needs of those working with and for young people.

We remain open to feedback or comments about this reporting process and ideas on how to improve this initiative in the future. We invite those organizations that have not yet done so to sign the Global Consensus Statement and to join this community striving to improve meaningful adolescent and youth engagement around the world.

FP2030, IYAFP and PMNCH

>> Acknowledgements

The founding partners of the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE, FP2030, IYAFP and PMNCH gratefully acknowledge the contributions to the development of the Reporting Survey and this Summary Report from the following individuals and partners.

FP2030, IYAFP and PMNCH extend sincere gratitude to the members of the Steering Committee for the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE: Adriana Martins de Melo, Alvin Mwangi Irungu, Alan Jarandilla Nuñez, Charity Rutendo Giyava, Emily Sullivan, Meheret (Mimi) Melles-Brewer and Vanessa Brizuela. Likewise to the following individuals who supported the development of the reporting survey: Amy Babchek, Andrej Vujkovac, Catherine Lane, Mwikali Kivuvani, Jennifer Catino, Jeanne Patrick, Enes Efendioğlu, Irem Tumer, Sivil Yaşam Derneği, Regina Guthold, Shanen Ganapathee and Sharafdzhon Boborakhimov.

We also extend our gratitude to Carles Pericas Escalé for leading on the writing of this report, as well as Helga Fogstad, Anshu Mohan and Narissia Mawad for their review and inputs. Finally, we thank the community of endorsing organizations for committing to enhance MAYE internally and for participating in the first reporting exercise of the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE. We look forward to working further with all of you in the future.



> Abbreviations

COVID-19 coronavirus disease 2019 **FP2030:** Family Planning 2030

GCS: Global Consensus Statement

ICFP: International Conference on Family Planning
IYAFP: International Youth Alliance for Family Planning

LGBTQI+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex individuals

MAYE: meaningful adolescent and youth engagement

MoU: memorandum of understanding NGO: nongovernmental organization

PMNCH: The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health

ToRs: terms of reference

SRH: sexual and reproductive health

SRHR: sexual and reproductive health and rights

>> Executive Summary

As part of the accountability system for the Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE), a survey of all 249 signatories of the statement was conducted to assess the progress made and the challenges identified during the first year of its implementation. This first accountability report compiles the findings from that survey.

The surveyed organisations, representing 37% of the signatories, had the following characteristics:

Type of Organisation:

65% nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) 21% youth-led initiatives.

Geographical outreach:

39% international or regional 62% national or local

Working mainly on:

advocacy, research, programming and community outreach



Walking the talk: Collective progress towards achieving MAYE

The majority of participating signatories affirmed their endorsement of the principles and commitments set out in the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE with the shared experiences in terms of daily work and progress. Among non-youth-led initiatives (e.g. NGOs, private foundations, academic institutions) progress was generally centred around capacity building, knowledge sharing and engagement with young people in youth-led initiatives. Youth-led initiatives generally reported that MAYE overarches all their efforts, both internal and external, and that their problems in implementing it resulted largely from lack of recognition from other institutions and limited resources.

Nearly two thirds of respondents answered the questions on specific mechanisms that were producing positive progress. The majority of these reported having protection mechanisms in place for young people and adolescents (although the latter were slightly less numerous). Most of these mechanisms were codes of conduct and child protection policies. In terms of feedback mechanisms for young people, over three quarters of them reported having at least one, mostly put in place using a case-by-case system. With regard to equitable inclusion of youth in all its diversity, the majority reported having mechanisms to ensure the engagement of young women and girls, young people living with HIV, young people living with disabilities and young LGBTQI+ people. Lastly, in terms of participation in decision-making processes, nine out of each 10 signatories answering this question stated that their governing body included some representation by young people. However, whether youth representation on governance structures is based on a systematic method or by default is unknown.



Bridging the gap: Identified barriers and needs to overcome

Despite reports of strong progress and the establishment of specific mechanisms for MAYE, challenges remain. Structural barriers - such as racism, misogyny and ageism - rooted in privilege and hierarchy still prevent adolescents and young people from meaningful engagement in all processes that affect their lives and hamper the advancement of MAYE within the endorsing organizations.

In terms of establishing equal partnerships with youth-led initiatives, almost half of those answering questions on this matter referred to the use of informal agreements, rather than formal memoranda of understanding (MoUs), contracts or terms of reference (ToRs).



As for identified barriers preventing young people's access to decision-making bodies, the commonest response was that unrealistic requirements for qualifications was the main reason preventing young people's access to those spaces.

Findings from the survey suggest that organizational mandates and internal advocacy were the main enablers of financial support for work done by young people, while restrictive internal financing policies and lack of donor requirements/encouragement were found to act as barriers.

This implies that, if those determining financial systems and policies worked closely with internal advocates and enablers, that would produce significant opportunities for progress. The organizations responding to the survey also commented on the support they would need to advance MAYE. Among the needs reported were: more case studies and good guidelines / policy practices to help organizations operationalize meaningful adolescent and youth engagement, greater exposure to youth-led initiatives, and more evidence on the effectiveness of ongoing MAYE processes.



The way forward: conclusions and recommendations

Many organizations reported that they expect to increase their MAYE commitments in the near future. This would be achieved by internalizing MAYE guidance documents, including but not limited to seeking ways to financially compensate adolescents and young people, or by developing accountability mechanisms. However, a few organizations referred to the uncertainty caused by limited resources in light of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of advancing MAYE within their organizations.

Despite the strong progress being made and the ongoing work, barriers, gaps and needs remain to be addressed. Future evaluations must take these into account in order to find solutions to overcome them.

With these factors in mind, the following groups of recommendations for signatories of the GCS and organisations that want to develop, implement and strengthen MAYE are the following:

Organisational setting

 Develop and implement internal policies and mechanisms that ensure the protection within the organization of both young people under age 18 and young people over age 18.



Develop and implement internal policies and mechanisms that ensure proper recognition and compensation of adolescents and young people as well as their meaningful engagement at all levels of the organization.

Investing in the professionalism of adolescents and youth

- Employ engaging and participatory processes, such as consultations or advisory boards, to ensure that all the organization's initiatives involving adolescents and young people incorporate their perspective.
- Establish equal partnerships with youth-led initiatives, avoiding informal agreements in favour of long-term MoUs, contracts, ToRs or other arrangements adopted for non-youth-led organizations.
- Provide full financial compensation for work carried out by adolescents and young people, acknowledging the economic value of their time and efforts, in the shape and form that best suits the adolescents or young people.
- Ensure the representation of adolescents and young people in all governing bodies and decision-making spaces, meaningfully engaging them in all processes and avoiding tokenistic practices.

Intersectionality

- Train staff and volunteers engaged in the organization to identify structural barriers as well as the culture of power and privilege and acknowledge these as indirect sources of disenfranchisement for adolescents and young people in all their diversity.
- Ensure that the organization carries out its activities from an overarching intersectional perspective, tackling the above-mentioned structural barriers, and generating safe spaces for young people regardless of their gender, place of birth, ethnicity, ability, skin colour and any other trait that shapes their individual or collective identities.

Accountability

- Develop and implement an accountability and transparency plan that allows the organization to track and share its progress on MAYE.
- Generate a mechanism by which signatories of the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE can share policy frameworks, case studies and experiences. This could also be used to reach out directly to youth-led initiatives.



Likewise, some recommendations for the founding partners (PMNCH, FP2030, IYAFP) have also been developed, in order to guide them in their role as spearheading organisations of the GCS.

- Provide evidence, guidance material and tools to assist relevant organisations to carry out an internal review to evaluate how their core values, vision and mission are aligned with the principles and commitments of the Global Consensus Statement. If this alignment is deficient, reshape them, with the participation of young people, to ensure that MAYE is properly incorporated.
- Provide resource tools for organisations to develop a strategic plan or a mid- to long-term organizational roadmap that enables the organization to further the implementation and guarantee of MAYE.
- Develop progress reports that highlight the advancements organisations are doing in terms of MAYE in order to provide clear examples and good practices to signatories and other relevant agents. The progress report, alongside resource tools, would mobilize and empower additional organizations to endorse the Global Consensus Statement for Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement and take action to implement its key principles and recommendations.

Chapter 1

Background and introduction



The Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement (MAYE) was jointly developed by the International Youth Alliance for Family Planning (IYAFP), Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) and PMNCH. It aims to consolidate a common understanding and set the standard for how young people can be meaningfully engaged and participate in the development and implementation of all policies, programmes and processes that affect their lives. The MAYE statement was launched at the International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) in November 2018 and at PMNCH's Partners Forum in December 2018.

To date, 249 organizations, ranging from UN agencies to small local organizations, have committed to advancing meaningful adolescent and youth engagement by endorsing the Global Consensus Statement. This commitment requires annual reporting on efforts, challenges and lessons learned about MAYE through an established accountability system, which is financially supported by FP2030 and PMMCH, coordinated by IYAFP, and steered by a committee of youth-led and youth-serving organizations

To assess how endorsing organizations are addressing and enhancing their MAYE practices, an accountability system and a steering committee were established. Both will facilitate the reporting process of the Global Consensus Statement.

About this report

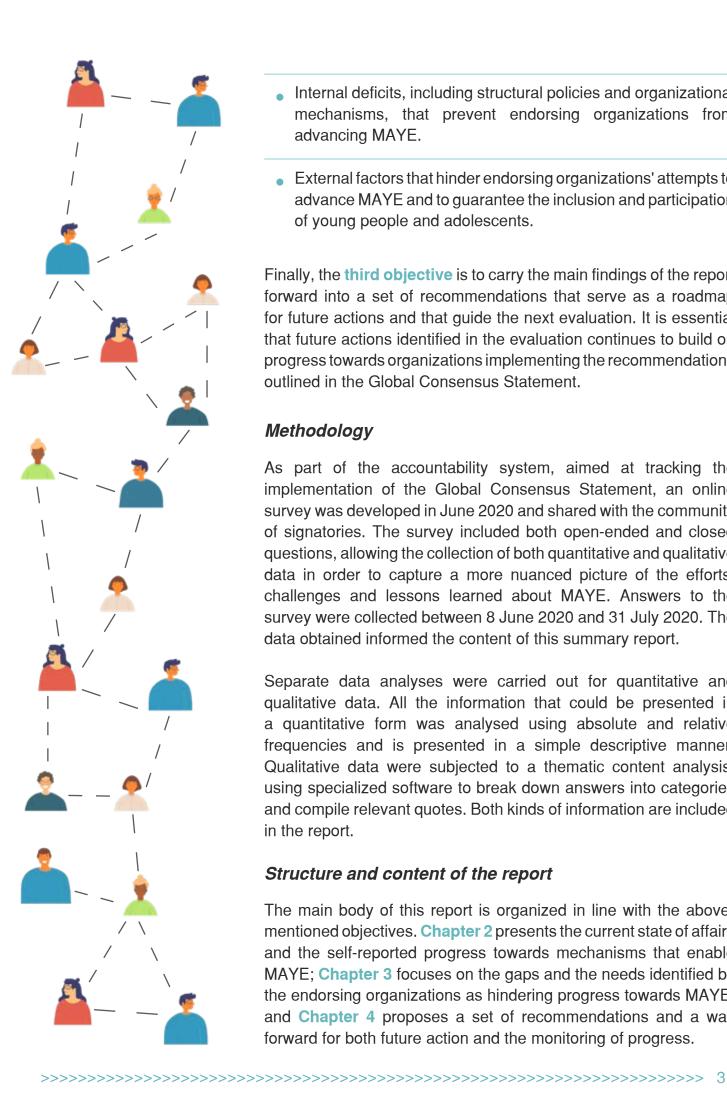
This is the first report on the status of the implementation of the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE. As part of the accountability system, it provides an update on the state of MAYE within the endorsing organization during the first year after the launch of the Statement.

The **first objective** of this report is to describe the current state of affairs and the self-reported progress of the endorsing organizations towards achieving MAYE assessment of this progress is based on the following two elements:

- The extent to which MAYE is being implemented by the endorsing organizations
- The existence of mechanisms that enhance the protection, inclusion and participation of young people and adolescents within the endorsing organizations.

The **second objective** is to highlight the gaps and needs that prevent the endorsing organizations from advancing MAYE and fully including young people and adolescents in all their endeavours at all levels. The assessment of these gaps and needs is based on two factors:





- Internal deficits, including structural policies and organizational mechanisms, that prevent endorsing organizations from advancing MAYE.
- External factors that hinder endorsing organizations' attempts to advance MAYE and to guarantee the inclusion and participation of young people and adolescents.

Finally, the **third objective** is to carry the main findings of the report forward into a set of recommendations that serve as a roadmap for future actions and that guide the next evaluation. It is essential that future actions identified in the evaluation continues to build on progress towards organizations implementing the recommendations outlined in the Global Consensus Statement.

Methodology

As part of the accountability system, aimed at tracking the implementation of the Global Consensus Statement, an online survey was developed in June 2020 and shared with the community of signatories. The survey included both open-ended and closed questions, allowing the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to capture a more nuanced picture of the efforts, challenges and lessons learned about MAYE. Answers to the survey were collected between 8 June 2020 and 31 July 2020. The data obtained informed the content of this summary report.

Separate data analyses were carried out for quantitative and qualitative data. All the information that could be presented in a quantitative form was analysed using absolute and relative frequencies and is presented in a simple descriptive manner. Qualitative data were subjected to a thematic content analysis, using specialized software to break down answers into categories and compile relevant quotes. Both kinds of information are included in the report.

Structure and content of the report

The main body of this report is organized in line with the abovementioned objectives. Chapter 2 presents the current state of affairs and the self-reported progress towards mechanisms that enable MAYE; Chapter 3 focuses on the gaps and the needs identified by the endorsing organizations as hindering progress towards MAYE; and Chapter 4 proposes a set of recommendations and a way forward for both future action and the monitoring of progress.



37%

Organisations that reported through the accountability system:

A total of 91 organisations filled in the evaluation survey. This amounts to 36.5% of all the entities that signed the Global Consensus Statement (249 based on the list exposed in the PMNCH website).



Geographical reach: There is a good balance between the geographical reach of those organisations that answered the survey.

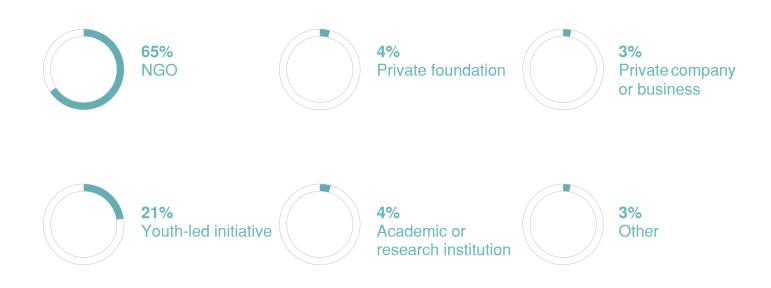
About the sample of participants in the evaluation survey

The evaluation survey was sent to all 249 signatories of the Global Consensus Statement, of which 91 responded, representing over one third of all the endorsing organizations.

Of the 91 respondents, 65% were NGOs and 21% were youth-led initiatives. In terms of geographical outreach, 39% said they operated at an international or regional level, while 61% said they worked nationally or locally. Most of the respondents worked on advocacy, research, programming and community outreach. A minority of them reported working on service delivery and funding.

Overall, we acknowledge potential bias in both the sample of respondents and the answers provided. The responding organizations are probably predisposed to advance MAYE, and therefore more likely to operate established mechanisms for ensuring equitable participation by adolescents and young people. However, far from being an inconvenience, this has made it possible to identify efforts that work, and highlights the most pressing needs for and opportunities to improve progress towards MAYE.

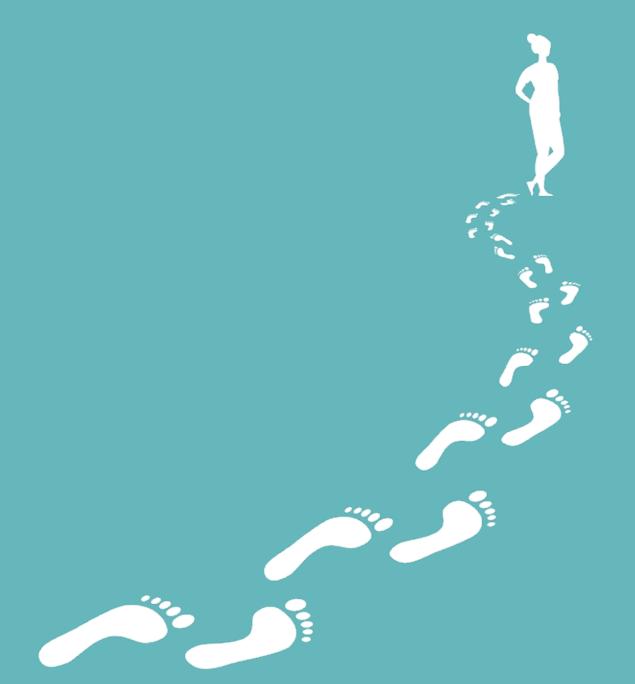
The results obtained from this sample and presented in this summary report are significant and substantially assist the evaluation of the Global Consensus Statement's implementation.



Category: As showcased in the figure above, most of those that answered the survey were NGO, followed by youth-led initiatives. This suggests that the data obtained might not be representative of all the types of entities that signed de consensus.

Chapter 2

Walking the talk: collective progress towards MAYE



Part of the evaluation survey focused on the progress and efforts being made by endorsing organizations to ensure internal MAYE. That included general questions intended to elicit self-identified examples and good practices. More specific questions were aimed at highlighting the mechanisms used to guarantee the inclusion, participation and engagement of adolescents and young people.

The majority of respondents are committed to MAYE as presented in the Global Consensus Statement, with 61% strongly committed and 36% committed. More specifically, 61% of the organizations answering this question said they dedicated more than half of their activities to young people.

Progress Overview

The surveyed organizations reported on how they are working daily to implement MAYE. Given the range in the organizational nature of respondents, findings were split between those provided by NGOs, partnerships and private foundations, which referred mainly to internal principles, policies and mechanisms, and those provided by youth-led initiatives, which tended more straightforwardly to illustrate how their structure and activities revolve entirely around ensuring MAYE.

Among the responding organizations that are not youth-led, many reported having worked on the implementation of MAYE for years, while at the same time recognizing the barriers they faced. Many organizations reported clearly endorsing principles, visions and missions oriented towards organizational transformation so as to allow MAYE. From the organizations' descriptions of their initiatives, three themes emerged.

First, for some organizations, developing and following a strategic plan to operationalize MAYE was an essential step. This was the case, for instance, in the national NGO quoted in Case Study 1, which had integrated MAYE into its strategic plan, leading the organization to engage young people in its projects and to ensure staff were trained about how to improve MAYE. Several organizations reported similar processes.

Case study 1: a national NGO

The key tenets of MAYE are integrated into our Strategic Plan. We already engage and train youth as design partners and leaders in all of our projects. All content is youth-designed and gender transformative. All staff are trained on MAYE, and safeguarding and research ethics are compulsory courses for all staff. We work in multiple geographies and we are doing more work to ensure that recruitment of youth designers specifically promotes roles to under-represented groups.



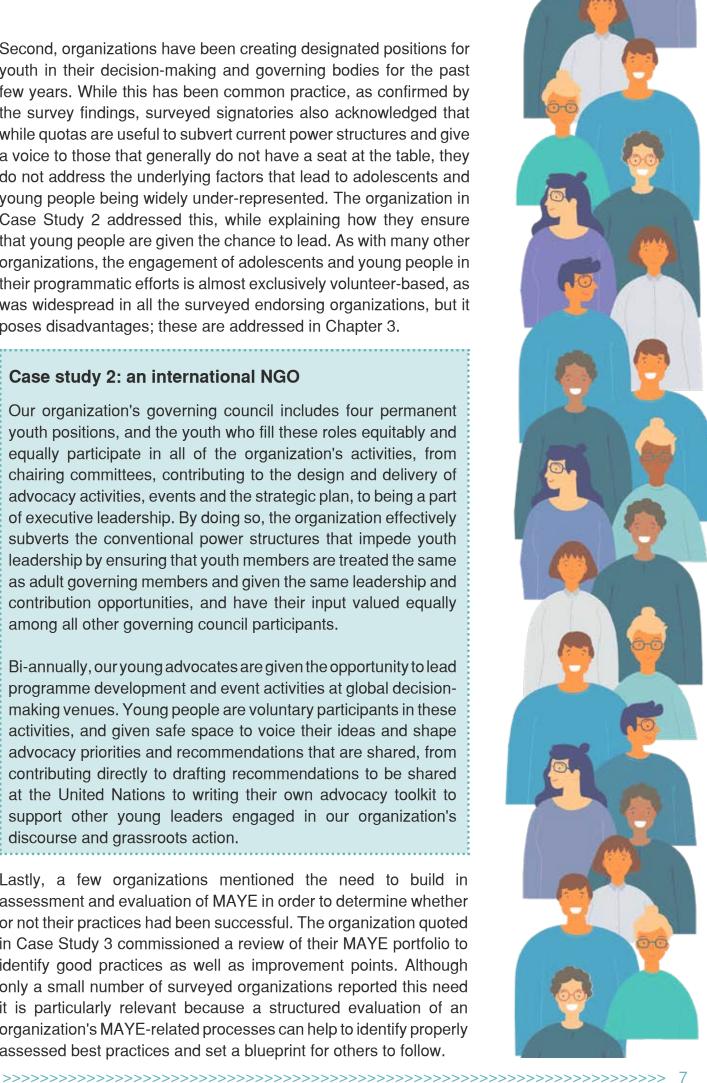
Second, organizations have been creating designated positions for youth in their decision-making and governing bodies for the past few years. While this has been common practice, as confirmed by the survey findings, surveyed signatories also acknowledged that while quotas are useful to subvert current power structures and give a voice to those that generally do not have a seat at the table, they do not address the underlying factors that lead to adolescents and young people being widely under-represented. The organization in Case Study 2 addressed this, while explaining how they ensure that young people are given the chance to lead. As with many other organizations, the engagement of adolescents and young people in their programmatic efforts is almost exclusively volunteer-based, as was widespread in all the surveyed endorsing organizations, but it poses disadvantages; these are addressed in Chapter 3.

Case study 2: an international NGO

Our organization's governing council includes four permanent youth positions, and the youth who fill these roles equitably and equally participate in all of the organization's activities, from chairing committees, contributing to the design and delivery of advocacy activities, events and the strategic plan, to being a part of executive leadership. By doing so, the organization effectively subverts the conventional power structures that impede youth leadership by ensuring that youth members are treated the same as adult governing members and given the same leadership and contribution opportunities, and have their input valued equally among all other governing council participants.

Bi-annually, our young advocates are given the opportunity to lead programme development and event activities at global decisionmaking venues. Young people are voluntary participants in these activities, and given safe space to voice their ideas and shape advocacy priorities and recommendations that are shared, from contributing directly to drafting recommendations to be shared at the United Nations to writing their own advocacy toolkit to support other young leaders engaged in our organization's discourse and grassroots action.

Lastly, a few organizations mentioned the need to build in assessment and evaluation of MAYE in order to determine whether or not their practices had been successful. The organization quoted in Case Study 3 commissioned a review of their MAYE portfolio to identify good practices as well as improvement points. Although only a small number of surveyed organizations reported this need it is particularly relevant because a structured evaluation of an organization's MAYE-related processes can help to identify properly assessed best practices and set a blueprint for others to follow.



Case Study 3: an international private foundation

Since 2015 our organization has been investing in youth-led advocacy and movements in accordance with a set of meaningful youth engagement investment principles developed in partnership with past Youth Fellows. Thus far, our MAYE investments have focused on adolescent-centred design and testing fit-for-purpose approaches to supporting youth-led advocacy and accountability, including: investments in movement and campaign building and strengthening; digital youth advocacy; edutainment platforms for local activism; global advocacy movements and mechanisms; and evidence generation to support advocacy. In 2019, we commissioned a review of our MAYE portfolio with a view to identifying learnings and challenges and to inform our future grant-making. The evaluation provided us with insights and recommendations to guide future growth of our MAYE processes and portfolio, including: continuing to support youth-led coalitions in both the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and climate fields, and more intentional support to young feminist leaders and movements; balancing short- and medium-term initiatives while planning for long-term investment in youth; exploring long-term core support to youth-led organizations; and continuing to strengthen and disseminate the evidence base and good practice for investing in youth.

The survey responses from **youth-led initiatives**, as noted above, clearly showed greater commitment to MAYE than the other surveyed organizations. A typical example is the organization quoted in Case Study 4, a longstanding youth-led organization with a fully-fledged youth leadership, in which educational efforts are delivered by young people, for young people. In line with that example, the activities most commonly engaged in by youth-led organizations were advocacy and capacity building, support for which requires a strong organizational structure. However, the volunteer-based nature of many youth-led organizations can present a challenge.

Case Study 4: an international youth-led initiative

Our organization is entirely youth-led and volunteer-based. On the international level, the network is governed by a team of young people and elected through transparent processes. MAYE is one of the most vital principles of the network, therefore we enhance MAYE internally and externally. Through our educational sessions (which are based on non-formal and peer education) we enhance awareness of the rights of youth, including SRHR and human rights generally. The fact that we have managed to be an entirely youth-led network for the past 20 years is something that we are proud of.

Despite having very consistent and strong MAYE principles and established mechanisms, it is important to note that youth-led initiatives often struggle to secure the necessary funding and resources in the longer term. This challenge is explored in more detail in Chapter 3. Case Study 5 quotes a strong national youth-led initiative whose potential is frustrated by older peers' lack of respect for and recognition of the abilities of adolescents and young people.

Case Study 5: a national youth-led initiative

Since 2018, our organization has been active in advocating for improved adolescent health care in our country. We have been able to engage over 4000 young people since 2018 with health-care information in order to empower them to make informed choices. We have been engaging different community stakeholders to raise awareness of the health-care rights of young people. As a youth-led organization, 40% of our leadership consists of people aged below 25. We have been successful in conducting rights-based advocacy for young people's SRHR, including family planning. This is because we understand current national policies on this subject. We are still struggling to create environments in which young people's views are fully respected, and where they can make decisions about their SRH, free from any coercion.

Around half of the responding organizations seemed to be thriving and making major advancements in including young people in their cross-cutting engagement (for those that were not already youth-led) through targeted processes of recruitment, inclusion in governing bodies or the development of internal youth-led networks. Some of the surveyed organizations also reported progress in terms of increased financial and technical support and the creation of formal partnerships. On a more quantitative note, Table 1 summarizes the type of support that the respondents reported providing, and how often they do so.

The absolute and relative frequencies presented in the list below are based on the answers received for this particular question, which stand at 54.

Table 1: Type of support for young people's engagement and how often it's provided (n=54)

n (%)

Type of support	Often-Always	Sometimes	Rarely-Never
Strengthening young people's capacity	45 (83.3%)	9 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
Strengthening adult's capacity to work with young people	21 (38.9%)	24 (44.4%)	9 (16.7%)
Using understandable, respectful and accessible language and communication methods for young people, including translation or interpretation services for young people	38 (70.4%)	12 (22.2%)	4 (7.4%)
Providing direct technical support for their initiatives and projects	32 (59.3%)	17 (31.5%)	5 (9.2%)
Fostering connections with broader networks	35 (64.8%)	16 (29.6%)	3 (5.6%)
Mentoring	37 (68.5%)	15 (27.8%)	2 (3.7%)

Based on the information the table presents, we can see how, according to the surveyed organisations, organisations seem to provide a significant amount of support to ensure meaningful engagement of young people.

Finally, some organizations reported progress in implementing policies, roadmaps and internal resources that advanced MAYE which translated into significant improvements in community empowerment strategies. These strategies were reported to enable adolescents and young people to lead on the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of interventions.



How organizations currently address MAYE

"We have made a lot of strides in giving the vulnerable power to challenge inequalities, including building their capacity to become self-reliant. Our approaches are very much sustainable, where communities own the interventions and implement them without much support and resources": **national NGO**

"The motivation of our organization in advocacy is to ensure in our work we drive a multistakeholder partnership to catalyse and advance comprehensive youth strategies, initiatives and accountability mechanisms that create opportunities for genuine youth-led change towards achieving sustainable development": international youth-led initiative

"Youth engagement sub-group members served on all our Partners' Forum structures, including the global organizing committee, communications and advocacy sub-committee, programme sub-committee and the national organizing committee": multistakeholder international platform

Mechanisms to improve the protection, inclusion and participation of adolescents and young people

As noted in the previous section, most of the endorsing organizations reported making progress on implementing MAYE. In order to obtain details of that progress, and to see whether it aligned with the principles and commitments reflected in the Global Consensus Statement, the survey included questions highlighting the mechanisms established by signatories to ensure the protection, inclusion, participation and engagement of adolescents and young people. These findings have been synthesized in the following subsections.

Protection mechanisms

Statistics: Question answered by 59.3% of the surveyed organizations. Of these:

- 66.1% stated that they have at least a protection policy, protocol or mechanism to protect young people under the age of 18 and to guarantee their safety.
- 50.9% stated that they have at least a protection policy, protocol or mechanism to protect young people over the age of 18 and to guarantee their safety.

The majority of organizations either did not answer the question about protection mechanisms or stated that they are currently developing or putting such a mechanism in place. However, of those who reported having protection mechanisms in place, most referred to internal guidelines and policies to safeguard and protect children. There were also a few references to organizational codes of conduct. The quantitative data suggest that surveyed organizations have stronger protection mechanisms for young people aged under 18 than for those aged over 18.

Feedback mechanisms

Statistics: Question answered by 59.3% of the surveyed organizations. Of these:

 78.2% reported having a feedback mechanism in place to receive input and comments from young people. A more accurate depiction of how these feedback mechanisms are articulated can be found in Figure 2.

"How does your organization respond to feedback?"

Out of those that answered having a mechanism in place:



86%

of them mentioned having at least a case-by-case system to address the feedback received by young people.



39.5%

of them mentioned having at least a staff member dedicated to addressing the feedback received by young people.





32.6%

of them mentioned having both systems.

As well as the results displayed in Figure 2, some organizations provided additional information, such as the establishment of hotlines and other internal mechanisms allowing young people to actively solicit feedback. Although feedback mechanisms for young people seem to be particularly widespread among the organizations surveyed, the point was made that international organizations working at multiple levels find it more difficult to systematically collect and react to feedback.

Equitable engagement mechanisms

Statistics: Question answered by 59.3% of the surveyed organizations. Of these:

- 61.1% reported having some mechanisms in place to ensure equitable engagement of marginalized young people. Specifically:
 - 84.8% had a mechanism concerning young women and girls
 - 63.3% had a mechanism concerning young people living with disabilities
 - 60.6% had a mechanism concerning young people living with HIV
 - 51.5% had a mechanism concerning young LGBTQI+ people

Organizations that provided additional answers specifically mentioned adolescent girls, teenage mothers and young women and girls in situations of increased vulnerability (such as refugees, asylum seekers and those living in war zones).

Generally speaking, and considering that the sample organizations already had a strong commitment to MAYE, respondents were sensitive towards the vulnerabilities of underserved adolescents and young people. However, of the options provided for this survey question, young people living with disabilities, young people living with HIV and young LGBTQI+ people were selected significantly less often than young women and girls. While these groups are harder to reach unless programmes specifically target them, this shows a need for organizations to change their approaches to participation and engagement so they are evenly applied to all young people.

Some specific mechanisms referred to by several organizations were: the creation of representation indicators for accountability purposes; vulnerability assessment for each programme developed; recruitment and decision-making processes involving an equity perspective; and confidentiality and privacy in both participatory actions and service provision.

Lastly, while some organizations reported having no formal documents or established benchmarks to fully engage under-represented adolescents and young people (mostly due to their organizational model) a few of them reported having a pro-diversity and inclusive work ethic.



Examples of equitable engagement mechanisms

"We have developed and employed "Each a Gender and Youth Marker, an vulnerability assessment based internal accountability and monitoring tool. This tool helps project teams to assess the degree of gender and youth integration within their programmes, based on five critical criteria: activities, participation, analysis, negative effects, and monitoring and evaluation": international NGO

programme undertakes the context of the project, the current realities of the project locations and emerging issues peculiar to project. This is then used to map out marginalized groups per project location and to develop strategies to increase their engagement and reduce their marginalization": national NGO

Participation in decision-making bodies

Statistics: Question answered by 60.4% of the surveyed organizations. Of these:

• 87.0% stated that they have some degree of representation by young people in their decision-making bodies.

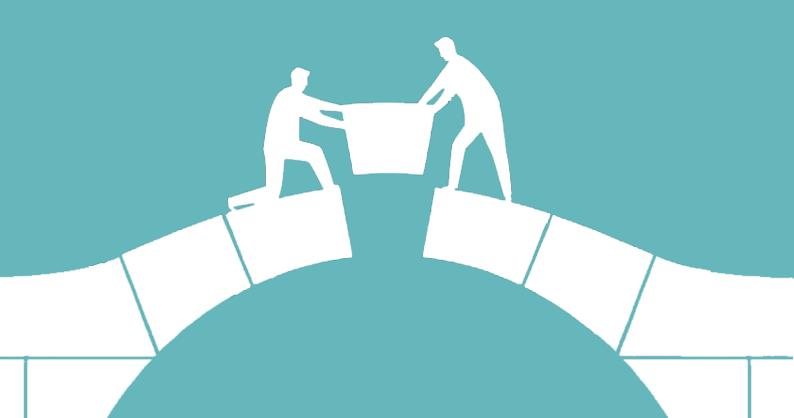
As for decision-making bodies, the existence of mechanisms such as youth advisory boards and youth focal points (especially for partnerships with organizational membership or organizations with country offices) were reported by many responding organizations.

Many respondents reported having a quota of seats for adolescents and young people in governing bodies. However, it was pointed out that the means of selection sometimes reinforced biases. For example, selection of a person because they are already well-known risks limiting diversity. However, some organizations have established guidelines moderating discussion to ensure that all voices are heard.

In general, the survey responses suggest that there are more mechanisms to recruit young people for programmatic action and advocacy than there are for their meaningful participation in decision-making bodies.

Chapter 3

Bridging the gap: identified barriers and needs to be overcome



Having reviewed the largely positive findings of progress made by MAYE signatories, remaining gaps were thereafter reviewed. This chapter presents findings from the second section of the survey, intended to identify the existing barriers and the shortfalls in resources (other than financial) which organizations believe must be overcome to establish full MAYE.

Structural barriers

Structural barriers were a constant complaint, including those experienced first-hand by youth-led initiatives. Acknowledging these structural barriers helps to better contextualize the other barriers detailed in subsequent sections.

Signatories of the Global Consensus Statement form part of a much broader system that systematically under-represents and underserves adolescents and young people. It is likely that all organizations impose such structural barriers to some extent.

The power relations and hierarchies that disproportionately favour adult-led organizations lead to young people being widely treated as beneficiaries rather than stakeholders. Despite the clear commitment of many organizations, this sometimes translates into less access to training and capacity building, less representation in decision-making spaces, inadequate compensation for work done, and other factors preventing adolescents and young people from engaging meaningfully at all levels of an organization.

Even when these power dynamics are overcome, young people still have to fight other structural barriers (e.g. racism, adultism and misogyny). This further impedes their chances of being fully represented and engaged in all their diversity, limiting access to the few most privileged individuals.





The consequences of structural barriers

"Our organization is struggling to provide adequate capacity-building support to our adolescent and youth team members and volunteers and to provide proper compensation/stipends to our team members due to our lack of technical resources and funding as an organization": **national NGO**

"Our organization wants to incorporate young people as part of its broader mission. We don't want young people to be represented in decision-making bodies without being adequately supported. We do not want them tokenized": **national NGO**

"The struggle is always to involve LGBTQI+ youth in decision-making processes, especially in SRH activities at the district level, because of homophobia and discrimination": national youth-led initiative

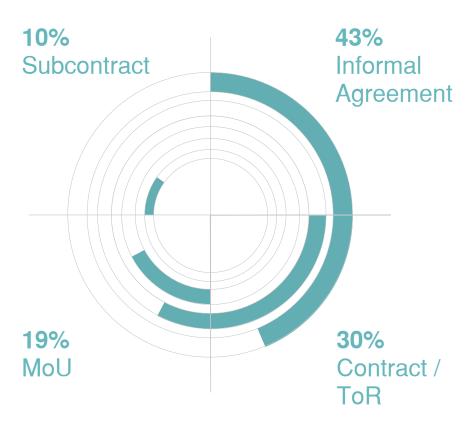
Exploring the gaps: challenges to and enablers of **MAYE**

Creating meaningful partnerships with youth-led initiatives

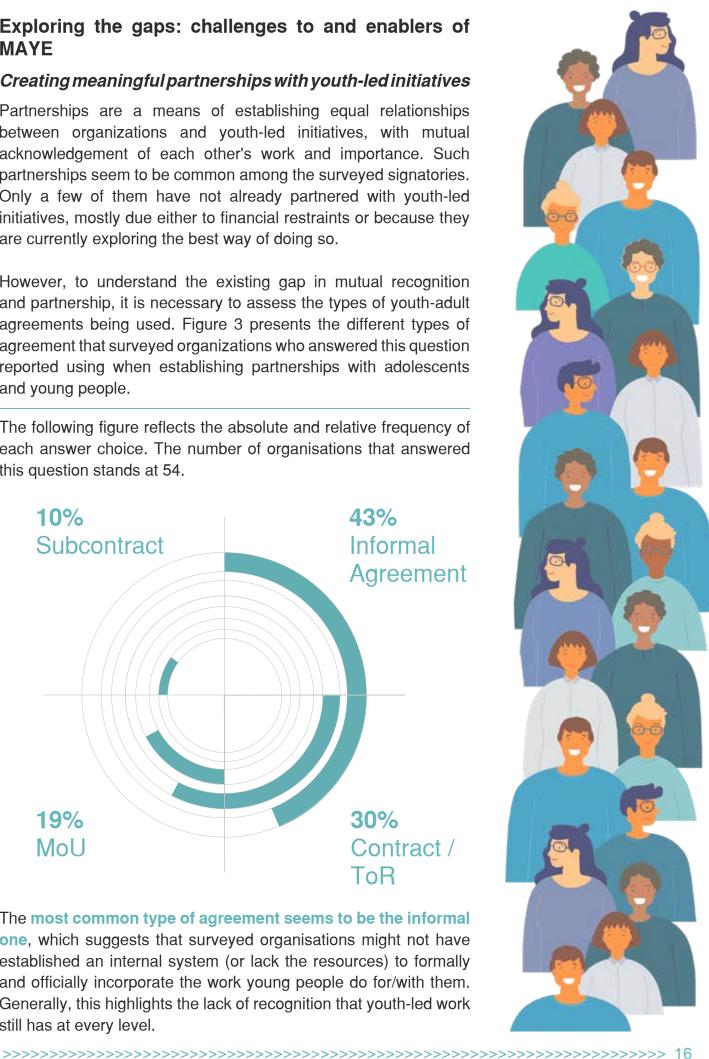
Partnerships are a means of establishing equal relationships between organizations and youth-led initiatives, with mutual acknowledgement of each other's work and importance. Such partnerships seem to be common among the surveyed signatories. Only a few of them have not already partnered with youth-led initiatives, mostly due either to financial restraints or because they are currently exploring the best way of doing so.

However, to understand the existing gap in mutual recognition and partnership, it is necessary to assess the types of youth-adult agreements being used. Figure 3 presents the different types of agreement that surveyed organizations who answered this question reported using when establishing partnerships with adolescents and young people.

The following figure reflects the absolute and relative frequency of each answer choice. The number of organisations that answered this question stands at 54.



The most common type of agreement seems to be the informal one, which suggests that surveyed organisations might not have established an internal system (or lack the resources) to formally and officially incorporate the work young people do for/with them. Generally, this highlights the lack of recognition that youth-led work still has at every level.



The type of agreement most commonly adopted is the informal agreement (42.6%). This may be due to the surveyed organizations either not having established an internal system, or lacking the resources to formally recognize the work done for and with them by young people. However, it could also be due to the unequal nature of the relationship and the perception that adolescents and young people will be satisfied with a less secure working relationship.

Representation in decision-making bodies

When assessing specific barriers to the improvement of youth representation on decision-making bodies, respondents provided some detailed insights.

As described in Case Study 6, a barrier identified by some surveyed signatories was that the qualifications required by organizations for young people to join their decision-making spaces generated a very narrow bottleneck. This factor often resulted in the selection of young people from more privileged backgrounds or older candidates. Additionally, while some organizations hired young people as temporary consultants or advisors, they were rarely appointed to permanent positions.

Case Study 6: international NGO

In our organization, the qualifications and requirements of specific positions within decision-making bodies often prevent young people from serving in those bodies. This is often due to requiring a vast number of years of working experience, which by nature of their age, young people do not have. For example, we do not currently have a Project Director, a Unit Director or a Senior Management Team member in headquarters or in a country programme aged under 30. Additionally, oftentimes, if a younger staff member gains access to a decision-making space this requires someone else within that space to take a step back, or even to cede power, and that is a hard thing. Without specific quotas or mandates from the Board or the Executive Team, it is very difficult for young people to gain access to these spaces.

The organization quoted in Case Study 7 pointed out that, while the predominant type of approach for MAYE in decision-making bodies seems to be individual, it would be worth exploring a more collective approach, which seems to work better.





Case Study 7: international private foundation

Our organization is working to address the challenges of youth access to our governance structures. Based on learnings from previous engagement processes, we are working to identify a structure that is fit for purpose, effective and meaningful. We have found that a more collective approach (such as a youth advisory board) may be more effective than an individual one (a youth fellow, for example).

Generally speaking, a few youth-led initiatives referred to tokenistic practices (inclusion of adolescents and young people simply for the sake of including them, without changing the underlying barriers that prevent them from meaningfully engaging) as a significant setback that hindered MAYE within governing bodies and organizations in general.

Financial compensation for work done

Statistics: Question answered by 58.2% of the surveyed organizations. Of these:

- 66.1% reported financially compensating youths either always or most of the time.
- 28.3% reported financially compensating youths either half of the time or rarely.
- 5.7% reported never financially compensating youths.

These figures show that a good proportion of organizations financially compensate adolescents and young people. However, those results should be interpreted in conjunction with the rest of the content provided in this section.

As for enablers and barriers, of the 55% of the surveyed organizations that answered this question, more than half identified the organizational mandate and internal advocacy as the main enablers for financially compensating adolescents and young people for their work. Most of those offering their own suggestions cited internally agreed principles and the use of an equity perspective as other enablers for financial compensation of young people. Of the barriers referred to by the survey, lack of donor requirement or encouragement and restrictive internal financial policies were the most frequently identified by responding organizations. Almost all of those that suggested other options mentioned lack of funding as the main barrier preventing organizations from financially rewarding young people's work.

Regarding the different types of financial compensation, Figure 4 presents the answers provided. It shows that most of those organizations that answered support young people predominantly by paying expenses, although other types of support are also frequent, with in-kind support and financial compensation both exceeding 25%.

"What types of financial support does your organization provide to young people?"

The following figure reflects the absolute and relative frequency of each answer choice. The number of organisations that answered this question stands at 53.



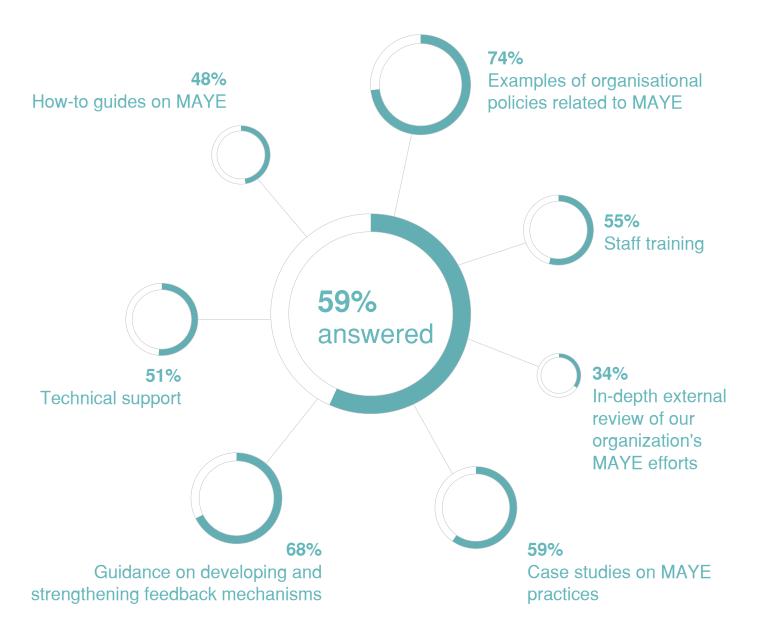
The predominant way of financially supporting young people is by paying their expenses, even though the other types of support also seem to be very frequent, with in-kind support and financial compensation surpassing the 50% threshold.

Identifying the need to increase MAYE

As well as identifying gaps and barriers, survey respondents were also asked about their organization's needs, and the kind of support that would help them fulfil their commitment to MAYE. Their answers are summarized in Figure 5. Overall, the answers suggest that there is significant demand for all the types of support suggested by the survey. Organizations offering their own suggestions referred to the need for support in establishing sharing mechanisms between organizations, developing toolkits and receiving more exposure to youth-led initiatives.

"Aside from financial resources, what support does your organization need to fulfil your commitment to MAYE??"

The following figure reflects the absolute and relative frequency of each answer choice. The number of organisations that answered this question stands at 53.



Many of the organizations surveyed expressed a view that resources for these purposes would help streamline their internal policies and work, enabling robust MAYE mechanisms to be implemented in the long run. Here too, they noted the need for more financial resources to be allocated for this purpose.

Getting exposure to good practices was perceived to be a means of better understanding how to properly commit to and work for MAYE, therefore a lot of organizations stated that exchanges of information with youth-led and other initiatives doing well in this field could be useful.

Responding organizations also confirmed the need for a decent body of evidence highlighting the effects and impacts of MAYE on work being done with and for young people. This was seen as likely to strengthen commitments to back and implement MAYE as a transformative strategy.



Support needed to advance MAYE

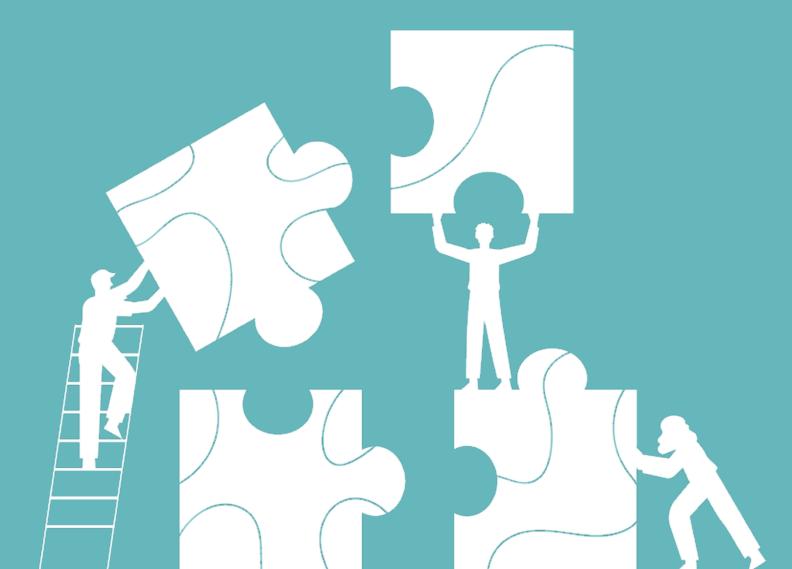
"Developing policies takes time and expert knowledge, which also costs staff hours. Being able to adapt other successful policy frameworks would be useful to us. External reviews are the best tool for properly validating an organization's efforts towards MAYE": youth-led international NGO

"Case studies on MAYE practices would be useful to include in guidelines, as well as examples of organizational policies, to ensure our members have access to specific examples and effective approaches to MAYE": youth-led international NGO "We need more evidence and data overall about the effectiveness and results/ impact of more intentionally and meaningfully integrating the participation and leadership of adolescents and youth": international NGO



Chapter 4

The way forward: conclusions and recommendations for relevant organizations



This chapter focuses on providing an overview on the reported expectations regarding MAYE for the near future as well as a set of conclusions. These conclusions aim at summarizing all the findings presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and are followed by a list of recommendations that provide a way forward on the commitments made around the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE.

Expectations to strengthen MAYE in the near future

Statistics: Question answered by 58.2% of surveyed organizations. Of these:

- 67.9% reported expecting it might be feasible to significantly strengthen their MAYE work.
- 32.1% reported expecting it might be disable to strengthen their MAYE work to some extent.

Based on these figures, all the organizations that answered this question intend to strengthen MAYE at least to some extent, showing a strong commitment to keep working to that end.

As for future work, many organizations reported having committed to strengthening MAYE as part of both their internal and external work. These commitments can be summarized in the following categories:

- keeping young people at the centre of their efforts and elaborating their new strategic plans as well as adapting the organization's structures and policies to reflect that (in collaboration with young people);
- implementing concrete engagement mechanisms within decision-making bodies and providing technical and financial support; and
- developing an accountability mechanism through checklists and indicators.

However, many organizations doubted the possibility of achieving these commitments in full, due not only to a major lack of funding but also to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has altered organizations' priorities. It is however apparent that it is important to provide guidance on how to enable and implement meaningful AY engagement regardless of funding levels.

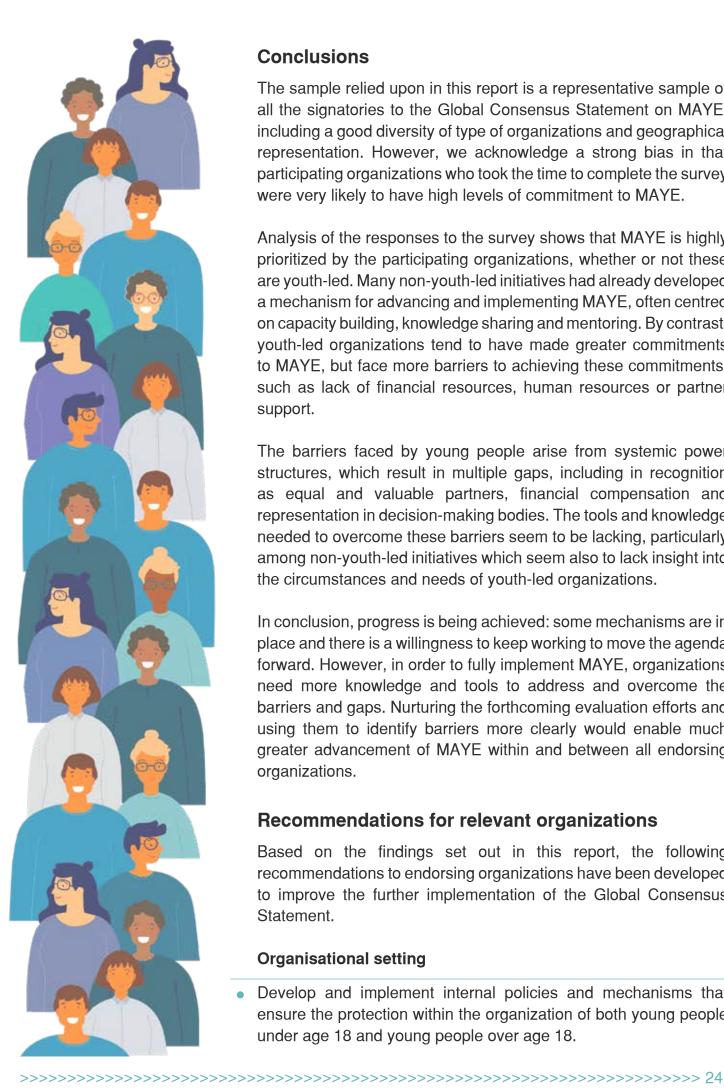


Expectations of advancing MAYE

"2020 sees the implementation of a new five-year strategy for our organization, where youth play a larger role and focus": international private foundation

"We are beginning a strategic process of mainstreaming MAYE as part of a broader approach to equity across the organization, covering both programming and institutional processes": international private foundation

"Over the second half of 2020 and through 2021, we are preparing for a deep internal and external reflection and assessment process that will help us dig deeper to really understand where we are on our MAYE journey and what we need to do towards institutionalizing meaningful and intentional adolescent and youth participation and leadership": international NGO



Conclusions

The sample relied upon in this report is a representative sample of all the signatories to the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE, including a good diversity of type of organizations and geographical representation. However, we acknowledge a strong bias in that participating organizations who took the time to complete the survey were very likely to have high levels of commitment to MAYE.

Analysis of the responses to the survey shows that MAYE is highly prioritized by the participating organizations, whether or not these are youth-led. Many non-youth-led initiatives had already developed a mechanism for advancing and implementing MAYE, often centred on capacity building, knowledge sharing and mentoring. By contrast, youth-led organizations tend to have made greater commitments to MAYE, but face more barriers to achieving these commitments, such as lack of financial resources, human resources or partner support.

The barriers faced by young people arise from systemic power structures, which result in multiple gaps, including in recognition as equal and valuable partners, financial compensation and representation in decision-making bodies. The tools and knowledge needed to overcome these barriers seem to be lacking, particularly among non-youth-led initiatives which seem also to lack insight into the circumstances and needs of youth-led organizations.

In conclusion, progress is being achieved: some mechanisms are in place and there is a willingness to keep working to move the agenda forward. However, in order to fully implement MAYE, organizations need more knowledge and tools to address and overcome the barriers and gaps. Nurturing the forthcoming evaluation efforts and using them to identify barriers more clearly would enable much greater advancement of MAYE within and between all endorsing organizations.

Recommendations for relevant organizations

Based on the findings set out in this report, the following recommendations to endorsing organizations have been developed to improve the further implementation of the Global Consensus Statement.

Organisational setting

Develop and implement internal policies and mechanisms that ensure the protection within the organization of both young people under age 18 and young people over age 18.



Develop and implement internal policies and mechanisms that ensure proper recognition and compensation of adolescents and young people as well as their meaningful engagement at all levels of the organization.

Investing in the professionalism of adolescents and youth

- Employ engaging and participatory processes, such as consultations or advisory boards, to ensure that all the organization's initiatives involving adolescents and young people incorporate their perspective.
- Establish equal partnerships with youth-led initiatives, avoiding informal agreements in favour of long-term MoUs, contracts, ToRs or other arrangements adopted for non-youth-led organizations.
- Provide full financial compensation for work carried out by adolescents and young people, acknowledging the economic value of their time and efforts, in the shape and form that best suits the adolescents or young people.
- Ensure the representation of adolescents and young people in all governing bodies and decision-making spaces, meaningfully engaging them in all processes and avoiding tokenistic practices.

Intersectionality

- Train staff and volunteers engaged in the organization to identify structural barriers as well as the culture of power and privilege and acknowledge these as indirect sources of disenfranchisement for adolescents and young people in all their diversity.
- Ensure that the organization carries out its activities from an overarching intersectional perspective, tackling the abovementioned structural barriers, and generating safe spaces for young people regardless of their gender, place of birth, ethnicity, ability, skin colour and any other trait that shapes their individual or collective identities.

Accountability

- Develop and implement an accountability and transparency plan that allows the organization to track and share its progress on MAYE.
- Generate a mechanism by which signatories of the Global Consensus Statement on MAYE can share policy frameworks,



case studies and experiences. This could also be used to reach out directly to youth-led initiatives.

Likewise, some recommendations for the founding partners (PMNCH, FP2030, IYAFP) have also been developed, in order to guide them in their role as spearheading organisations of the GCS.

- Provide evidence, guidance material and tools to assist relevant organisations to carry out an internal review to evaluate how their core values, vision and mission are aligned with the principles and commitments of the Global Consensus Statement. If this alignment is deficient, reshape them, with the participation of young people, to ensure that MAYE is properly incorporated.
- Provide resource tools for organisations to develop a strategic plan or a mid- to long-term organizational roadmap that enables the organization to further the implementation and guarantee of MAYE.
- Develop progress reports that highlight the advancements organisations are doing in terms of MAYE in order to provide clear examples and good practices to signatories and other relevant agents.

