Operations Research on Youth-Led Collaborations in Uganda

Final Report
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Get Up Speak Out (GUSO) is a five-year programme (2016-2020) developed by a consortium consisting of Rutgers, Aidsfonds, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Dance4life, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Simavi. The programme is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the SRHR Partnership Fund. The GUSO programme addresses the following problem: “Young people do not claim their sexual rights and their right to participation because of restrictions at community, societal, institutional and political levels. This hinders their access to comprehensive SRHR education and services that match their needs, and ability to make their own informed SRHR decisions.” The GUSO consortium addresses this problem in seven countries: Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Indonesia, Ethiopia and Pakistan. The change that is envisioned is that all young people, especially girls and young women, are empowered to realise their SRHR in societies that take a positive stance towards young people’s sexuality. Operational research has been identified as an integral part of activities in the GUSO programme. The aim is to enhance the performance of the program, improve outcomes, assess feasibility of new strategies and/or assess or improve the programme Theory of Change.
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ASK</td>
<td>Access, Services, and Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEHURD</td>
<td>Centre for Health Human Rights &amp; Development</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>FLEP</td>
<td>Family Life Education Program</td>
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<td>GUSO</td>
<td>Get Up Speak Out</td>
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<td>IPPF</td>
<td>International Planned Parenthood Federation</td>
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<td>MYP</td>
<td>Meaningful Youth Participation</td>
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<td>NAFOPHANU</td>
<td>National Forum of People Living with HIV and AIDS Networks in Uganda</td>
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<td>NL/UK</td>
<td>Netherlands/United Kingdom</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Steering Committee</td>
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<td>OR</td>
<td>Operations Research</td>
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<td>RAHU</td>
<td>Reach A Hand Uganda</td>
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<td>RD</td>
<td>Restless Development</td>
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<td>RHU</td>
<td>Reproductive Health Uganda</td>
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<td>SRHR</td>
<td>Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights</td>
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<td>STF</td>
<td>Straight Talk Foundation</td>
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<td>UFBR</td>
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<td>UNYPA</td>
<td>Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV and AIDS</td>
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<td>YAC</td>
<td>Youth Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>YCC</td>
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<td>YLC</td>
<td>Youth Led Collaborations</td>
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<td>YLO</td>
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Acknowledgements

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The research team was led by Arushi Singh, who worked with the four young co-researchers of the Uganda SRHR Alliance – Magoola David, Faith Mairah, Rose Mbirirre and James Ocen. Valuable technical inputs were provided by Rosalijn Both, Researcher GUSO, from the Netherlands.

All the respondents were very helpful and generous of their time and knowledge, and helped the research team gain insights on how meaningful youth participation, youth leadership, and youth-led collaborations were being implemented.
Introduction

Get Up Speak Out (GUSO) is a five-year programme (2016-2020) developed by a consortium consisting of Rutgers, Aidsfonds, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Dance4life, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Simavi. The programme is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the SRHR Partnership Fund.

The GUSO programme addresses the following problem: “Young people do not claim their sexual rights and their right to participation because of restrictions at community, societal, institutional and political levels. This hinders their access to comprehensive SRHR education and services that match their needs, and ability to make their own informed SRHR decisions.” The GUSO consortium addresses this problem in seven countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, and Uganda. The change that is envisioned is that all young people, especially girls and young women, are empowered to realise their SRHR in societies that take a positive stance towards young people’s sexuality.

By using a multi-component approach, there is a unique added value as a multitude of factors and actors are addressed in influencing young people’s SRHR. The theory of change describes five interrelated outcomes that contribute towards the long-term objective. These interrelated outcomes are:

1) Strengthened in-country SRHR alliances.
2) Empower young people to voice their rights.
3) Increase the access to and utilization of SRHR information/education.
4) Increase the access to and utilization of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.
5) Improve and create a supportive environment for SRHR.

The five outcomes in combination with five core principles are related to the strategies of the programme. These strategies focus, for example, on capacity building, evidence-based advocacy, provision of SRHR education and information, building youth-adult partnerships, and establishing social accountability mechanisms. GUSO’s Theory of Change builds on the earlier successes and experiences from Access, Services, and Knowledge (ASK) (2013-2015) and Unite for Body Rights (UFBR) (2011–2015) programmes.

Operational research has been identified as an integral part of the activities in the GUSO programme. The aim is to enhance the performance of the programme, improve outcomes, assess feasibility of new strategies and/or assess or improve the programme Theory of Change.

For outcome area 2, specific strategies include the structural engagement and empowerment of young people to voice their rights, through strengthening their capacities and ensuring that they are meaningfully involved in all aspects of the programme through youth-adult partnerships. The GUSO programme document lays out that young people will be encouraged, capacitated and empowered to act as youth advocates at local, national and international level, ensuring they can create a critical mass to advocate for and voice their SRHR. Major positive changes cannot be effected without building collective power which can mobilise a political force for change.\(^1\) Therefore, the idea within GUSO was to bring together young people working with the different partner organisations and existing youth

networks under a joint agenda, to strengthen these, and enable them to mobilize and engage in collective actions and activities, in particular towards building public opinion and advocating for SRHR.

Previous ORs on MYP had revealed that there were several young people working on the ground as volunteers, peer educators, etc. for each of the partner organisations in a country alliance. While some partners had good systems and structures of youth representation within their organisation, others did not, and the alliance as a whole did not have such a structure either. To ensure that all young people working under the same alliance could have a more unified voice within the alliance and their own organisations, it was agreed that these young people need to be brought together, empowered to work together as a constituency, and demand their SRH rights, not only from governments and communities, but also the partner organisations and the country alliances.

This kind of movement building, especially between young people who were involved with partner organisations at ground level but were not aware of each other’s roles in the programme, was intended to strengthen meaningful youth participation by ensuring that young people within the country alliance had a collective voice. It was also envisioned that this would enable better youth-adult partnerships at the country alliances’ level, not just at the partner organisation level.

In practice, a youth movement was conceptualized as a group of young people working together towards a shared goal, namely, to create change towards better SRHR. It was intended to foster youth movements by supporting young people involved in GUSO to organize themselves and work together effectively.

This operational research report is focused on the youth movement building strategy implemented by GUSO country alliances under outcome area 2. In Quarter 4 of 2018, it was decided to change the term youth movement building to youth-led collaborations. This was because youth movement building was a challenge for the country alliances. It was not clear to everyone working in GUSO what a youth movement exactly was, how to build a movement and what a movement should do. The GUSO mid-term report (July 2018) showed that the work on youth movement building remained behind in most of the GUSO countries and not much progress under this strategy was being made.

Discussions at different levels within GUSO subsequently led to a redefining of the strategy of youth movement building. It was decided to change the strategy ‘networking and movement building’ to ‘youth-led collaborations’. Also, on the intermediate outcome level it was decided to change ‘young people work together’ to ‘networks of empowered young people’. It was felt that this change would lead to an improved understanding of the outcome for Youth Movement Building and would provide better directions for action in this area. This change was presented in the GUSO workplan for 2019-2020. In the remainder of the report youth-led collaborations will be referred to as YLC.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this operational research was to examine how country alliances were implementing the newly defined strategy of youth-led collaborations, what were the good practices that could be shared across different alliances and programmes, and what lessons could be learnt for future iterations of the strategy. Therefore, two countries were chosen based on their reported progress and good practices on outcome area 2, i.e. Uganda and Malawi, with the intention of examining and documenting their progress and sharing learnings.
Uganda was selected because many countries were already learning from the Youth Advisory Committee established by the Uganda Alliance. Malawi was selected because they are implementing different kinds of YLC, including working with existing government structures, thus providing an opportunity to learn about sustainability. Because of their (partly) different approaches, together the choice of countries enables learning about a variety of YLC.

**Research question**

**Main research question:**

How is the strategy of youth-led collaborations applied within the GUSO programme and how do youth-led collaborations work to positively contribute to the development, implementation and delivery of SRHR interventions through the GUSO programme?

**Sub-questions**

1. How are the countries within the GUSO programme implementing the strategy of youth-led collaborations?
   i. What kinds of youth-led collaborations are country alliances reporting under output indicator 2b?
   ii. Who are involved in the implementation? What is the role of young people in general and the role of the YCC?
   iii. What are the methodologies used to implement this strategy and what was the process partners/alliances went through to arrive at the current implementation methodology in use?
   iv. What structural processes are in place for youth-led collaborations (to make sure that they do not disappear after GUSO programmes end)?
   v. What are country alliances doing to make sure that youth-led collaborations are inclusive / involving young people from different walks of life?
   vi. What mechanisms are put in place by country alliances to measure the effect of the youth-led collaborations?

2. How do Youth Led Collaborations work to positively influence the development, implementation and delivery of SRHR interventions through the GUSO programme?
   i. What is the effect of this strategy on the young people / YLOs involved in it?
   ii. What is the effect of this strategy on the collaborations within the programme / partner organisations / alliances?
   iii. What is the effect of this strategy on building solidarity for SRHR among young people?
   iv. What is the effect of this strategy on SRHR interventions for end-beneficiaries?

3. What are common obstacles in fostering youth led collaborations on SRHR within the GUSO program?

4. What distinct (missed) opportunities do country alliances have in nurturing youth led collaborations on SRHR?
Methodology

This was a qualitative operational research (OR) aimed at generating evidence-based knowledge on interventions, strategies or tools for youth-led collaborations, that could enhance the performance, quality, effectiveness or coverage. The research was led by an international consultant, in collaboration with a team of four young co-researchers (two females and two males), trained by the SRHR Alliance Uganda. These young co-researchers constitute the Alliance research team and were previously involved in the endline evaluation activities of GUSO outcome 2. They came from four different partner organisations and were also involved in GUSO as peer educators, peer buddies, and/or members of the Youth Advisory Committee.

The data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), for which guides were developed based on the research question and sub-questions (see Appendix 1). Interview respondents included Programme / Project Officers and Programmes Coordinators from Alliance partner organisations, some National Steering Committee members, service providers and youth attendants, the National Programme Coordinator (NPC), the Youth Country Coordinator (YCC), and the research team members. There were a total of 23 interviews / group interviews held with 25 respondents. FGD respondents included the members of the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), peer educators and peer buddies. A total of six FGDs were conducted of mixed females and males with 26 female and 36 male respondents.

The OR focused on Jinja and Iganga Districts at the recommendation of the NPC and YCC, and all eight partner organisations were covered, i.e. Centre for Health Human Rights & Development (CEHURD), Family Life Education Program (FLEP), National Forum of People Living with HIV and AIDS Networks in Uganda (NAFOPHANU), Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU), Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), Restless Development (RD), Straight Talk Foundation (STF), and Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV and AIDS (UNYPA).

The data collection took place between 9-19 September 2019. Respondents were mobilised by the YCC, in collaboration with the four research team members. Respondents were reimbursed for travel expenses for the interview or FGD.

The analysis was done based on the research question and the sub-questions through an iterative process of discussion of the data collected each day among the research team. Each interview and/or FGD was discussed at the end of the day and research team members’ observations, opinions, and interpretations of responses were noted to inform the final analysis. At the end of the data collection period, an overall discussion with the research team resulted in the development of a PowerPoint presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations that was shared with the NPC and at a planning meeting of the Alliance.

This report presents the final analysis informed by the interview and FGD notes and research team discussions, written up by the lead consultant.
Findings

The youth-led collaborations taking place under the SRHR Alliance Uganda are varied and innovative. One of the reasons that Uganda was chosen for the OR was that it was the first country alliance to establish a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) which has a role at different decision-making levels of the Alliance. The intention was to capture the learnings from this experience and document the good practices for other alliances to learn from. The YAC, and other forms of youth-led collaborations, are described in this section, along with the effects of them and the obstacles faced.

How the strategy of youth-led collaborations is being implemented

Some of the kinds of youth-led collaborations implemented under the Uganda SRHR alliance, other than the Youth Advisory Committee, include integrated outreach activities, special events led by young people, and joint advocacy or social accountability. In this section, we explain these structures and activities, including who is involved and how. Specific examples from different locations, that we were told about, are also described, and some good practice examples are provided in boxes. The section starts off with some background on how the alliance in Uganda thought about and gave shape to the YLC.

We asked the GUSO staff members among our respondents (who were a mix of adults and some young people) about their understanding of youth-led collaborations. The common response was that it is about young people working together to achieve a common goal. Some mentioned young people from different organisations coming together but most seemed to mean young people in general. This indicates that the strategy is now better understood for implementation, though the aspect of building young people’s ‘leadership’ was less emphasised in these definitions provided to us. The only respondent who did emphasise this was the NPC, “Youth driven collaboration, it is the ability of the young people to identify opportunity for partnerships – initiate those partnerships and get the desired result. The most important thing is that it has to be youth driven and youth led in terms of implementation.”

As mentioned in the Introduction, the strategy of youth-led collaborations, as envisioned in its original form of youth movement building, was intended to strengthen MYP and YAP. In practice, we observed that the focus on youth-led collaborations, including the attempts to define it at the NL/UK level and the country alliance level, resulted in GUSO staff viewing youth-led collaborations as one of the main means to achieving MYP.

Among the first actions taken to operationalise youth-led collaborations was to put in place the Youth Country Coordinator (YCC). From the YCC it came that there was a need for a structure of youth representation and the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was put in place. While it was unclear where the idea of the YAC exactly came from, some of our respondents indicated that it may have emerged from the example of RHU’s YAM (Youth Action Movement) and ideas from the YCC. The YAC was established by asking each partner organisation to nominate two young people (from different districts) based on their work and contributions to GUSO. These 16 young people then met and elected the eight (one from each partner) who would form the national YAC. From these eight, the
Chairperson and General Secretary were elected to represent young people on the National Steering Committee (NSC), as well as a Vice Chairperson. The NSC is the main decision-making body for the country alliance, consisting of all the Executive Directors of the partner organisations. The budget allocation for outcome 2 is given to the YCC to plan for, in collaboration with the YAC. This is at the Alliance level.

The YAC were provided with a written Terms of Reference (see Appendix 2) with clear roles and responsibilities, and the procedures for selecting YAC members. The two YAC members on the NSC have equal voting rights as all other NSC members and are expected to bring forth young people’s ideas and concerns from the ground to the NSC for discussion, as well as to participate in the overall decision making of the programme. The national YAC members also sit with the Technical Team (comprised of the Programme Officers / Coordinators from each partner) on programme planning and review. Thus, a structure for meaningful youth engagement and leadership has been established at the Alliance level.

**UNYPA send its YAC member to represent the organisation at several national and international fora, thus making youth leadership visible.**

The other eight young people (who were not elected onto the national YAC) are known as District YAC members and serve as replacements for their colleague if they are not available for a meeting or training, as well as a link with young people working on the ground in their district and the YAC.

The YCC plays a management and support role with the YAC, preparing budgets and concept notes for proposed activities, and providing technical assistance where required. The YAC members also have their own action plan, that they are expected to implement in collaboration with their Programme Officers (PO), though this tends to depend on the willingness of the PO to be collaborative and supportive. The POs were not always supportive and in some instances demonstrated negative attitudes towards enabling the YAC members to be part of decision making.

**The RHU model for electing youth representatives for the YAC, as well as for the organisation’s own Youth Action Movement (YAM), is a good practice worth highlighting and learning from. For the YAC, the peer educators in the GUSO sub-counties elect one representative to the District level. From these, one representative is elected to the National level. Since there are 2 GUSO Districts in RHU, these are the two who went for the YAC meeting and one of them got elected as the National YAC member while the other one is known as the District YAC member. This process ensures that all the peer educators engaged in GUSO are aware of the YAC and its role and get to choose freely and fairly their own representative to it.**

Another type of youth-led collaborations implemented by the alliance are **integrated outreach activities**. These take place when different partner organisations come together for a health outreach camp at a particular location. The young people and service providers and/or staff from the different partners work together to mobilise clients and provide SRHR information and services, in a complementary manner. This means, for example, that young peer educators from Straight Talk Foundation or Restless Development or Reach A Hand Uganda will go out into the community to
mobilise young people, while the young peer buddies or peer service providers from UNYPA, FLEP and RHU will help provide information and services at the tents. This results in integrated service delivery to a particular community, with well-coordinated mobilisation and service delivery. However, in practice, the staff of the partner organisations still tend to make most of the decisions for these activities while young people’s roles are largely centred around implementation. There is one specific example of Bugiri district where young people lead the planning and implementation of these integrated outreach activities on their own. This became possible because the project officers from the partner organisations located in Bugiri decided to meet and discuss the modalities of youth-led collaborations, especially as it was initially unclear who would own the data / clients reached if young people from different partners worked together. The project officers agreed that for a given activity, the organisation providing the resources would be the one to report the data. Thus, the young people got the go-ahead to work together and organise integrated activities. Similarly, in the Iganga as well, young people mentioned that there was “…collaboration between peer educators in the community and those in the hospitals. We refer young people to the health facilities where peer educators are attached, especially in government hospitals.” They also said, “we have to work together because we are giving the same information, like referring to services, health education, health talks and mobilisation,” and spoke about the specific merits of working with young people from different organisations due to their specialities, “It’s very hard for someone who is (HIV) negative to counsel someone with positive results, so we decided to bring in the young people from UNYPA who have positive results to counsel.”

Another example is from Masese where there was an integrated outreach activity planned and the young people from different organisations were to work together. On the day of the camp, they found that there were clients from different age groups awaiting information and services. Due to the different age groups, it would have been difficult to address their concerns and need for information and services all together. So, the young peer educators from the different partner organisations took the initiative to get together, agreed to divide the clients up into different age groups, and allocated the groups amongst themselves.

In addition, the Alliance has handed the reins for organising joint events like the Alliance Week or youth bonanza, and observation of International Youth Day, International Women’s Day, etc. over to the YAC under the leadership of the YCC. This is viewed as another form of youth-led collaboration. The Alliance Week occurs once a year in a different district each time, where all partners come together and conduct weeklong activities on SRHR, and young people are meant to be leading it. However, the budgeting was in fact done by a planning team (comprised of staff from partner organisations), with only one young person and the YCC, instead of with all the YAC members. Therefore, young people felt that their roles were limited to implementation since, other than the YCC, only one other young person was engaged in the decision-making process. Therefore, the planning was not in fact youth-led.

The advocacy strategy of the Alliance is to put young people at the forefront. In some districts, young people have taken on the mantle of joint advocacy within communities, with civic leaders, and local health authorities. There were several examples of young people from different partner organisations teaming up for social accountability or demanding action to address young people’s SRH needs. One such example is from Bugembe where the youth-friendly corner at the maternity hospital was relocated to a shared office and afforded no privacy to the young people accessing it. So the young peer
educators from RAHU and FLEP, who were involved in providing SRHR information and services to communities served by that hospital, got together, along with the youth chairperson of the local sub-county and the head of youth-friendly services, to meet with the head of department and ask for a better location for the youth corner. This meeting resulted in the head of the department agreeing to allocate a space for the construction of a brand new youth corner as long as funds were raised from the relevant district officials. At the time of writing this report, the young people were in the process of targeting district officials and the mayor to start construction.

NAFOPHANU has engaged its peer buddies to provide data that can be presented at the meetings of the Consortium of Advocates on Access to Treatment (CAT). The young peer buddies give data on service delivery gaps, including stockouts, to the District Coordinators, who use the information for ensuring commodity security and ARV access.

One more example is from Naluwerere, where a health centre at level two, was upgraded to a level three due to the advocacy done by the young people trained on community advocacy and social accountability. These young people observed that there were a number of young sex workers in the area, and they did not have access to adequate services since a health centre at level two has only two service providers. Due to the advocacy of GUSO peer educators, in collaboration with the civic youth leaders in the community, it has now been upgraded to a level three health centre with eight health providers, thus being able to provide more comprehensive SRHR services.

Another example is from Mayuge, where young community health advocates who had received training in advocacy and human rights, decided to take it upon themselves to reach out to religious leaders on SRHR. They identified these religious leaders and one of the major obstacles and tackled them by opening a dialogue with them after Friday prayers at the mosque. This was initiated entirely by the young people themselves.

These examples, however, are ad hoc, rather than part of any written strategy of the partners or the Alliance and tend to depend on the willingness of the decision makers to include and/or allow young people to take the lead.

FLEP has taken the initiative to bring such meaningful youth participation and youth leadership to government structures. They have lobbied with the local health centres to include young people in the Health Unit Management Committee (HUMC) and succeeded.

“In public health centres it wasn’t easy to adopt but we managed to have an activity on (youth-led) social accountability where we had FGDs with the young people at the health centres and found that they were not using the health facilities as they didn’t find any youth representation at the facility so this finding was taken to the DHO and it was taken up.”

The Alliance research team is another example of youth-led collaborations, where young people from different partner organisations have been brought together and trained on research. This team has then been involved in the endline evaluation for GUSO as well as this OR itself. The team is comprised of peer educators / buddies and YAC members.
Structural processes in place for youth-led collaborations

The YAC and the YCC are now part of the structure of the Alliance and are reflected in its Strategic Plan 2019-2023 as part of the organogram. Therefore, the YAC and YCC will continue along with the Alliance even beyond GUSO. Some partners have adopted the principle of young people’s involvement in decision making structures of the organisation by having young people on their boards where there were none earlier, for example Straight Talk Foundation and FLEP. These will also continue beyond the life of the programme as they are now part of the organisational governance structure. However, other aspects of the youth-led collaborations currently being implemented are more ad hoc and unstructured, e.g. the integrated outreach or joint events (explained below), and dependent on programme funding. Thus, it is unclear if these will continue beyond GUSO as there is no particular strategy for ensuring this.

Mechanisms to measure the effects of youth-led collaborations

It is unclear how the success of the YAC structure is being measured, because not all the young respondents knew or understand the YAC. Since the purpose of the YAC members is to represent the young people working on the ground, it would be important for these young people to know about the existence of this structure for their representation, have some investment in electing its members, and be able to access these members to raise their concerns or ideas. Similarly, for the other kinds of youth-led collaborations mentioned, measurement of success is provided in the reporting of achievements in the relevant sections of the reporting formats for GUSO.

Inclusiveness of youth-led collaborations

In terms of diversity and inclusion with respect to the marginalised or under-served young people being involved in the programme, due to UNYPA being one of the partners, young people living with HIV are well involved. In addition, the communities reached through GUSO include different religions, so the peer educators are recruited from within these communities, ensuring some diversity. While there was an intent at the beginning of GUSO to include people living with disabilities, this was not adequately followed through and several respondents brought up the importance of focusing on this group.

The positive influence of youth-led collaborations

There has been a positive effect of youth-led collaborations on young people as reported by them as well as observed by the staff members we spoke to. The young respondents explained that they had gained more knowledge from collaborating with young people from other organisations, “I am informed and now I have a lot of knowledge about SRHR.” This supplemented what they had learnt from their own organisation as they could gain specific skills from the other young people, for example, learning to do an HIV test from a UNYPA peer buddy, or engage with religious leaders from a FLEP peer educator. Working together also helped them achieve larger outputs like reaching more clients, providing more integrated information and services, and having smoother referrals to health services – this is exemplified at the end of this sub-section.

The YAC members specifically have gained leadership skills as well as skills on advocacy, report writing, public speaking and networking. This has been achieved through a combination of training, on the job work, and mentorship, as explained by a YAC member, “As YAC, the Alliance really empowered us with knowledge on meaningful youth participation, rights based approaches, and gender transformative
approaches, so really in terms of capacity building it was a lot. I gained knowledge, networking, and when you’re working together tasks become easier.”

The trust that the organisation places in the YAC’s abilities also gives them the confidence and motivation to be better engaged, for example, one YAC member told us, “I am more engaged at partner level than I was before. Back then it would be like, until you are called for an activity [you don’t engage], but now when they are planning, they are saying, ‘oh there is a YAC and we should engage them’. She can go and lead an activity in a far-flung district as the organisation believes she has the ability.”

Even personally, and within their communities, engagement and leadership within the programme, has enabled young people to gain social worth and personal growth. Through the work that the young people have been doing with their organisations, they have gained credibility and respect or importance in their communities – they are seen as knowledgeable and someone to turn to for help. This sense has been enhanced through being seen as part of the Alliance and/or part of the GUSO programme as several different young people identify with it and can recognise fellow activists wearing a GUSO T-shirt for example, even if they are from different organisations. As one YAC member told us, “I am a person who couldn’t separate from alcohol, and any money I earned went to the bar, but now I changed and many friends of mine are changing too and refraining from alcohol thanks to the Alliance. Now I wear my Alliance t-shirt and everyone is like ‘eeeeeiii’ and waiting to hear from me.” One young respondent told us, “I used to desire being like the VHT in the community where someone comes and asks you to give them some condoms. It feels good when you have the condoms.” Another young respondent said, “people listen to me more and I am visible in my community.” Similarly, a young respondent said, “Alliance has branded me in the community such that I assume a lot of respect and audience,” and another said, “Confidence is part of it, but above all, the knowledge I have gained. The schools I studied in and the church said the information given in sexuality education is bad for children, so I grew up without the knowledge. But since I joined GUSO the knowledge has grown.”

The staff members also pointed out how working together and seeing other young people achieve goals motivated young people further, “...they come into the Alliance and see other young people doing good things so are challenged to improve themselves. They have also been able to get options to grow and sell themselves and reflect on who they are without the organisation.” Another respondent said, “It builds their leadership skills and capacity around delivering programmes. Report writing, confidence to speak. The opportunity to work together empowers them.” One respondent explained the confidence gained in young people’s ability to deliver, “It has been a learning ground for them. We have people who were not able to stand and talk. Now they have been empowered. Their capacity has been built. Sometimes we get calls that we are having a session somewhere – I don’t get worried as I know they will give the right information. They have been capacitated with the information.”

Some young people had also gained the opportunity to be seen and recognised for their skills and expertise outside of the Alliance as this respondent told us, “MYP in terms of exposure has really empowered young people even outside the Alliance and within. For example, my young people have been taken up by the government and attached to different government facilities and other NGOs due to their empowerment. When these young people meet others during youth led activities, they get to meet other people who see their skills and they get opportunities to collaborate or work outside the Alliance.” Another respondent said, “They have gained a lot of experiences. Some are called basaawo (doctors). They also get opportunities from other orgs who need help.”
Meeting other young people engaged on the same programme but from different organisations and places helped motivate them to do more. Some sense of solidarity was built with the fact that so many more young people were also working towards the same goals and objectives, “when we are carrying out outreach in the community, I can’t do all the activity alone, so with other young people we work together in planning, and when we are working together it makes it easier for us to coordinate activities.” Similarly, “Before we could not be together but after we got together and started working together there is some easiness. When we started working together and came to agree and combine activities now things are moving on easy.”

Some personal relationships were also built, leading to the sense that they could rely on each other, e.g. an STF peer educator obtaining condoms from an RHU peer educator, “If a youth calls me and he is in need of condoms I know RHU is the place, so I call him and tell him where,” and another young respondent said, “young people from STF don’t do test for HIV but they take them to the (UNYPA) peer buddy and they work on them.”

At the same time, however, some of the young respondents were not aware of the GUSO outcome areas and vision of the Alliance which hampered their creativity and their ability to contribute meaningfully to youth-led collaborations. Many times, the solidarity only came when there was a joint activity to conduct and diminished afterwards with young people not staying in touch or taking the initiative to do other activities together. Young people recognise the need for this solidarity, as demonstrated by this young respondent, “it’s hard for one person to advocate for something but if all of us come together and ask for the same thing we can get it because they can listen to a bigger number.” However, they have not been able to adequately demonstrate it due to, a) their own lack of initiative, but also b) the lack of support from adults of their own organisations who often want to control what the young people do.

The partner organisations, like FLEP and STF, have now got young people on their boards, where earlier they did not, as a result of the GUSO programme and its outcome area two, as well as the value seen in having young people on board through the YAC. Other partners like RHU have established YACs for their other programmes as well, not only for GUSO. CEHURD started working with younger people than it was used to working with, including those under 25 in their internship programme.

While in some districts, partners are working together to achieve outcomes 3 and 4 due to the youth-led collaborations strategy being operationalised, in other districts, this is not so. Where the partners are working together, they share the same office space which enables POs to meet and plan together.
In the other location, the offices are not on the same premises, which results in a lack of collaborative planning between POs.

The Alliance has received greater visibility among communities because of the young people viewing themselves as part of the Alliance and making this known, as well as the branding through t-shirts, hoodies, notebooks, etc. that the young people use on the ground to carry out their day to day activities.

As a whole, due to integrated outreach activities, young people being able to refer their peers to other young people stationed in the health facilities or youth centres, and joint advocacy or social accountability work, the GUSO programme has been able to reach more numbers of young people and gain a higher coverage of information and services provided.

This was highlighted by several respondents, “youth-led collaborations influence demand of services and availability of services and when you look at our vision of the Alliance the youth-led collaborations provide us the roadmap to achieve our aims as an Alliance.” Another respondent said, “an integrated outreach health camp for 3 days gave us a huge output and we reached many young people.” Young people themselves told us, “young people hesitated to access services but due to sensitisation they can now go to a health centre and access services without hesitation. They believe we are confidential enough that they can share anything with us. We created youth friendly spaces where young people can access SRHR services, e.g. the youth corner in the health facility.” Another one said, “the doctor came and thanked our organisation because during those days youth feared to go for testing but now, they come in big numbers and get HIV testing.”

This implies that the overall goals of enhancing young people’s access to SRHR information and services have been contributed to significantly through youth-led collaborations. Larger numbers of young people are reached because the youth-led collaborations result in synergised work on the ground. Referrals are smoother because young people who provide SRHR information and/or CSE (from one partner) can provide the name of another young person who is at the facility (from another partner) and will help young clients in accessing services.

Common obstacles and areas for improvement

The biggest obstacle for youth leadership and youth-led collaborations remains the attitude of some adults who are not accepting of youth leadership or not supportive of young people being part of decision-making processes. This lack of supportiveness results in young people not having enough information to take leadership or come up with ideas for collaboration with other young people within or outside of GUSO. However, there are a number of supportive adults, as seen by the following responses we got when we asked staff members the added value of the YAC and youth-led collaborations and ways to improve, “We need young people to be thinking for young people,” and, “Young people can decide for themselves what they want to do and where they want to participate.”

Another said, “we need to ensure young people are given what is necessary to implement programmes. If they have a plan, it means they have identified a problem. If the partners have their budgets approved by the NL/UK, why do young people have to go through presenting to the technical team and then the NSC, why can’t they have their budgets approved by the NL/UK as well?” Yet another pointed out the need for more meaningful and youth-centred engagement, “We need to engage young people more during the budget and planning process so the end product is young people focused and this gives them a feeling of being part of it.”
One respondent spoke about the resistance faced by fellow adults in being transparent with young people, “(adults) thought there was some information about partners that should not be passed onto the young people. I felt that was wrong and insisted that they stay in the room.” Similarly, another adult explained how they encourage young people, “I have encouraged young people by giving them chances by delegating to them the work I’m given. I’ve given them different tasks to teach them how to write reports for example. It is all about trusting young people.” Those staff members who themselves were still young, or had been associated with the organisation or the Alliance since they were a young person themselves, were typically more supportive.

Nevertheless, there are a few adults who limit the growth of the young people around them, control their actions and ability to reach out to other young people, and don’t believe that they can be trusted with decision-making on budgets. Staff members spoke about this, “…some of them don’t really believe that young people have a role to play in discussing the programme for the organisation. They will start asking who told you to do that activity, why didn’t you ask us, you need to know your place in the organisation.” Another said, “We need to continue building the capacity of organisational leaders as there are so many who think young people are not responsible and those that have not embraced MYP.”

Young people are primarily engaged at the implementation level but do not always get a seat at the planning table. The strategy on youth-led collaborations is meant to improve youth leadership and without meaningful youth participation and youth-adult partnership, youth leadership is difficult to put in place. Young people highlighted to us, “we don’t know why we are not included. The POs decide for us. They are judgemental and its really challenging when they think we can’t bring ideas to the table” Another said, “We do not have good relationships with our POs and PCs. They don’t trust us, and we don’t trust them. It is highly disrespectful to young people.” Young people were very clear about their need to be involved in budgeting and planning “if there is MYP as the core value and budgeting is by adults then why are they saying they are doing MYP. I want us to look at MYP, especially outcome area 2 – adults making the budget – they should include the peer educators and the peer buddies. When we sit in those meetings we will enforce what we need. The young people working on the ground won’t be disappointed,” and another said, “there is no point conducting an activity without you telling me your targets and there is no turnout. We really need to sit together and plan together. I really want to own what I do. Its being part of the team. I would work harder and be motivated if we sit with the planning team.”

Some reflected their lack of trust in the adults due to the lack of transparency, “I think not involving us in planning is done intentionally. These people know we are the ones in the community but they don’t involve us in planning. It is not good to plan for an activity in the community when you are not living in that community. The reason is that they don’t want us to know about finances,” yet another said, “we map in the communities, find out the issues of young people, write projects, sit with POs and find ways how to solve the issues. 60% of the work is done by the young volunteers but with the budgeting stuff we are not involved.”

Young people’s frustration was evident, “Adults trust their fellow adults more than the young people. If you question something they will say, go back to your PO and discuss more on why you don’t know about this. Then you feel like a fool because they are not believing you.”

In addition, there tends to be a lack of transparency and clear communication between young people themselves as well. Sometimes adults or young people in power, e.g. YAC members or peer leaders,
do not realise the importance of discussing decisions with the young peer educators, peer buddies, and other young people working on the ground. Explaining processes and decisions, how they were made and why, being open about budgets and how they have been allocated, and talking through concerns and ideas brought forward by young people to explain feasibility or not, are important for young people to feel included, involved and respected. When this does not happen, they believe that their opinions have not been listened to and they feel de-motivated, “When you are not informed you don’t have the interest in something.” Another said, “We are the people on the ground and know who needs what... They might say we’re coming with HIV testing on such and such day, but we’ll say no they need more services on something else instead.”

The young respondents were very keen to emphasise the lack of clear communication from adults as hindering their ability to contribute fully to the programme, “I think it’s very hard for the young people to be involved in planning, but if we were given a chance to plan, we can identify where the services are needed. The time they need us is when they need mobilisation. We are the people down there and know where what will work better so if they got us on the table, we would be able to say for such and such service, go to such and such a place as the clients are there. We talk to our PO but still things don’t move.” In addition, they felt frustrated with the lack of recognition of their work and importance to the programme, “Adults don’t give us feedback whether positive or negative – we keep waiting every time we raise our issues. These are issues from the ground. We are told you young people are becoming money-minded. We are going to sack you – as if we are employed! How are you going to sack volunteers?!”

The young respondents were also keen to have more information for better collaborations, “before being allocated they should let us know the different organisations in the places we are going to work, who are under the same umbrella, because I didn’t know FLEP was also in the same area until they came there for an activity and wanted young people to work with.” Similarly, “there’s a reason there is a workplan so if these line managers are in touch then the peer educators should also be in touch. The main reason for collaborations is for communities to gain,” and, “young people should be able to meet beforehand and discuss what they are going to do. Such planning meetings happen within the organisations already so why not between organisations and young people?”

Some of the young respondents we spoke to were vocal about adults not treating them well, but not having an avenue for grievance redressal. Restless Development has a confidential email address on its website, which can be used for grievance redressal. Anyone, including young people, with a complaint to make can do so anonymously and without fear of repercussion, through this email address and the complaint will be investigated.

Though the YAC structure is a good practice, it hasn’t yet translated down to the partner organisational level, where programme staff tend to plan and inform young people rather than work together with them to plan and budget. There is adult-led decision making, where young people propose an idea which gets approved or rejected by the adults, often with no attempt at arriving at mutual agreement or consensus on what is possible. This leads to a sense of frustration among young people who are in touch with ground realities and know what is feasible or not in a particular community or location, “it’s like having a wife – you buy food, but after your wife cooks it, you don’t even eat the food. The adults gain but not the young people,” said a young respondent.
Even some adults agreed with this perspective and highlighted, “We are still planning for people – sitting in rooms and planning for them... how about we go into the community and sit with the young people and ask them what they want... bring all the young people from the field into one room and ask what they want to do and they work on the planning and budgeting together. So that they tell you what they want you finance.”

Thus, a couple of issues that came up over and over again are the fact that (i) young people are not being adequately involved in planning, and (ii) there is not enough transparency on budgets to enable the young people to contribute meaningfully to planning and collaborations.

Apart from this, lack of budget allocations means that YAC members find it difficult to engage with community level young people. Therefore, it is not easy to bring up issues from their perspective to the national YAC meeting and planning, as there is little opportunity for engagement without budgets to enable travel, or conduct trickle-down trainings.

Young people also face unrealistic expectations from the community for remuneration, in the form of travel reimbursement or food, in exchange for coming to events. This causes a problem for the young people who are mobilising as they are faced by these demands, “you are wearing the organisation t-shirt and some young people want to know how they will benefit from the programme, they want money. They want to squeeze you.” Another young respondent said, “before you even introduce yourself, young people want to know if there is food and if there isn’t food then they don’t want to come.” Similarly, “some children have their own problems and they come to us to help them with money. Someone can come to you and tell you I didn’t have supper. So you have to touch your pocket and give them some money so they can take their (ART) medicine.”

Often, partner organisations expect the peer educators attached to their organisation to prioritise the organisation over others or over the Alliance. For example, if a young person is engaged in a joint activity for the Alliance, but is needed for some work back at their own partner organisation, the staff expect them to drop the Alliance work and prioritise organisational work. This leads to a lack of solidarity among young people of different partners as they feel the need to ‘represent’ their organisation rather than young people as a whole.

Despite the obstacles posed by adults, it is important to acknowledge that it is a ‘two-way traffic’, i.e. while there are some adults who are not creating an enabling environment for youth-led collaborations, there are also some young people who are not taking up the space created for them, or if they do take the space, they do not see the need to share it with other young people. Therefore, there is a need to enhance understanding among both adults and young people of an inclusive, democratic, empathetic model of leadership that is based on sharing power and building capacities. This model of leadership should seek to transform hierarchies and power structures, including gender and age, aim at building solidarity, value collaboration over competition, and recognise and appreciate the different contributions people make.

Opportunity for nurturing youth-led collaborations
Finally, one aspect of youth-led collaborations was referred to by some respondents, that is, the need to encourage collaborations outside of the Alliance, “The opportunity the Alliance is missing out is that youth-led collaboration has been inwards – we are working with young people from the partners. But the collaborations could move outwards – to look at other youth-led or youth serving organisations. So we could look at how to move away from just the young people within GUSO and look at other young
people in the country – discuss with them what is happening and get them to be part of our agenda. Amongst the young people – yes they want to do it – they have proposed it. Partners have also been doing it. But some partners don’t look at it as collaboration but as competition. So they are not willing to work with other organisations.” In fact, collaboration across programmes, i.e. GUSO with the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) programme, READY, PITCH, etc., was also mentioned as an opportunity for enhancing youth-led collaborations.
Conclusion

The purpose of youth-led collaborations (and of the original strategy of youth movement building) was to create a sense of solidarity among the different young people involved in the project, enabling them to have a bigger voice within and outside the project, the partner organisations, and the Alliance. This has been achieved to varying degrees in different places.

The strategy of youth-led collaborations was also intended to build young people’s leadership, thereby enhancing meaningful youth participation (MYP). MYP is an integral part of the programme and of the alliances’ values. Learning from the previous iterations of the alliances’ programmes, i.e. the ASK and UFBR, it was necessary to find a space for all the different young people working towards the shared goal of the alliances, to come together, learn from each other, be motivated by each other’s achievements, and feel a sense of belonging – not only to their own organisation – but also to a larger movement of young people working on SRHR. This was the logic behind the youth movement building / youth-led collaborations strategy.

Continuing to build this sense of solidarity and togetherness is necessary in future iterations of the alliances’ work to ensure that young people feel stronger together, achieve synergies, and reach out beyond the alliance as well to achieve common SRHR goals or advocate for young people’s SRHR in their countries.

It is clear that the move to change the strategy from youth movement building to youth-led collaborations was a good one. It has led to a clearer understanding of the strategy and to the implementation of very concrete, potentially sustainable YLC. For Uganda, the key youth-led collaboration is the YAC. Several other GUSO alliances have already adopted the YAC structure and, the idea of having a YAC could be attractive to many other programmes outside of GUSO. The strategy of youth-led collaborations has also provided alliances with a very practical way to enhance MYP but the study also found that the YLC strategy is conflated with meaningful youth participation and not all respondents were able to distinguish both.

Other than the YAC, the youth-led collaborations strategy is being implemented more in an ad hoc manner rather than in a structured or deliberate way. The YCC and the YAC members are receiving a lot of the input and exposure, while other young people are still being left out of decision making at different levels. It is important to reflect on the fact that merely putting structures for representation into place, like the YCC and the YAC, are not enough to achieve youth-adult partnership and meaningful youth engagement. Eventually, those holding power still need to give some of it up and share it with the young people for whom the space and the structure has been created to engage meaningfully. In fact, there are other forms of youth-led collaborations that seem promising and worth investing more into such as the research team, integrated outreach, and the youth led social accountability. Some of the key successes of the youth-led collaborations implemented by the Uganda Alliance include reaching more young people, better referrals, and better understanding and application of MYP.

Connected to this, something to explore further is whether trust building is only connected to individual personalities or if programmes can build this aspect into their design.
Recommendations
This section provides some recommendations for improving the implementation of the youth-led collaborations strategy, including some areas on MYP and YAP, which when strengthened would enhance youth leadership and movement building. Some of these recommendations came from our respondents while others are from the research team, based on the findings and analysis.

For YAC and YCC and young people on the ground
The National YAC member and the District YAC member from each partner should be proactive in engaging with each other to share and learn from each other. This would also ensure that young people from the different districts under each partner feel heard. Since young people other than the YAC members have less of a platform to interact with other young people, the National and District YAC members should make efforts to share information and strategise on how to collaborate with other partners at ground level. One of the ways to do this, is for young people from different partners on the ground to meet together at the health centres during youth days.

The YAC members need to strengthen solidarity amongst themselves by engaging with each other socially and relaxing with each other outside of work. In addition, to build their own leadership skills and get support for their activities, they should identify MYP champions among the adults and reach out to them to learn and gain mentorship.

Finally, the detailed budgeting for Outcome Area 2 should be done together with the YCC and YAC so that the capacities of the YAC members are also built and the YCC is not over-burdened.

For partner organisations
Partner organisations need to create more opportunities or spaces for the YAC to engage with the other young people on the ground and the different districts by allocating budgets or including their YAC member in ongoing monitoring or capacity building activities.

They should also adopt inclusive and fair structures for young people to select / elect their own YAC members, ensuring that different Districts are also represented, and the YAC members are accountable to all the other young people who they are representing.

The POs / line managers who interact directly with their organisational YAC have a role to play in mentoring them to develop their skills on and creating opportunities for public speaking, report writing, budgeting, etc. There is also a role for the adults and the YAC members in encouraging young people to interact with and forge alliances with other young people from the different partners. POs or other project in-charges at the District level from partner organisations should meet and harmonise their activity plans and data reporting, along with young people, so that young people can take initiative and organise integrated outreach, joint dialogues, or other information and service delivery on a day to day basis.

Partner budget ceilings and details should be shared with and explained to the organisational YAC members to enable their meaningful contribution to planning and budgeting. Alongside this, the POs should provide clear, honest and transparent communication, and constructive feedback on the plans and initiatives proposed by young people to encourage and enable them to achieve their goals or vision and keep them motivated. Financial disbursements to young people should be less bureaucratic, especially when they need to be reimbursed for money spent on conducting programme activities.
The orientation or foundation training that young people get on joining a partner should include information on the Alliance. Currently, not all young people are aware about the Alliance structure and the YAC, YCC, etc. In fact, the Alliance could develop a brief / sessions to be shared with the partner organisations who provide this orientation along with their own, as young people need to learn about the role of the partner organisation in the Alliance, and the role of young people within the Alliance and the partner organisation. This would help enhance Outcome Area 1 as well.

It may also be worth combining resources and providing a harmonised training module since many partners hire new cohorts of young people at the same time during the year, e.g. RAHU and RD. Such combined trainings would provide the young people with the opportunity and understanding for collaborating right from the beginning.

Finally, youth-led collaborations should also be looked for outside of GUSO, with other youth groups at the sub-county level, by building their capacity on SRHR (by the GUSO young people), instead of working with them only on one-off activities.

For the SRHR Alliance Uganda
There were several recommendations for the Alliance which are quite practical. These are listed below and can be prioritised and acted upon as time and budget permits.

For meaningful youth participation, better youth-adult partnership, and enhancing youth leadership:

- Create opportunities for enabling the NSC to go the ‘young people’s spaces’ and interact with them where the young people are taking leadership on the ground to get a better understanding of their skills and leadership
- Provide more capacity to adults, including the NSC, on the importance of youth-led collaboration, especially on how to create space for young people and enable them to occupy that space
- Simplify and make youth-friendly versions of documents like the Alliance Strategic Plan, reports presented at NSC and Technical Team meetings, policies on safeguarding / gender / bullying and harassment and disseminate among all young people
- Establish a confidential grievance redressal system for young people (for example like RD has done through its website) and ensure that all young people are aware of this
- Examine ways to do planning and budgeting with young people rather than planning and budgeting and thinking for young people, for example, going into a district and engaging with all young people to plan and budget for the district with all partners working there. Young people need to understand why and not just deal with the effect of a decision – why are programme decisions changed and how can young people deliver these messages to the community or other young people without losing trust and credibility. Therefore, they need to be involved in the discussion where these decisions are being made
- Planning teams for ‘youth-led activities’ like the Alliance Week should be populated and led by young people, with selected adults supporting them through the process. More opportunities, like the Alliance Week, should be created for young people’s exchange and learning between districts and partners
- When young people are involved in specifically defined activities that require their dedicated time and effort, e.g. research, they should receive a nominal stipend because they are putting in the same kind of work and effort as salaried adults
• Organisations should institute policies that make allowances / per diems equitable and transparent across staff and volunteers in the interest of being seen to be serious about MYP and being youth-centred (for example like the Alliance standard rates for all)
• Identify and link with opportunities outside of the Alliance that will enable young people to engage in income generation, livelihood building, furthering studies through scholarships, etc. The Alliance could also develop a mentorship programme where young people from the Alliance are seconded / given internships at other organisations to enable their career growth.

Training / capacity building:

• Handhold young people through proposal development and response to calls for application from donors / funds specifically for youth-led initiatives (e.g. Robert Carr Fund, AmplifyChange, FRIDA Fund, etc.)
• Train young people on facilitation skills, through a training of trainers, so that they are able to trickle down the training to other young people.
• Find ways to involve and train select young people in different aspects of the Alliance work, for example, like an alliance research team has been established, look at other avenues like communications, resource mobilisation, etc.
• Showcase human interest stories from the project by training young people in PhotoVoice and other communications
• Adults need to sign up to be mentors and the list should be shared among the YAC and the other young people so they know who to approach

Finally, the GUSO partners should think about engaging young people not only within GUSO but also with the young people from other programmes like RHRN, PITCH, READY, etc. and develop a common advocacy agenda to work together.

For the NL/UK Alliance

The Outcome 2 working group at the NL/UK Alliance should have YCCs on it to be more effective as currently they are discussing strategies to be implemented in countries that they are not so familiar with. In fact, young people should also be included in the proposal design team meaningfully, not just tokenistically.

It may be worth having a session or a module on youth-led collaborations alongside the MYP manual.
Appendix 1: Interview and FGD guides

1. Interview guide for young people:

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking time to participate. My name is ____________ and I am a researcher working with the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Alliance in Uganda. We are carrying out an operations research on youth participation within the SRHR Alliance, our focus is specifically on young people from different organization working together to realize better SRHR for young people.

You are invited to participate in this assessment, specifically by joining an in-depth interview. If you agree to participate, you will be asked some questions relating to your experience with the GUSO programme, working together with other young people, and your perception of such collaborative work. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Your participation may benefit you and other GUSO programme stakeholders by helping to improve its effectiveness. This will be no different from an ordinary conversation.

Anonymous data from this assessment will be analysed by the consultants and reported to the GUSO Alliance. No individual participant will be identified or linked to the results, unless they specifically request to be identified. If the results of this assessment will be published or presented at meetings, your identity will not be disclosed. All information obtained in this assessment will be kept strictly confidential. All materials will be stored in a secure location by the consultants and the GUSO Alliance, and access to files will be restricted to paid professional staff.

Please indicate verbally whether you consent to participate:

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Questions

1. Tell us how you have been involved in the GUSO programme/SRHR Alliance.
   - How did you get engaged with GUSO?
   - Please tell us about your main tasks and responsibilities? Are they formalized? Do you have a task description or ToR?

2. Tell us how the role you have been playing has contributed to the achievement of the GUSO program objectives to date?

3. How have you been working with other young people towards a shared goal within the GUSO programme / SRHR Alliance?
   - How did you arrive at a shared goal?
   - What have you been doing to achieve it?
   - How easy or difficult has it been? Why?

4. How did you begin working with other young people?
   - What enabled this collaboration?
   - Is this a structured process, i.e. even if you move on, other young people will still be able to work together in a similar manner?
   - If yes, what is the structure? If no, how does it work?
   - Who takes decisions?

5. Why have you been interested in this work / these activities?
   - What do you get out of them?
   - What has changed (positive / negative) for you since you started doing these activities?

6. What are your thoughts about working alongside other young people coming from different organizations on SRHR?
   - Feel stronger / safer / louder / more acceptability / more effective / more credible – or not?

   OR

   What is different about working alongside other young people on SRHR versus not working together?

7. How can this be done better, i.e. enabling young people to work together, take leadership / ownership, achieve things in collaboration?
2. Interview/group interview guide for YAC members:

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INTRODUCTION

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You are invited to participate in this assessment, specifically by joining an in-depth interview. If you agree to participate, you will be asked some questions relating to your experience with the GUSO programme, working together with other young people, and your perception of such collaborative work. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

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Please indicate verbally whether you consent to participate:

| Yes | No |
Questions

1. Please tell us how you became a YAC member in the GUSO programme/SRHR Alliance? Were you asked or did someone (who?) approach you? How did it go?

2. Please tell us about your main tasks and responsibilities as YAC member? Are they formalized in a task description or ToR?

3. Please describe how the role of the YAC members has contributed to the achievement of the GUSO program objectives to date?

4. Please describe what you believe is the added value of having young YAC members to the SRHR Alliance? (probe for: added value of having representation in the steering committee)

5. Please describe if and why you believe that young people coming together from different organizations as YAC members adds value to the programme?
   - What is the added value of being from different (partner) organizations?
   - Can you describe some of the challenges of working together with young people from different organisations? Some of the successes?

6. What motivates you to work in the SRHR Alliance as a YAC member?

7. What factors are responsible for the success of the YAC? (probe for: support from NPC/YCC, support from own organization, young people’s commitment etc)

8. What changed for you, if anything, after being a YAC member? (e.g.: changes in self-esteem, decision-making ability, relationship with adults at home / school / community, participation in other social or citizenship domains, development of knowledge and skills / leadership development / advocacy skills / perceptions of empowerment etc.)

9. What changes, if any, have YAC members made at the level of the community/beneficiaries? (ask for concrete changes, they can be small ones but ask for concrete stories)

10. What types of changes, if any, have you noticed regarding SRHR Alliance staff and other adults’ attitudes towards youth participation since the YAC has been established?

11. What can be done better / improved in the way that the structure of the YAC is currently being implemented?

12. If similar programmes in other countries would like to implement a YAC, what is the top advice / tips you would give them on how to go about it?
3. **Interview/group interview guide for adults (NSC members, POs, with extra questions for NPC & YCC):**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

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Please indicate verbally whether you consent to participate:

| Yes | No |
Questions

1. What is your understanding of youth-led collaborations? Please tell us in your own words.

2. Tell us what has been happening with regard to output indicator 2b (collaborations between young people from different organisations / networks) in the GUSO programme in Uganda.
   - How did you approach this strategy from the start of GUSO until now (from when it was called Youth Movement Building up until it was changed into Youth Led Collaborations)?
   - What kinds of activities have you been implementing under this indicator at Alliance level / Partner Organization level?
   - What have you been doing to encourage collaborations between young people from the different partner organisations?

3. How did you arrive at this way of doing things for output indicator 2b?
   - How did you identify opportunities for collaboration between young people?
   - How did you set goals for this collaboration?
   - What kind of technical support did you receive from the SRHR Alliance/ The NL/UK Consortium?

4. Which of the youth-led collaborations within the SRHR Alliance in Uganda are you most proud of and why?

5. What, in your view, is the added value of youth-led collaborations (young people from different organizations working together) when compared to meaningful youth participation within your own organization?

6. How are you measuring the effects / achievements of the youth-led collaborations?

7. What do you think the young people have gained from working together? (development of knowledge and skills / leadership development / advocacy skills / perceptions of empowerment, etc)

8. What do you think the programme / your organisation / the SRHR Alliance has gained through implementing this strategy?
   - What has changed since you started implementing this strategy with regard to the organisation’s way of working / organisation’s attitude towards youth involvement
   - In your view, how do the youth-led collaborations contribute to the overall objectives of the GUSO programme?
   - What positive effects, if any, did the youth-led collaborations have for the SRHR of the end beneficiaries? (ask for concrete / tangible results / changes)

9. What has been the most challenging part of enabling youth-led collaborations that are meaningful / effective?
   - Have you been able to ensure that diverse young people are involved? If yes, who and how; if no, why not?

Note: This may have been answered under Q1 already
10. Is this particular part of the programme sustainable – do you think the young people will continue to work together after GUSO? (The YAC and other youth-led collaborations) Which ones will continue? Why / how?

- Have the YAC or other youth-led collaborations been integrated into your organisational / alliance strategies?
- Is there a link between outcome 2 and outcome 1 (building strong and sustainable alliances)?

11. What can be done to improve the way that youth-led collaborations are currently being implemented?

12. What kind of support – if any – is needed / would be useful to strengthen the strategy of youth-led collaborations within the GUSO programme? From whom should this support come?

Extra questions for NPC & YCC:

13. How are partner organisations within the SRHR Alliance working together to come up with efficient youth-led collaborations?

14. Please describe what has been your role in developing / coordination of the strategy of youth-led collaborations?

15. Considering the lack of clarity around this strategy that has been there from the start, would you recommend for youth-led collaborations to be a strategy that should be taken up in other, similar SRHR programmes as well? Why yes or why no? Or in adjusted form, why?

16. Looking back, what do you feel about the level of support you have received from the NL/UK consortium on implementing this strategy? What should be done differently next time and why?

17. What distinct (missed) opportunities does the country alliance have in nurturing youth led collaborations on SRHR?
4. FGD guide with young people:

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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

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operations research on youth participation within the SRHR Alliance, our focus is specifically on young people from different organization working together to realize better SRHR for young people.

You are invited to participate in this assessment, specifically by joining an FGD. A facilitator will guide and facilitate the discussion and a note-taker will take notes of the discussion. If you volunteer to participate in this focus group, you will be asked some questions relating to your experience with and perceptions of working with other young people in the GUSO programme. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Your participation may benefit you and other GUSO programme stakeholders by helping to improve its effectiveness. This will be no different from an ordinary conversation. All participants will be asked to respect the privacy of the other group members and not to disclose anything said within the context of the discussion.

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Can all participants please indicate verbally whether you consent to participate: [put number of respondents in boxes below]

| Yes | No |

FGD GUIDELINES

- Guidance on how to raise hand, speak, etc.
- No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view.
- You don’t need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.
- Participation is completely voluntary. There is no obligation to answer any question. Feel free to pass on any question that you are not comfortable discussing.
- All points discussed during the FGD will remain confidential. Please do not share details of the discussion outside of this group.
- Role of the facilitator is to guide the discussion; however, please speak with each other. Feel free to use first names.
- Please speak slowly and clearly so we can all understand one another.
- One person speaking at a time. FGD will last approximately 1 hour.
- Place phones on silent and turn off notifications for emails or other apps for the full duration of the FGD.
Questions

1. Tell us how you have been involved in the GUSO programme.
   - How you got engaged with GUSO in the first place
   - What you have been doing / achieving

2. How have you been working with other young people towards a shared goal?
   - How did you arrive at a shared goal?
   - What have you been doing to achieve it?
   - How easy or difficult has it been? Why?

3. How did you begin working with other young people?
   - What enabled this collaboration?
   - Is this a structured process, i.e. even if you move on, other young people will still be able to work together in a similar manner?
   - If yes, what is the structure? If no, how does it work?
   - Who takes decisions?

4. Why have you been interested in this work / these activities?
   - What do you get out of them?
   - What has changed (positive / negative) for you since you started doing these activities?

5. What are your thoughts about working alongside other young people coming from different organizations on SRHR?
   - Feel stronger / safer / louder / more acceptability / more effective – or not? Please explain.
   OR
   What is different about working alongside other young people on SRHR versus not working together?

6. How can this be done better, i.e. enabling young people to work together, take leadership / ownership, achieve things in collaboration?
Appendix 2: Terms of Reference for YAC

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (YAC) UNDER THE GET UP SPEAK OUT (GUSO) PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Alliance Uganda is a consortium of like-minded organizations formed on the basis of multi-component approach and comparative advantage on the different components of SRHR programming. The current membership of the alliance is comprise of: Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU), Straight Talk Foundation (STF), Family Life Education Program (FLEP), Centre for Human Rights & Development (CEHURD), Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV and AIDS (UNYPA), Restless Development (RD) and National Forum of People Living with HIV and AIDS Networks in Uganda (NAFOPHANU). The alliance is currently implementing the Get Up Speak Out for youths right and needs program in four districts of Jinja, Mayuge, Iganga and Bugiri. The program is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the consortium of United Kingdom/Netherlands based funding organizations including SIMAVI, Rutgers, AIDS Fonds, Dance4life, Choice for youth rights and sexuality as well as International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) with secretariat in the Netherlands.

BACKGROUND TO ESTABLISHING THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (YAC)

The GUSO program strives for a world in which all young people fully enjoy their SRHR in productive, equal and healthy societies. When young people stay healthy and realize their SRHR, they are able to lead productive lives and access economic opportunities. The long-term objective therefore is to empower all young people, especially girls and young women, to realize their SRHR in societies that are positive towards young people's sexuality.

Majority of young people in Uganda experience their sexuality in a context of stigma, discrimination and violence; they have difficulties accessing and utilizing youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, including contraceptives and condoms, as well as accessing correct, scientifically proven and consistent comprehensive SRHR information. While young people have the fundamental right to (co-) decide on issues that affect their lives, often times, there is little or no room given for them to express their opinions and feelings. Further to say, their voices are only heard at crisis point, rather than being included, as a matter of course, in those societal institutions that shape their everyday lives. This situation seriously limits young people’s ability to be a part of conversations that determine their future hence creating a platform (Youth Advisory Committee) through which young people provide leadership, express their views and opinions, learn from each other and empower their peers to make their own, informed choices about sex, sexuality and relationships, with serious consequences.

One of the core principles under the Get up Speak out (GUSO) program is Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP). It is on this basis that the consortium constituted the Youth Advisory Committee-a group of empowered youth volunteers, who shall play an important role in advising, guiding and fronting youth affairs and raising the views of young people during GUSO program implementation.
Under the current structure of the Sexual and reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) alliance, the YAC have included represent the voice and needs of young people at individual organization’s level and at the National Steering Committee of the alliance.

This Terms of Reference therefore stipulates the purpose of the YAC as well as their specific roles and responsibilities, accountability lines, and requirements.

**CONSITUTING THE YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The following are the key considerations while constituting the YAC;

1. The Youth Advisory Committee shall be a council of eight (8) diverse volunteers/ young persons aged (18-24 years) who will guide the leadership for the youth constituency of the Alliance, as well as representation of young people in planning, coordination and implementation of activities within the GUSO program and the entire alliance. The YAC plays advisory role to the Youth Country Coordinator (YCC) and entire country alliance members to ensure meaningful youth participation in GUSO program.

2. The YAC members shall comprise of young people from each partner organization and together with the Youth Country Coordinator. They shall be champions for meaningful involvement and participation of young people in the GUSO program.

3. The YAC will foster and promote meaningful youth participation in the GUSO programming, implementation and monitoring as well as advice on processes of youth engagement and identify best practices for youth friendly programming. They will additionally provide linking & learning opportunities for their peers at district, national, regional and international levels.

4. In line with the GUSO objective; *to empower all young people, especially girls and young women, to realize their SRHR in societies that are positive towards young people’s sexuality,*

5. The YAC composition shall be at least 1/3 being female.

6. Positions on the YAC are strictly voluntary hence no salary is paid to YAC members

7. The YAC shall serve a term of (2) two years and every member can serve on the committee at least twice consecutively.

**COMPOSITION OF YAC MEMBERS**

The YAC shall consist of the following positions;

1. President
2. Vice President
3. General Secretary
4. Member
5. Member
6. Member
7. Member
8. Member

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF YAC MEMBERS**

1. **PRESIDENT**
Charged with providing leadership and direction to the committee, the President is responsible for ensuring that the committee maintains utmost discipline and fulfils its responsibilities. Specific duties include but not limited to;

- Chair committee meetings ensuring that they are run efficiently and effectively
- Represent the YAC and other young people on the National Steering Committee
- Regularly focus the committee’s attention on matters of governance that relate to its own structure, role and relationship
- Work with the committee to ensure that youth activities are implemented
- Serve as a spokesperson for the YAC and fellow peers in different platforms

Desirable attributes

The President should:

- Have a good understanding of Uganda’s SRHR context especially in relation to adolescent health and sexuality of young people
- Have a deep understanding and appreciation of meaningful youth participation
- Be sensitive to the feelings of members by being impartial and objective;
- Be approachable;
- Be well informed of the SRHR Alliance vision, mission and objectives
- Be a fluent and competent public speaker

The Vice President supports the President in ensuring effective functionality of the committee and he/ she steps in for the President in his/ her absence.

2. **GENERAL SECRETARY**

The secretary is the primary administration officer of the committee and provides the links between the committee and other Alliance functional working groups. The Secretary should be a good communicator, maintain confidentiality on relevant matters and have the ability to delegate tasks and supervise others. Specific duties include but not limited to;

- Work with the President and YCC to prepare meeting agendas, minutes and other documents required for the meeting
- Maintain records of the committee and ensure effective management records
- Ensure to distribute information including minutes, activity reports and other documents to members
- Represent the YAC and other young people on the National Steering Committee
- Receive and share with all members communications to and from the committee.

3. **YAC MEMBERS**

The following are the general roles of all YAC members:

- To provide leadership to the young people working within the program
- To encourage meaningful youth engagement and participation by Alliance partners at all levels of the program
- To take lead in youth led quality monitoring of GUSO activities and initiatives.
To ensure effective partnerships with relevant youth (serving) organizations in the country program

Receive plan of actions from the young people in the line partner organizations; lead on and monitor their implementation - the specific contribution of the YAC shall be to advice on implementation of the plan of actions

Serve as a spokesperson for youth in different platforms

To ensure timely preparation of youth input in Alliance meetings and reports; and ensure that documentation meets meaningful youth participation standards and the donor requirements for approval and progression of the initiative.

To participate in meetings of coordination, planning, implementation of activities with the different line partner organizations and with the Secretariat

Participate in high stake holder meetings; The Chairperson and General Secretary of the YAC shall participate in the National Steering Committee meetings, all members on the committee shall participate in the Project coordinators’ meeting as well the routine meetings with the youth working groups.

Participate in all Alliance joint activities and those planned at partner level and

Advice the Secretariat on the planning, development, integration and implementation of government policies and programs concerning young people.

**PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING MEMBERS OF YAC**

1. The outgoing YAC members shall spearhead the process at partner level; together with GUSO project coordinators and youth volunteers, shall democratically identify two youth volunteers; male and female, every partner shall then submit the names of the nominees to be subjected to the election process

2. The selected sixteen (16) young people will then meet and an election amongst themselves will be conducted by the YCC (as a neutral party with no voting rights). The young people shall vote the eight (8) members of the YAC amongst themselves.

3. Every partner organization has to be represented on the Committee meaning the committee will be a cocktail of representatives from the different partners in the consortium.

**REQUIREMENTS TO BE A YAC MEMBER**

The following are some of the attributes required of a young person to become a YAC member;

- Should have a commitment to human rights issues and meaningful participation of young people
- Fluent spoken and written English is essential.
- Able to work on own initiative; flexibility and ability to work in a team and a good sense of humor
- Experience working in the GUSO program
- Experience working with Alliance member organizations and partners
- Experience to work with social media for SRHR advocacy
- Knowledge on the SRHR Alliance vision, mission and objectives is an added advantage

**SKILLS**

- Interpersonal skills; Ability to develop and sustain good relationships internally and externally
- Time management skills
- Ability to work collaboratively with other committee members
- Be a competent public speaker
- Effective communication skills

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

- The YAC is impartial and works in a youth-adult partnership with the Secretariat. The YAC is hierarchically coordinated and accountable to the YCC. The YAC are also accountable to the technical team members and the National Steering Committee.
- For daily management issues the YAC members can turn to their direct supervisor who is project coordinator of the organization.
- The YAC shall meet on a quarterly basis to discuss a range of relevant topics, share progress reports on how young people are working in the different organizations as well as monitoring and evaluating youth-related policies and legislation which affect young people.
- The YAC shall present a quarterly report of activities conducted to be shared with the GUSO functional working groups, i.e. technical team members and the National Steering Committee
- The YAC will not interfere in the program content, as this is the responsibility of the consortium members and the country alliance partners. However, the YAC will advise and guide the process and implementation of the meaningful involvement of young staff/volunteers in GUSO

**BENEFITS OF BEING ON YAC**

- YAC enables young people to advise the Alliance partner on important issues affecting young people.
- YAC is an empowerment initiative that builds young people’s esteem, confidence, skills and knowledge on SRHR issues at community, national, regional and international levels.
- Gives an opportunity for young people also to advice on, plan and participate in fun, safe youth events.
- Meanwhile, you’re developing valuable leadership skills, management skills, meeting new friends from all over the county while gaining exposure to the SRHR environment.

“Being a member of YAC is no joke – it’s a commitment. But the rewards are amazing!!”
Appendix 3: Youth Involvement Structures in Alliance

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<th>Youth involvement / leadership structures of SRHR Alliance Uganda partners</th>
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<td>The 8 partner organisations are a combination of youth-led and youth-serving organisations with diverse structures for young people’s involvement and leadership. Following is a summary of these structures per organisation:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Centre for Health Human Rights &amp; Development (CEHURD)</strong> has an internship programme where young people are recruited and treated as equal to regular staff members in all respects (apart from not receiving a salary). They are trained on the job and receive mentorship from the adult staff members. CEHURD has recently begun to engage with young people in the ground and recruited and trained young people as community health advocates.</td>
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<td><strong>Family Life Education Program (FLEP)</strong> has young peer educators who are involved in delivering SRHR information and counselling services. There are two young people on the board, though it is unclear whether these young people are recruited from among the peer counsellors or elsewhere.</td>
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<td><strong>National Forum of People Living with HIV and AIDS Networks in Uganda (NAFOPHANU)</strong> is a federation of several networks and organisations of people living with HIV, which includes the Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV and AIDS (UNYPA). This network constitutes the youth engagement part of NAFOPHANU, with a young person on their governance board as well.</td>
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<td><strong>Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU)</strong> is a youth-led organisation with young people as staff members as well as peer educators (who receive a JD). The peer educators are volunteers and serve till age 25, after which they can remain as mentors to other young people. Each new peer educator serves in schools for a year, while recruiting and training another young person. Thereafter, they move onto community-based work through youth corners. Thus, there is an ongoing cycle of recruitment and training, as well as mentorship by older young people. There are two young people on the board, who are peer educators themselves.</td>
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<td><strong>Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU)</strong> has young volunteers who can take on several different roles, i.e. peer educators, peer mentors, and data clerks. Some long-serving young people also get recruited onto project staff positions. The youth volunteers have a leadership structure called the Youth Action Movement (YAM), where they elect their representatives who sit on the governing board of the organisation at all levels.</td>
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<td><strong>Restless Development (RD)</strong> is a youth-led organisation though senior management is not always within the age bracket for young people. It also has peer educators who are recruited, trained and then deployed to a certain community for a year (they sign a contract to carry out their peer education duties at this area for a year, and are given a JD).</td>
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<td><strong>Straight Talk Foundation (STF)</strong> works with established and registered youth groups at the community level and recruits peer educators from among these. They also have a young person on their board though it is unclear whether this young person is/was a peer educator or otherwise involved with STF’s activities on the ground.</td>
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<td><strong>Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV and AIDS (UNYPA)</strong> is a youth-led organisation with young people as staff members, including the Executive Director. Young peer buddies are recruited, trained and attached with a hospital where they are expected to enable young people to access HIV-related services easily, and provide support to health service providers in providing youth-friendly services.</td>
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