

Young staff needs supportive adults – Youth Participation in Indonesia

Young co-researchers observed diverse ways of youth participation at SRHR organisations in Indonesia and considered working in partnership with adults as the most meaningful strategy. From interviews with young and adult staff they reveal advantages of youth participation as well as recommendations on how to best support the involvement of young people.

Different ways of youth participation

Despite a hierarchical socio-cultural structure, youth involvement is common—young people have a voice and many belong to the numerous youth organisations in Indonesia. However, the nature of youth involvement differs per organisation. Young people sometimes merely implement programmes without a decision-making role. Sometimes young staff runs the entire youth programme, from coordination to evaluation. Although this suggests strong youth participation, it can be misleading since adult staff shows minimal support for youth activities, which creates pressure and hinders the work of young staff and volunteers, and lowers programme quality. The most successful examples come from organisations in which young people are responsible for youth activities *and* the organisation’s strategic direction together with adults.

Moreover, the organisations’ visions and policies have a self-sustaining effect on youth participation. Youth staff and volunteers in organisations with youth representation policies understand the concept of *meaningful youth participation* and regard it as their right. On the other hand, at organisations that engage youth ‘because the donor demanded it’, the understanding of youth participation is often limited to the few young people working in the team and leaves young volunteers unsure about their roles, possibilities and further involvement.

The benefits of youth participation

On an individual level, young volunteers and staff reported improved self-confidence, public speaking skills and expanded networks, through their roles in documenting for advocacy, media campaigns and training of health providers in youth-friendliness. They also gained a better understanding of sexuality. In addition, working in a team created a sense of togetherness and solidarity. Moreover, youth who had the opportunity to manage SRHR activities independently—but with advice and

Facts - ASK programme in Indonesia

Where?

Denpasar, Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Semarang and Suarabaya

By whom

- Aliansi Remaja Independen (ARI or Independent Young People Alliance)
- Community Development of Bethesda Hospital
- Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia (PKBI or Indonesian Planned Parenthood Association)
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Rutgers WPF Indonesia,
- Telepon Sahabat Anak 129 (TESA 129)
- Yayasan Pelita Ilmu (YPI)

For whom?

- Young volunteers and staff at Indonesian NGOs
- Adults at Indonesian NGOs

Scope of the research

The research in Indonesia was led by youth-led organisation ARI. The research team included a research coordinator and eight young co-researchers (from ARI and PKBI).

Interviews with 23 young people and 28 adults among all implementing partners. And 19 focus group discussion with youth and 1 with adults.

feedback from adults—were happy to be able to learn by doing, a chance they would never have had in a more traditional organisation.

Many adults recognise the value of young colleagues. For instance, young informants are less restrained when talking about sexuality issues with peer educators or researchers they can identify with. The data obtained in this way is more accurate and can be used in building more successful programmes. An example is the youth centre called Pilar, run by young people. They coordinate a network of peer educators in schools, universities, and communities and have a referral system working with 10 government health providers (*Puskesmas*), 18 independent midwives and 1 women's crisis centre. Also, young staff seems to push more cultural boundaries on SRHR than the adults. Working with and for marginalised or under-served youth including lesbian, gay and transgender, youth builds partnerships across human rights, women's rights and LGBTI movements.

Recommendations to support youth and youth-led organisations:

- Provide simple, transparent and fair procedures and job descriptions for youth involvement and youth representation within the organisation.
- Train and coach young volunteers and youth-led organisations on specific topics such as youth-friendly services or certain roles like writing for the media, policy influencing or programme management.
- Maintain contact with volunteers through low-cost new media like WhatsApp. This personal involvement and close communication enables shared decision-making and better programme results.
- Share responsibilities and support and guide youth with productive comments, rather than demotivational criticism.
- Provide youth volunteers with membership cards. It would provide protection and credibility in encounters with police or conservative groups.
- Offer staff positions to promising volunteers and alumni roles for ex-volunteers to ensure commitment, guidance and the transfer of knowledge to younger volunteers.