



What motivates young people – *Youth Participation in Pakistan*

Young co-researchers in Pakistan interviewed youth and adult staff at SRHR organisations about what youth participation means to them. They found out the positive effects of youth participation in the development and implementation of SRHR interventions. With this information they provide recommendations on how to best support young people's involvement.

Youth as co-implementers

Meaningful youth participation means the active engagement of young people in all phases of the development and implementation of policies, programmes and services that affect their lives. Adults mainly see advantages in engaging young people because of their creativity and entrepreneurial mindset and the energy they bring to the workplace. They also feel they are contributing to building the capacity of future leaders.

When young people are asked about their motivation to work in SRHR-programmes they mention a definite value in building work experience and networking opportunities. However, it is alarming to see that they did not consider leadership and contribution to programme design, planning or strategic direction as a possibility. Many could not think of roles other than as co-implementer of the programme.

The benefits of youth participation

Young community mobilisers and young staff improved the diversity of the SRHR interventions. Young volunteers were able to engage youth that would otherwise not participate in SRHR programmes. For example, Sadia (23) made the SRHR programme attractive to youth through sport activities, and reached out to young girls in her community in just a few months. And the youth-friendly health centre of Rahnuma Family Planning Association—run by a young doctor and counsellor—actively engages minority groups and visits nearby transgender communities, which is generally a taboo in Pakistan.

Moreover, having young people on board improves the quality of the programme. Where doctors and counsellors are younger, there are more open conversations about SRH-needs: *"I noticed that young people talk to their peers and friends openly. Also in a group discussion they are very honest in sharing their experiences at times. But we have seen that they are very reluctant to talk to older doctors"*.

Facts - ASK programme in Pakistan

Where?

Lahore, Karachi and Quetta.

By whom?

- Rutgers WPF
- Rahnuma-Family Planning Association
- Madadgaar helpline
- Visionary Foundation
- HANDS
- PIDS
- KIND
- ITA
- Chanan Development Association

For whom?

Young people (10-24 years old) as well as LGBT youth

Scope of the research

Four young co-researchers and a principal researcher undertook 27 interviews, 8 focus group discussions and 6 observational field visits.

Recommendations

A major challenge in meaningful youth participation is the short period of time many youth tend to engage to the organisation and the SRH activities. These are good examples of how to best motivate and support young people's involvement:

- Provide a clear understanding of the programme goals and clarity on roles. Also, regular two-way communication like socialising after office hours, is very important. Young people who meet their seniors on a regular basis feel more committed to the organisation's work, while hierarchy and bureaucracy seriously demotivate young people who have a heart for the organisation.
- Develop volunteer development and management plans, which can also include mentoring or regular discussion to share ideas. Youths are eager to learn, not only about SRHR-issues but also about communication and leadership skills. Also there are youth-led organisations (YLOs) look for support in organisational development trainings. Moreover, it is necessary to acknowledge their work, for example certificates and official references enhance motivation.
- Provide job opportunities for long-term volunteers or outstanding interns. Also, have policies in place to hire a significant percentage of staff under the age of 30. This measure supports the quality of the programme and motivates other volunteers. Nevertheless be careful, competition for limited opportunities sometimes also triggers mistrust among youth, which can be counterproductive for the programme.
- Place your confidence in young staff to take up more leading roles. Diverse tasks over time are really motivational, especially when young volunteers or staff can take on increased responsibility. For example, have young representatives in the national programme board or district council where implementing partners regularly work with youth in designing, executing and evaluating interventions. These spaces could also encourage self-criticism and open discussion for in-depth understanding of the dynamics of meaningful youth participation.