



Power to You(th) 2023 Annual Report

In Memoriam: Mr. Dame Ndiaye

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of Mr. Dame Ndiaye, a cornerstone of the Power To You(th) Senegal Consortium. As the coordinator for the National Alliance of Youth for Reproductive Health and Family Planning (ANJ SR/PF), Dame's leadership and vision were instrumental in driving our initiatives forward.

Dame's role as a liaison brought numerous projects to fruition, particularly in fieldwork where his expertise shone brightest. He was known for his dynamic approach, bringing experience, openness, and an unwavering dedication to each task. His colleague, Awa Niasse, and others who supported him in various capacities, recall his ability to inspire and engage all those fortunate enough to work alongside him.

Dame departed at the tender age of 35, leaving a void that will be deeply felt across our community and beyond. Let us continue to carry forward the torch of change that Dame carried so passionately.

The Power to You(th) family will miss you immensely, but we are grateful for the time we had with you and for the indelible mark you have left on our hearts and our work.

Rest in peace, dear Dame.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GYW: Adolescent Girls and Young Women

AU: African Union

BPD: Head of the Village Representative Body CBO: Community-based Organization

CM: Child Marriage

CMT: Country Management Team

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CYECE: Centre for Youth Empowerment and Civic Education

EAC: Equivalent Annual Cost

FGM/C: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GMT: Global Management Team

GSB: Global Supervisory Board

GTA: Gender Transformative Approach

GUSO: Get Up, Speak Out (alliance)

GYG: Global Youth Group

HRC: Human Rights Council

HSA: Health System Advocacy (alliance)

ICFP: International Conference on Family Planning

IDGC: International Day of the Girls Child

IRCU: Inter-Religious Council of Uganda

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MCA: 'South Western Inter-County SRHR members of County Assembly Champions Network (MCA)

MCA: Members of the County Assemblies

MEU: Men Engage Uganda

MIYP: Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation

MOFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MoH: Ministry of Health

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

MP: Member of Parliament

OCA: Organizational Capacity Assessment

PHC: Parliamentary Health Committee

PMEL: Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

PMERL: Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning

POCT: Plan Opérationnel des Collectivités Territoriales

PRA: Participatory Rural Approach

PTY: Power to You(th)

SAC: Social Accountability Committees

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

SEAH: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment

SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence SOGIESC: Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities, Gender Expressions and Sex Characteristics

SRH: Sexual and Reproductive Health

SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

STI: Sexual Transmitted Infection

ToC: Theory of Change

ToP: Termination of Pregnancy

TWG: Technical Working Group

UPR: Universal Periodic Review

UYAHF: Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum

VAWG: Violence Against Women and Girls

YAG: Youth Advocates Ghana

YIDA: Yes I Do (alliance)

YLO: Youth-led Organization



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 was the third year of implementation of Power to You(th). In 2023, the program is impacted by several **risks and contextual factors**. We see a growing opposition to SRHR in some of the countries where we work, like the Anti-Homosexuality-Act (AHA) in Uganda. Also political instability has impacted the program, especially in Ethiopia, Senegal and Kenya. Next to this, inflation, climate change & natural disasters and technological progress are among some of the contextual factors.

In 2023 we executed the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), which evaluated effectiveness, relevance, sustainability of our implementation on the **four pathways**. The MTE revealed the program is well on track towards achieving our intended objectives but there is also room for improvement on some of the pathways. For pathway 1, in 2023 there was a continued effort in capacity strengthening and support to movements, groups and platforms of youth, which resulted in increased knowledge & skills of young people, increased engagement of young people with decision makers and increased participation of young people in policy and decision-making bodies. In pathway 2, CSO and CBO capacities were strengthened, among others through a Small Grants Initiative that was launched in many countries. CSOs whose capacities have been strengthened take collective action through political engagement and advocacy. In Pathway 3, through approaches such as intergenerational dialogues, community advocacy and (social) media campaigning, societal actors are engaged and many of them expressed commitments. In pathway 4, results show that many state actors at both subnational and national levels took action and spoke out against harmful practices, unintended pregnancies, SGBV and the importance of youth rights.

The activities in the four pathways have been complemented by **global and regional advocacy and communication** efforts, like global campaigns, language advocacy on global resolutions and statements, the development of evidence and shadow reports and support to adolescent girls and young women from countries to speak out during global and regional events and hold their government accountable.

In 2023, there have also been interesting developments on our **cross-cutting themes**. Connections between youth activists and Youth-Led Organizations (YLOs) from the 7 countries were strengthened through a Connector Week and an online Mighty Networks platform, which enhanced MIYP. We also invested in the Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) by country exchange sessions, GTA online dialogues and tool development. Safeguarding training sessions took place in Senegal, Malawi & Uganda.

Learning, research & innovation was strengthened, amongst others, through a Human Centered Design trajectory which was rolled out in 6 countries and Central Operational Researches on 'SRHR and Policy and Implementation Gaps' in Malawi, Senegal and Kenya and 'Engaging Effectively with Religious Leaders' in Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2023 Annual report of the PTY program! This report includes the results, challenges and lessons learned in our journey towards empowering youth and adolescent girls from underserved communities. In the face of global challenges, PTY has continued to blaze a trail towards positive change, creating impactful initiatives that resonate with our mission of fostering resilience, inclusivity, youth empowerment, and gender equality. This report serves as a testament to the dedication of our team, the support of our partners, and the remarkable achievements of the young champions that lead our activities. Notably, the year 2023 saw a significant milestone as we conducted a MTE ofW the program, and the results show promise, reinforcing our conviction in the effectiveness of our strategies. Join us as we navigate through the milestones, challenges, and triumphs that have shaped the Power to Youth program in 2023. Together, we illuminate the path toward a future where every young person has the opportunity to thrive, irrespective of their background or circumstance.

CONTEXT, RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the third year of implementation, PtY has had to deal with emerging trends, threats and opportunities at the country and global level. Some of these have had a direct impact on the program while others may indirectly affect the program in the near future.

Several Power to You(th) implementation countries experienced **political instability** in 2023. In Senegal 2023 was a pre-election year. A series of violent crashes and demonstrations broke out which led to the halting and rescheduling of some activities and the cancellation of the PtY global partnership meeting which was meant to take place in Senegal. Similarly, following the 2022 elections in Kenya which saw a new government get into power, nationwide demonstrations spilled into the first half of 2023. In Ethiopia in July 2023, the security situation deteriorated again, particularly affecting the Amhara region and a state of Emergency was declared in August. The adverse political conditions led to a restriction in movement, heightened tensions, and potential security risks that have made it difficult to carry out planned activities in Amhara. In all 3 countries, this meant that the PtY teams had to apply 'adaptive programming': monitoring the situation, adapting their interventions and applying mitigation strategies, like shifting activities to safer areas and conflict free locations. Another challenge highlighted

by Ethiopia, Senegal, Kenya and Indonesia is the constant transfers of key officials with whom PTY has established relations, like changes in the ministerial posts, departments, institutions and local authorities. To address this, PtY teams in these countries continuously focus on building the capacity of the new officials on PTY themes and calling for their support. **Growing opposition to SRHR** has also been witnessed both at the country and the global level.

In Ghana for example the draft bill on the "Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values 2021" was passed by parliament in february 2024, and currently awaiting Presidential endorsement. The bill criminalizes LGBTIQ+ people and behavior and criminalizes LGBTIQ+ advocacy with five-to-ten year prison sentences. This bill has become an issue of great concern for partners working in the advancement of human rights in Ghana, as debate about SRHR in Ghanaian society is now polarized and there is high mistrust of SRHR organizations and SRHR activities as 'promoting LGBTIQ+'. Similarly, in Uganda, The Anti Homosexuality Act (AHA) 2023 was passed by the President of Uganda. This has had a direct impact on our program, as in certain regions, both state and societal entities have expressed reluctance to associate with the PtY program. This exacerbates the



already limited space for civic engagement and hampers our advocacy efforts. The PtY Uganda teams has tried to mitigate this through (a) participating in a network of CSOs that was formed to petition the government on the act, (b) Collaborate with other Dutch funded programs in Uganda to lobby and advocate for human rights , (C) Building a coalition with other like-minded programs and institutions to counter the opposition, (d) participate in strategic meetings organized by the Dutch Embassy to identify effective mitigation strategies as well as share experiences and learnings as well as continuous monitoring of the opposition.

There is pressure from the international community to the government to review its position on the Act and we are hopeful for a positive outcome. At the global level, PTY has been affected by growing conservative pushback which led to a stalemate in CPD negotiations on sexual-ity education. Also, at the SDG summit the negotiations on the Political Declaration led to the maintenance of reference to gender, but references to sexual and reproductive health could not find consensus. In 2023, Rutgers continued to facilitate the Community of Practice on Deal-

ing with Opposition. It facilitates exchange and learning on effective strategies for working on SRHR in a context affected by the opposition. The CoP consists of 56 members from over 20 countries and operates across multiple programs (Power to Youth, Generation G, RHRN 2 and Centres of Excellence).

Inflation has continued to be a challenge in most of the PtY implementation countries, affecting project implementation, as prices of materials, equipment, fuel and services have gone up. In Ghana, inflation skyrocketed precipitating in constant hikes in fuel prices which resulted in increases in transport fares to a very high percentage coupled with high food prices. Likewise, water and electricity tariffs had been increased by 29.96%. Malawi is undergoing harsh economic conditions worsened by the 44% currency devaluation, resulting in a 33.1% inflation, affecting the cost of living at all levels of the economy. The annual inflation rate in Ethiopia ticked up to 28.7% in December 2023 compared to the year before, driven by a weakening local currency. This inflationary pressure placed additional financial strain on the project, requiring careful budget management and resource allocation to

ensure the continued progress of activities.

While some countries have made **progress in the technological realm**, others continue to face challenges related to internet access. In Ghana, the digital space continued to expand in 2023 with more and more young people being active on the various social media handles, such as X, Facebook and WhatsApp. The PtY team capitalizes on this, now reaching a large number of AGYW with SGBV and SRHR information digitally. Also, AGYW in the PtY program use social media platforms to campaign and engage societal duty bearers to address their concerns. One of the largest youth campaigns in Ghana's history "do not tax my period" was designed and spread through the social media, with thousands of young women picketing around the parliament house to impress on parliamentarians to scrape the luxury tax on sanitary pads. The success of this campaign led to the government removing taxes on locally manufactured sanitary pads and imported raw materials. In Ethiopia the PtY project strengthened the capacities of youths and CSOs to use social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook and Telegram to deliver information and influence decision makers. More than 40 youth clubs and 25 CSOs are connected through the Telegram platform. However, the disruption of internet connectivity in some implementation areas has posed challenges in digitally linking up with regional staff members and engaging with youth, and therefore the teams continue to organize in-person meetings and gatherings.

Climate change and natural disasters have a direct impact on both the beneficiaries and the project team. In Indonesia, some project areas are still recovering from the Earthquake in November 2022. In Malawi, some PtY implementation areas were adversely affected by Tropical Cyclone Freddy (TCF) and subsequent floods in February & March 2023. As a result, many people were displaced, most schools were closed because they were turned

into transit camps. And governmental actors and many CSOs focused more on emergency response to survivors, having less priority on SRHR messages, services, and products. However, the situation increased risks of SGBV to AGYW, as the camps where many of them lived were open and not protected from risk and AGYW lacked privacy.

As a result PtY Malawi had to adapt its activities, postponing some of its regular activities in these areas, and focusing more on the collaboration with school structures to ensure the protection of girls from SGBV. In Machinga, an Education Technical Working Group was established to coordinate key players in the education sector, addressing issues affecting children in schools during the crisis. The Consortium continued to support youth advocates to engage state actors aiming at holding duty bearers accountable to issues of child protection strengthening and SRHR service provision to AGYW in the IDP-camps.

In 2023, there have also been **progressive voices and public commitments regarding SRHR**. The launch of the Ghana Youth Manifesto is a great opportunity for PTY Ghana. The Ghana Youth Manifesto is a public declaration of the priorities of the youth in Ghana for 2025-2028. These priorities were collated from young people all over the country, led by a collection of CSOs in Ghana, including the PtY consortium.

In Malawi, there was a **public commitment by the President of Malawi**, to end child marriage by 2030, during a high-level meeting with Michelle Obama, Melinda French Gates and Amal Clooney. PtY Malawi is using the president's commitment as an opportunity to push for the speedy enactment of Gender and SRHR laws. In Uganda, the merging of policies, exemplified by the integration of the Adolescent Health (ADH) policy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) policies into a uni-

Public commitment by the President of Malawi: <https://www.nyasatimes.com/chakwera-hosts-clooney-foundation-for-justice-renews-commitment-to-ending-child-marriages/>



fied national health policy, holds the potential to create a comprehensive and interconnected approach to addressing critical health and well-being issues among the young people. By amalgamating these policies, Uganda aims to establish a cohesive framework that not only prioritizes the holistic health of adolescents but also permeates into various other sectors. This move is likely to have a cascading effect, extending beyond the health sector to other key areas like education, social services, gender equality and youth empowerment.

POWER TO YOU(TH) IMPLEMENTATION AT COUNTRY LEVEL

In 2023, the MTE for the PTY program was conducted. The MTE revealed the program is well on track towards achieving our intended objectives but there is also room for improvement on some of the pathways. Details per pathway will be discussed in this chapter. A full overview of the quantitative results linked to MoFA's Strengthening Civil Society basket indicators, compiled overall and by country can be found in Annex 1.

Pathway 1: Young People Demand Accountability And Responsiveness On Harmful Practices, Unintended Pregnancies And Sexual And Gender-Based Violence

Pathway 1 focuses on strengthening youth and youth-led organizations, for them to demand accountability and responsiveness from their leaders on issues related to harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies. The MTE showed that PtY, in the first half of implementation, has substantially contributed to this goal by working directly with youth, raising awareness, capacity strengthening, service provision and networking to youth, their families, and service providers.

Strengthening knowledge and skills of young people on HP, SGBV and unintended pregnancies

In 2023, the program continued to invest in strengthening knowledge and skills of young people and young leaders. For example in Indonesia, where a Reproductive Health and Sexual Education (RHSE) curriculum is rolled out in 29 schools by trained peer educators and teachers, reaching

Click to Read Légal Dow Nafi's Story from Matam, Senegal: <https://powertoyouth.com/impact-tales-senegal/>

3314 young people in 2023. This does not only empower students, but also influence the broader community and school environment, for example when peer educators of the RHSE curriculum from schools in East Lombok advocated for improved SRHR facilities, resulting in changes in school policies, such as the provision of menstrual pads for female students. Also, RHSE implementation in Jember has shown to empower parents to actively engage in and support the RHSE program through school committees. A tangible outcome of this is observed in groups of parents declaring to refrain from marrying off their children at a young age and actively encouraging them to pursue their schooling. In Kenya, PtY supported youth engagement in primary and secondary schools, through school debates, talk shows and Afya talks focused on life skills, sexuality education and menstrual hygiene management. In Ethiopia 40 youth clubs in 14 implementation districts continuously receive skillsbuilding in life skills, SRHR themes, lobby & advocacy, club leadership and management. In 2023, champions from these youth groups came together and established district youth networks in 7 districts, to improve their voice and collective advocacy. In Malawi, the PtY program facilitated psychosocial support for SGBV survivors, who were then trained in facilitating peer support, and supported in the setup of 10 peer groups. The MTE concluded that as a result of PtY implementation, young people have more knowledge of harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies.

Young people engage with decision makers

Also in 2023, there are many great examples of young people who have been empowered, and are able to engage with decision makers. In Malawi, the PtY team co-organized the national Forum for Adolescents event, where adolescents presented the status of adolescent health and well-being. PtY provided technical support to the adolescents who were co-leading the planning and implementation of the event. The adolescents made a presentation to the Minister of Gender, Community

Development and Social Welfare on the need to improve adolescent health and wellbeing including the need to improve access to SRH services as well as to increase funding for family planning commodities and services. In Senegal, young people actively engaged with local authorities during 'citizen hearings' in 14 districts, where they exchanged openly with Mayor and Council Members, and conveyed advocacy messages about the need to reduce FGM/C and improve health services and counselling for young people.

Young people participate in decision making processes

The MTE concluded that the engagement with decision makers is starting to bear fruits in the sense that youth are often directly involved in the decision-making processes related to SRHR, and that in this pathway, most results are witnessed already in the higher-level outcomes. For example in Kenya, where youth trained by PtY in Migori, Siaya, Homabay and Kajiado engaged in the county budget making process, where they voiced their concerns and presented a 'memorandum for consideration' regarding youth SRHR subjects in the County 5-year plan 7 budget 2023 - 2027. This resulted in the inclusion of youth-friendly corners, youth friendly services at health facilities and the construction and operationalization of gender based violence rescue centers in the county plans. In Ethiopia, Amhara region, the Power to You(th) project conducted a series of advocacy events with the aim of influencing local governments to assign young people to health center governing boards. In this regard, we were successful in bringing young people to 29 health centers governing board positions. In each health center one young female and one young man are represented.

1,162

Young people supported by PtY in 2023 participated in decision making bodies and perceived their participation as meaningful



Eysha is a young advocate from Power to You(th) Ethiopia, who spoke up during the International Women's Day celebration in Semera City, Afar. Eysha, at 18 years old, courageously challenged panelists, including the Minister of Women and Social Affairs, on the issues of child marriage, FGM/C, and SGBV, and how they have been impacting the lives of adolescent girls and women in the Afar region. She emphasized the importance of revising policies to provide proper protection for women and girls.



Lessons learnt

The MTE showed that involving and strengthening youth at community and district level is a very effective strategy that has yielded many results. However, the empowerment of youth to also speak out at the national level is more challenging, and sometimes the involvement of young people at these levels is limited to attendance/ physical presence, without them getting an opportunity to voice their views, opinions on issues that affect them. To support youth to speak out at the national level, it is needed to invest even more in strong youth-led organizations to support and mentor advocates. Another lesson learned is a 'backlash' that some countries encounter when empowering young people, especially girls. For example, in Ghana, where girls empowered through the program experience name calling and stigmatization, and remarks from parents, peers and leaders during their advocacy missions. This has scared some young people off that they did not want to participate in decision-making platforms and representations in the public space again. This shows the importance of working on all four pathways simultaneously. The teams that experience this have started to intensify their work in Pathway 3, addressing social norms and demystifying these misconceptions with influential community stakeholders like parents, religious leaders and peers. Lastly, the MTE showed the importance of starting to reach out to youth at a young age, and include more in-school interventions

to broaden the reach. Although some countries already include in-school interventions, others focused more on youth who are out of school. A lesson learned is that nurturing youth advocates right from the school level enables competent champions to continue advocacy of youth rights beyond the school.

PATHWAY 2: CSOS AMPLIFY YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES TO CLAIM, PROTECT AND EXPAND CIVIC SPACE

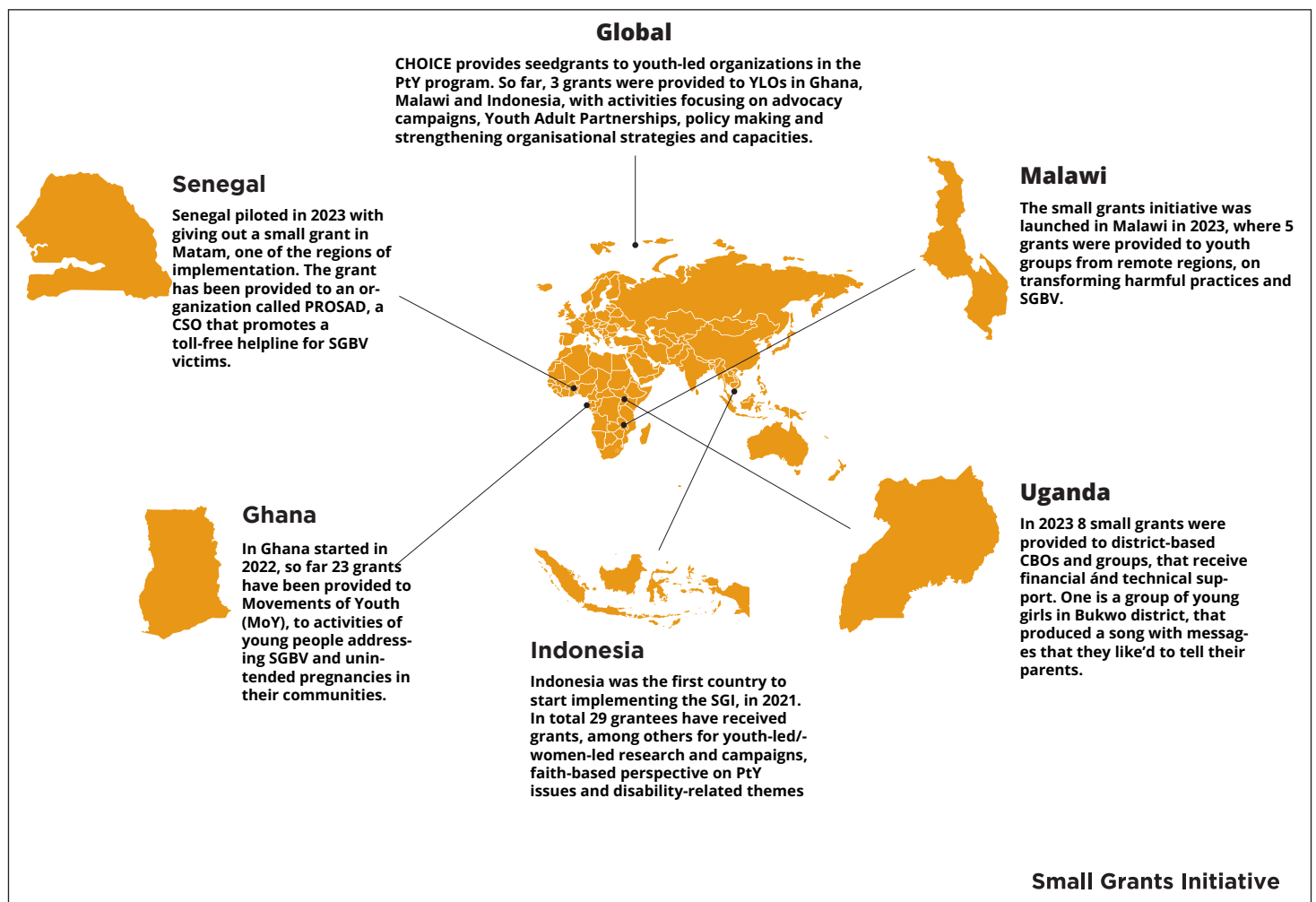
Power to You(th) aims to strengthen CSOs, to apply inclusive lobby & advocacy methods and amplify young people's voices to claim, protect and expand civic space. The Midterm Evaluation showed that we have contributed to pathway 2 to some extent, as through PtY interventions, it was reported across all the countries that CSOs are now applying innovative and inclusive lobby and advocacy approaches, and CSOs whose capacities have been built are taking collective actions through active political engagement and lobbying and (as a result of increased capacities) the CSO space has attracted more legitimacy.

CSOs have increased capacities and increased legitimacy

In 2021, 2022 and 2023, a cumulative total of 428 CSOs participated in Power to You(th). Besides support and capacity strengthening to formal CSOs and CBOs, Power to You(th) also wants to support smaller informal groups, of youth, of women, of people with disabilities, who might have just started and may not have all organizational

structures fully in place, but who have the ambition and motivation to become the change makers of tomorrow. Next to this, the MTE also recommended providing more financial support to CSOs and groups (next to technical capacity strengthening). Therefore, in 2023, the Small Grants Initiative was expanded. The initiative started in 2021 in Indonesia and 2022 in Ghana, but has been

The PtY program strengthened the advocacy capacity of these CSOs, enabling them to move beyond only providing services, taking collective action towards leaders. The CSOs called on the local government for a separate court for survivors of SGBV, and they were successful, as this led to the establishment of a separate court for survivors of SGBV in Bahirdar court office. Another key milestone



scaled to more countries in 2023. Groups and CSOs received small grants, as well as technical support and mentoring.

CSOs whose capacities have been strengthened take collective action through political engagement and advocacy.

There are many examples of this in 2023, like in Ethiopia, where PtY has been working with more than 25 local CSOs in the West Gojjam of Amhara that provide rehabilitation and safe house services for SGBV survivors.

is witnessed in Indonesia, with the establishment of the National Coalition for Young People to Prevent Child Marriage (KNOMP2A), which was initiated by Power to You(th) partners, amongst others. With 46 members from 28 organizations, KNOMP2A serves as a collective force for policy advocacy and campaigning against Child Marriage. 2030 YFI, one of the PtY partners in Indonesia, facilitated three consultative meetings between KNOMP2A and the government, addressing essential themes such as the National PPA Strategy and opportunities for young people's

involvement in monitoring and evaluation. In Ghana, Movements of Youth (MoY) were strengthened in network and alliance building, media advocacy, influencing manifestos, gender transformative approach (GTA), the art of lobbying and evidence-based advocacy. As a result, many MoYs were able to engage traditional authorities, community leaders and state actors and speak out on key issues that affect them. An example is the campaign during International Women's Day commemoration 2023. MoYs highlighted challenges of young people in the media space like cyber bullying and security threats and demanded the Cyber Security Authority to implement the CyberSecurity Act (CSA) 2020 and ensure the protection of young women against blackmail and sexual exploitation in the digital space.

CSOs amplify young people's voices by influencing decision making processes

The MTE concludes that many CSOs and YLOs in the program increasingly influence decision making processes. In Kenya for example, PtY partners have supported YLOs across four counties and as a result, these YLOs were able to actively participate in the budget and policy processes within these counties. Consequently, these young men and women have assumed leadership roles in shaping County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), Annual Development Plans (ADP) and budgets. A result of this can be seen in Migori, where they lobbied for budget allocation to a youth resource center, and where the country government eventually allocated KES 66,600,000 for construction of such a center in the ADP 2023/2024. In Senegal, CSOs and YLOs influence local decision making through actively participating in public hearings at community and district level. For example in Rufisque town, CSOs and YLOs lobbied the mayor to take into account youth health needs and to involve them more in decision-making bodies, and as a result, a budget line dedicated to SRHR was added to next year's town budget, and they were invited to attend sessions of the municipal council and budgetary debates.



Lessons learnt

There are several lessons learned with regards to financial and technical support to CSOs and CBOs. The first one, is to find the right balance between solid financial risk-management and not over-burdening (small) grantees with (financial) procedures. Secondly, we also learned in some countries that mentoring & monitoring grantees is very time-consuming, and that, if we want to do this right, we need to scale down on the amount of grantees. Another lesson learned is that capacity strengthening can start a flywheel effect for an organization to professionalize, and access bigger funding. Like one CBO in Uganda, who won a bigger project grant with IPAS, after a small grant and advocacy & fundraising training by PtY.

PATHWAY 3: SOCIETAL ACTORS TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE YOUTH RIGHTS AND PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL NORMS

The MTE concludes that the PtY program has contributed to pathway 3 of getting societal actors to support and promote youth rights and progressive social norms by engaging with key societal stakeholders in promoting SRHR for youth and the inclusion of youth in SRHR decision making at community level.

Societal actors have increased knowledge and skills to act on key issues



60 religious leaders in Ethiopia engaged in capacity-building workshops on SRHR

The MTE evaluation findings show that combination of the different approaches used to engage the societal actors have contributed to the societal actors getting a better understanding of key PtY issues. For example in Ethiopia in 2023, the PTY program successfully engaged 60 religious leaders in the Afar region in different workshops, where the capacity of the leaders on SRHR issues was built and they had the opportunity to discuss misconceptions around SRHR. Jointly with the religious leaders, a

'discussion guide' was developed on FMG, Child Marriage and SGBV, in the local language Afarigna, which is now used by the Islamic Affairs Office to facilitate discussions in the religious community.

Societal actors engage in (intergenerational) dialogues and community advocacy

Intergenerational dialogues and community advocacy are among the unique approaches of the Power to You(th) program, including the collaboration with community champions and gatekeepers. For example in Kenya, through 'male engagement' forums like MURA (Men United Ready for Action) in Migori, Moran Dialogues in Kajiado County and 'DUOL' forums in Homabay County, young boys and adult men (often traditional leaders) participate in discussions on harmful practices and SGBV, their roles as boys & men in preventing these practices, and exchange youth and adult perspectives. In Malawi, PtY CBOs organized dialogues with the local Traditional Authority¹ in Mizinga, a community near Lake Chilwa, that has high rates of SGBV, especially among young girls and boys who are employed by fishermen. Jointly, they set up four committees focussing on addressing and preventing SGBV and child labor in the area, which include Local Village Heads. Through these committees, the CBOs and local societal actors are actively working together to prevent parents from sending their school-age children to work at the lake.

(Social) media campaigning to influence societal actors and public opinion

One of the strategies applied in 2023 has been the use of (social) media to influence public opinion. In Senegal a collaboration has been set up between the project partners and social media influencers who have become ambassadors for the program. In 2023, these influencers

¹ A 'Traditional Authority' in Malawi, is a cultural custodian who oversees day to day activities in the villages and communities.



hosted a series of live sessions on FGM, Child Marriage, Early Pregnancies, SGBV and MIYP on social networks, which reached around 5000 views each. In Ethiopia, PtY collaborated with local radio stations to air interactive bi-weekly radio debates twice a week, where listeners were invited to call-in and discuss SRHR topics with societal actors, youth and CSOs in the studio. In 2023, 12 media debate show broadcasted and an estimate of 50,000 people were reached. There are also several examples of edutainment for awareness raising and advocacy. This has taken the shape of films, documentaries, story-telling, festivals, podcasts and graffiti contests. For example, 'community voices against FGM' from Migori, Kenya, a documentary series that is used during meetings with policy makers & community leaders. Another example is from Uganda, where a 'Power to You(th) festival' was organized, during #16DaysOfActivism, which included dialogues, experience sharing, music, dance, drama, and talks from societal and state actors.



'Community voices against FGM' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahYTl9yOvml&t=312s>)

This video from PtY Kenya ‘the SILANTOI SERIES’ highlights re-integration of girls rescued from FGM and Child Marriage in the Maasai community in Kenya. It shows how community leaders, rescue centers and Community Based Organization work together to change social norms and support girls: <https://bit.ly/Silantoiseries>



Societal actors express a commitment

The MTE report further revealed an encouraging shift in the attitudes of societal actors towards the rights of young people. As a result of capacity building, dialogues and community advocacy, community and religious leaders have demonstrated a more progressive outlook toward the need to address harmful practices SGBV and unintended pregnancies. An exemplary case of this is seen in Ghana, where now two traditional councils in Mirigu and Shirgu have legally recognized community byelaws (gazetted byelaws) to safeguard AGYW against child marriage. This move has served as a catalyst, motivating three other traditional councils to initiate bye-laws gazetting processes. In Indonesia, religious leaders participated as champions in community discussions and expressed their commitment to decreasing SGBV and Child Marriage, by reporting cases of SGBV, sharing comprehensive information and dispelling misconceptions surrounding child marriage. Their involvement in the PTY program is instrumental in correcting the understanding of community and traditional leaders, who sometimes use religious arguments to justify child marriage. Additionally, discussions in Kenya with leaders of religious groups resulted in the establishment of a religious caucus that committed to providing SGBV counseling sessions to youths in churches. Sixty churches enrolled in the platform, with ten of them establishing fully-fledged counseling

rooms conducting victim-centered and rights-based SGBV sessions.

Societal actors involve young people in decision making

The MTE concludes that PtY has created a channel for young people and decision makers to engage on issues of harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies, but that more needs to be done to change traditional decision making. In 2023, there are good examples that show how, as a result of PtY interventions, young people are included more in decision making of societal actors. For example in Uganda, where Mr. Njuba Livingstone, a representative of the Buganda Kingdom, gave a directive to organize bi-monthly ‘Byotos’, which are safe spaces where elders and young people interact and make decisions on cultural practices. In Ghana the PtY program strengthened Movements of Youth (MoY) at community level, among others through training and mentoring in lobby & advocacy skills. In 2023, the MoYs after successful engagement with Buipe Traditional council were offered a representation in the highest decision-making body of the traditional area. The MoYs in that area now join traditional leaders in their Friday weekly meetings to take decisions about the communities in Buipe, where they ask attention for the welfare of youth especially adolescent girls and young women.

Click to Read Mekale Birhan’s Story from Ethiopia: <https://powertoyouth.com/pty-impact-stories-ethiopia/>



Lessons Learnt

With regards to pathway 3, there are several lessons learned to share. In some of the countries of implementation, we learned that, to decrease harmful practices, there is a need to complement awareness and dialogues for social norm change with strengthening of reporting mechanisms, to make sure that actions are taken against offenders. In 2024, more strategies are included in this regard. Another lesson learned is that, as a response to a growing awareness among young people in communities on the fact that SGBV, Child Marriages and FGM are human right violations, there is a growing need for 'safe spaces', 'self-help groups' and 'rescue centers', and several Power to You(th) CSOs and CBOs have started to focus on this.

PATHWAY 4: STATE ACTORS IMPROVE POLICY MAKING, BUDGETING AND IMPLEMENTATION ON HARMFUL PRACTICES, SGBV AND UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES

The progress report from MTE demonstrates that we have been successful in implementing Pathway 4. This particular pathway has resulted in significant outcomes, highlighting the increased involvement of young people as equal partners in policy processes across seven countries. As a direct result of this collaboration, state actors are increasingly developing effective policies, laws, and budgets that address the specific needs of young people. The outcome harvesting data collected for Pathway 4 also reveals that the majority of outcomes were significant and of medium to high importance.

State actors recognize the rights of young people and the importance of eradicating harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies

The MTE concludes that state actors recognize the rights

of young people and the importance of eradicating harmful practices, SGBV and unintended pregnancies. There are several examples of this in 2023.



Reduction of marriage dispensations from 716 to 332 in Bondowoso, Indonesia, due to active advocacy against child marriage.

For example in Indonesia, where a long process of advocacy and engagement of CSOs with village governments, led to the formulation of Regent Regulations focused on the prevention of child marriage, and several regional and village heads signing these 'child-friendly village' regulations. In one of the districts, Bondowoso, also a Cooperation Agreement on this topic was signed with the Religious Court and District Health Office and District Education office. These regulations focus on protecting children applying for marriage dispensation. As a result, all actors now work together to encourage community members to consider alternatives to child marriage. In 2022, the number of marriage dispensations in Bondowoso granted stood at 716. By November 2023, this figure decreased to 332. Also in Senegal, after advocacy and campaigning activities by youth champions, several mayors of implementation districts have made public commitments to include in their communal budgets a line dedicated to the reproductive health needs of adolescents and young people.

State actors engage with youth representatives on rights of young people and the importance of eradicating harmful practices through expressing their commitment

The program has contributed in getting more people to participate in discussion on strategic documents of the Ministry of Gender. For example, PtY facilitated the participation of 25 young people in the review of the Ghana

Click to Read Fred Mbabeki's Story from Uganda: <https://powertoyouth.com/pty-impact-stories-uganda/>

Child marriage framework. In Homa Bay County, Kenya, PtY Kenya consortium was able to mobilize the Department of Gender Inclusion, Sports, Culture and Social Services to address the high cases of SGBV and teen pregnancies in the County by supporting the launch of the SGBV Policy in March 2023. The launch of the policy was the culmination of many months of lobbying by the youth, postponement of the event and interruption by the election calendar that slowed down momentum for many months, but the youth remained resilient. By launching the policy during the International Women's Day celebrations, Homa Bay County joined counties that have adopted a county-level policy on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) while simultaneously making a watershed statement on the County's commitment to support programs that address women's rights.

State actors improve policy making and implementation on key issues

The MTE already concluded that, through several engagements, advocacy interventions and capacity strengthening, state actors have increasingly designed effective policies and laws and budgets for young people. In 2023 PTY Ghana trained a collection of vibrant youth champions in advocacy and lobbying, who joined a coalition of CSOs on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), to lead the "don't tax my period" campaign against the 20% luxury taxation of menstrual hygiene products. The campaign which gained mass recognition and support resulted in the government scrapping taxes on domestic production of sanitary products.

The PtY Malawi program was actively involved in the review of several crucial policies that are of paramount importance for ensuring the well-being of the country's youth. The policies in question include the National SRHR policy for the period of 2024-2030, the Youth-Friendly

Health Services Quality of Care Standards, and the Ending Child Marriage Strategy. The overarching goal of the review process was to ensure that the PtY agenda and themes were fully integrated into these policies. As part of their efforts to bring about positive change, the consortium also made a significant contribution to the 2023 Penal Code Amendment, which modified the age of a child and consensual sex from 16 to 18 years. This reaffirms PTY's commitment to addressing the issue of unintended pregnancies, harmful practices, and SGBV through policy implementation. Moreover working in coordination with the government, PtY Malawi undertook great care to ensure that the views and needs of young people are taken into account when developing these policies. This approach ensures that there is meaningful youth participation in the decision-making process regarding their SRHR. By prioritizing the involvement of young people, the program is fostering a culture of inclusiveness and putting the needs of the most vulnerable members of society first.

Additionally, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has recently launched the Malawi 2023-2027 National Youth Policy with the crucial support of PtY Malawi. PtY played a pivotal role in reviewing the National Youth Policy, particularly in Priority Area 3, which focused on transformative leadership and youth inclusion in governance systems. The policy provides a unique opportunity for advocacy, allowing young people to amplify their voices and contribute significantly to decision-making, representation, and budgeting processes. The transformative leadership aspect of the policy aims to develop young leaders who can drive change and promote youth participation in governance. Moreover, the policy recognizes that youth inclusion is essential and entails deliberate and consistent consideration of young people in executive decision-making processes. It aims to ensure equal access to

"the project came at just the right time for the region, which is an area with a high rate of harmful practices. Today, if there has been a reduction in harmful practices and the abandonment of FGM/C in the area, it's thanks to the various awareness-raising and capacity-building activities of the PTY Project". Mayor of Matam commune, Senegal



opportunities and resources for all young people without discrimination. The launch of the National Youth Policy marks a significant milestone in creating an enabling environment for youth participation in governance systems in Malawi. It represents a critical step towards empowering young people to play an active role in shaping the country's future and achieving sustainable development.

In addition to the above, the PtY Uganda program made a significant impact in Busia district by addressing a harmful cultural practice known as “disco Matanga.” Traditionally, disco Matanga involves night funeral dances organized by families facing financial constraints in affording burials for their deceased relatives. These events, intended as fundraisers, often extend over several days and feature music and dancing all night long. Unfortunately, disco Matanga has evolved into a setting conducive to sexual exploitation, particularly affecting young women and girls. Attendees, predominantly men, frequently consume alcohol and drugs, and there is a disturbing trend where they financially incentivize young women to serve as their “dance partners.” Regrettably, this arrangement often leads to coerced or transactional sexual encounters, exposing unwilling participants to significant

risks. The district leadership identified disco Matanga as a contributing factor to the escalation of unintended pregnancies, STIs, and various other health and social issues among the young population. This is particularly aimed for teenagers and young adults who may be more susceptible to peer pressure and exploitation. Acknowledging the threats posed by disco Matanga to their community, the Busia district local government sought the assistance of the PtY program in formulating and enacting an ordinance to regulate these events. The ordinance has undergone presentation to the council for a second reading, with the legislative process still ongoing. Upon its passage, it will represent a significant triumph for the safety and well-being of young women and girls in Busia, ensuring greater protection against exploitation and harmful practices associated with disco Matanga.



Lessons learnt

Implementing pathway 4 we learned that persistence and resilience are critical factors in achieving success, with regards to changing laws and policies, as these processes often take (very) long. For instance, in Homa Bay County, Kenya, the launch of the SGBV Policy faced numerous postponements and interruptions due to external factors

such as the election calendar. However, the youth involved in the initiative showed remarkable resilience and commitment to their cause, and eventually succeeded. Another lesson learned is that it is effective to leverage national and international platforms, such as International Youth Day and World Contraception Day, as a moment to intensify campaigns, and reach a wider audience.

Despite the progress made in policy development and advocacy, limited budgetary allocations remain a significant challenge for implementing policies effectively. Investing in budget advocacy emerges as a powerful strategy to address this challenge, entailing efforts to influence government funding decisions and ensure policy priorities are integrated into annual work plans. Additionally, reinforcing accountability mechanisms, such as social accountability processes like community scorecards, is essential to ensure transparency and hold duty bearers accountable for budget utilization. .

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

OUR GLOBAL ADVOCACY

In 2023, the global and regional advocacy team has been brokering global and regional spaces for AGYW advocates from country teams to speak, share best practices and experiences from their work and to hold their government accountable. A notable example of this was our participation at CSW67 and Women Deliver, where we hosted side events on 'Tracking Girls In Crisis: An Innovative Digital Tool for Long-Term Monitoring of Girls Rescued from Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Kenya.' Both events provided a platform for youth advocates from Kenya to showcase their innovative approach addressing FGM/C, and demonstrating the link between grassroots actions and national policy implementation. During Women Deliver, also the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Gender from the Government of Kenya participated, who committed to collaborate with

the PtY campaign to reduce FGM in communities where it continues to be practiced. Furthermore, PtY participated in the African Union Conference on FGM in October 2023 and co-hosted, along with UNFPA Djibouti a side event titled 'Transforming FGM eradication through legal, gender and community engagement'. Also during Women Deliver, PtY organized an event where a youth advocate and policy maker from Kenya and the youth SRHR ambassador from MOFA discussed the practical application of the Meaningful Inclusive Youth Engagement Framework and highlighted the results of inclusion and representation in local policy development.

AGYW advocates were strengthened & mentored to meaningfully participate during these global events. For example, ahead of Human Rights Council 54 PTY organized an "HRC open house Extravaganza". This was a youth-friendly two-hour session to go through what the HRC is, its relevance and opportunities of engagement (such as: statement to be delivered during the Panel discussion on youth and human rights). Additionally, after the 53rd and 54th sessions of the HRC, PtY produced youth friendly resources (document and videos) to disseminate the main advocacy outcomes of these spaces, which were used by youth advocates to follow-up in their countries, connecting national and international advocacy efforts. For the 53rd HRC session, for example, the document contains a comprehensive and easy to read summary of the two resolutions that PTY engaged in: (1) Resolution on Child, early and forced marriage: ending and preventing forced marriage and (2) Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls in criminal justice detention.

In addition, we continued the important work on progressive language in global resolutions and statements. The CSW remains the only and largest intergovernmental platform that is solely dedicated towards advancing



gender equality. The outcome document of CSW67, the Agreed Conclusions, set out governments' commitments to advance women and girls rights and informs policy development within the respective countries. PtY contributed technical inputs into the outcome documents at CSW67, which the UN SDG summit adopted as a Political Declaration in September 2023. PtY also made technical inputs into the CSW67 Global Youth and Adolescents Recommendation with concrete proposals to Member States, to lead the conversation around technology and innovation with young people at the forefront. Important to note is that the priority theme itself on technology was new and presented a challenge in the negotiations of the Agreed Conclusions. It made it difficult to predict the points of conflict as there was no agreed language on it. International advocacy spaces experienced heightened opposition from conservative states and civil society groups, who vocally contested previously agreed-upon language. For instance, at the Human Rights Council, conservative pushback led to contentious debates over language related to sexual and reproductive health. Similarly, negotiations during the CPD and SDG summit reached a stalemate due to disagreements on references to gender and sexuality. The challenges persisted during CSW67, where opposition actors vehemently opposed language on CSE and SRHR. Consequently, the resulting

outcomes document lacked crucial references to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and CSE, 'family' language advanced. Recognizing the significance of this opposition, Rutgers developed a tool aimed at managing such challenges in international spaces. This tool has since been embraced by various organizations to safeguard their initiatives in conferences and fora against opposition. Also, the ICPD+30 shadow-report '[the Heart of the Matter](https://rutgers.international/icpd30/)' was developed in 2023, covering three MoFA partnerships (Right Here Right Now, Power to You(th) and Generation G), 16 countries and four global regions. It concludes the findings with a Global Call to Action. The final report was launched during Women Deliver at a high-level reception at the residence of the Netherlands ambassador to Rwanda in Kigali. This high-level presence at the reception took place among many concurring events and showed the clear support of the Executive Director of UNFPA for the importance of young people speaking out about their SRHR. In the presence of executive director of UNFPA Natalia Kanem, the Netherlands ambassador and Princess Mabel van Oranje, young advocates, including from PtY Malawi spoke about the findings of the report and shared their recommendations. The launch in Kigali was the starting point for an online campaign that unpacked the contents of the report and that will continue into 2024.

'The Heart of the Matter' : <https://rutgers.international/icpd30/>

COMMUNICATION AND CAMPAIGNS

2023 was a dynamic period for the Power to You(th) global communications, marked by significant advancements and collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing communication strategies within our program. From November 27th to December 1st, 2023, the Comms TWG workshop in Dakar, Senegal, which was co-created with the PMERL TWG, underscored this focus. It fostered successful collaboration between PMERL TWG and Communications TWG, highlighting the importance of clear communication channels and showcasing impactful initiatives. A key outcome was the 2024 comms strategy, prioritizing simplicity and impact, drawing on our strengths in engagement expertise, advocacy, and youth engagement. The workshop featured CMT presentations on diverse communication strategies, emphasizing digitalization and collaborative approaches, and culminated in a set of comprehensive recommendations, including engaging communications as a strategic partner, budget allocation, strategic dissemination plans, and collaboration with stakeholders for a global campaign focus in 2024.

Interactive sessions spanned strategy development, MTE impact stories, training, and creative competitions, such as the Slam and Graffiti Competition organized by the Power to You(th) Senegal team. These activities, along with country teams presenting their localized strategies, provided valuable insights and emphasized the importance of collaboration and shared initiatives across the TWG. A notable outcome was the formation of the MTE taskforce, blending Comms and PMERL TWG expertise for knowledge product development into 2024.

Expanding our collaborative efforts, we engaged with other youth programs like Y-ACT, Youth Power Hub, Joint Youth Working Group (JYWG) by UNFPA, and #1point8 by the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health

(PMNCH). This included joint online campaigns, promotions during conferences like Women Deliver, and leveraging our JYWG representation to share updates, activities, and support on youth, SRHR, and climate change issues. This position not only offered insights into global youth advocacy but also facilitated the dissemination of PTY key messages to a broader audience outside of our usual spectrum, particularly on the intersection of climate change with SRHR and youth empowerment.

Country-specific communication strategies were developed, tailoring messages to local contexts for relevancy and impact, supported by regular forums for cross-learning and a repository of good practices. Youth Ambassador engagement, both online and offline, proved instrumental in amplifying our message through trained young leaders who led digital advocacy efforts, effectively mobilizing community support and driving change.



The strategic focus on digital platforms significantly extended our program's reach, with the launch of the [Power to You\(th\) website](https://powertoyouth.com/) and engaging social media campaigns.

Power to You(th) website:
<https://powertoyouth.com/>

RESULTS, PROGRESS AND LESSONS LEARNED ON CROSS CUTTING THEMES

Meaningful And Inclusive Youth participation

Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation (MIYP) continued to be an effective and essential component and strategy in achieving the programmatic objectives. The MTE found that within the program, the importance of including young people within all stages of project implementation is being better understood, with youth being intentionally included in all stages of project implementation, as well as youth within the program recognising the importance of their MIYP, which has been seen in the formulation of youth boards and intergenerational dialogue sessions. In the external advocacy of Power to You(th), MIYP capacity building was shown to be a crucial component in enhancing young people's abilities and awareness of MIYP's significance. This enables them to advocate for young peoples' meaningful inclusion in decision making spaces, reflected through the increase of youth champions and advocates in political and civic spaces.

Linking and Learning between Youth Led Organisations

In 2023 PtY organized the Connector Week event. Hosted in Kenya, this week-long linking and learning event brought together young people from across the RHRN2 and Power to You(th) programs to share knowledge, experiences, successes and challenges related to MIYP, including facilitating sessions on disability inclusion in CSE, regional and global advocacy, and more. This space also enabled the dissemination of tools and best practices to support MIYP integration, for example a micro training on the Y-ACT MIYP Scorecard that measures MIYP of young people in policy processes. The Connector Week also helped strengthen a growing youth movement and forged meaningful connections amongst the participants, with more than 40 young participants from 12 different countries. One participant reported that the week en-

abled them to "build networks" and "make new friends", and when participants were asked how likely they were to collaborate with other participants after Connector Week, the average score was 8/10.

Youth Led Advocacy

Ensuring that young people are meaningfully and inclusively involved in advocacy, and taking the lead in advocacy activities is a central part of the program. With a focus on youth-led digital campaigns, a digital campaign strategy was executed, leveraging on the digital platform 'Mighty Networks' to foster a safe space for advocacy collaboration of young people across the partnership, and through continuous engagement of young people on the platform the membership has grown from 100 to 333. The PtY team also organized Advocacy Open House Extravaganza's ahead of the Human Rights Council (HRC) to provide young people attending the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what these events entail in a youth-friendly way, how to engage and how to access these spaces. Through this, young people could more meaningfully engage and participate in these spaces and forge stronger connections with other YLOs attending.

Lessons Learnt

Along with these above-mentioned successes and recommendations, we must also reflect on the lessons learnt from 2023. Whilst there is clear youth representation in the PTY governance structure, one key challenge is the lack of a shared perspective on operationalization of MIYP across the program, as different partners and countries operationalize MIYP in different ways. Continuing our efforts from 2023, we strive to further mainstream MIYP, for instance, through the nomination of MIYP focal points in each CMT, who will champion MIYP within their country teams, and support the GYG to recognise areas where technical assistance may be valuable. A lack of documentation was also identified in the MTE, therefore, the GYG has formulated concrete plans to increase

documentation of our MIYP learnings and best practices, which will be shared both internally and externally, using multiple platforms, including the PTY website Mighty Networks and social media. The balance of power between adult-led CSOs and YLOs continues to persist, shaped by contractual obligations, accountability standards and societal hierarchies. To address this, we will continue to invest in youth-adult partnerships through both MIYP capacity strengthening and facilitating intergenerational dialogues and mutual learning.



MIYP Success at Country Level

At the country level, many youth-led initiatives were implemented in 2023, including the Youth Initiative Small Grant (YISC), and youth-led advocacy campaigns. In Indonesia, intergenerational dialogues between young people and various societal actors have been taking place, with young people speaking up about their rights and questioning harmful norms. One major milestone for the Indonesian CMT is the establishment of the National Coalition for Young People to Prevent Child Marriage by 2030 Youth Force Indonesia (2030 YFI). The purpose of the coalition is for collective policy advocacy and campaigning to reinforce Power to You(th)'s national impact. 2030 YFI facilitated three consultations with the government to address core themes, such as youth involvement in monitoring and evaluation.

To foster linkages between MenEngage Africa Youth and PtY, Sonke supported the participation of representatives from Youth Wave, Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum to participate at both symposia. The Youth Pre-Symposium started off with a youth dialogue titled The Youth Perspective: a discussion on strategies to foster collaboration and understanding between different generations within MEA to effectively promote gender transformation. This dialogue discussed what MIYP is, barriers

and strategies to promote it. The dialogue was followed by the development of the Youth Declaration which both participants co-authored. The declaration which can be found [here](#) and includes key demands from young people on SRH and CSEn, funding of youth work, climate justice, and more.

In efforts to ensure that MIYP is strengthened in other MEA countries, there was an orientation into and sharing of the MIYP checklist developed in partnership with CHOICE as well as the media advocacy toolkit with 15 MEA Youth coordinators. By sharing the checklist and analyzing the responses, MEA/Sonke has been able to establish linkage of PtY YLOs and MEA Youth to ensure that MEA Youth in Malawi and Uganda can benefit from the MIYP learnings and operationalise it.

Y-ACT leveraged the partnership meeting held in Ethiopia to further map MYE needs across contexts and countries to explore MYE needs as well as explore opportunities for the domestication of the MYE tool. In a bid to support countries develop and contextualize standardized tools for MYE, Y-ACT rolled out a digital MYE training program to Ethiopia and Kenya. One of the outputs from the training was having PtY Kenya develop an MYE checklist (similar to the GTA) that will be embedded in their reporting template for 2024 in a bid to have more intentional reporting on MYE. Ethiopia and Senegal will roll out contextualisation of the tool in 2024.

Gender Transformative Approach

In 2023, the GTA TWG and the country teams embarked on different strategies to strengthen GTA at global, regional, and national levels. The TWG conducted (re-fresher) trainings for Uganda, Malawi, Senegal and Kenya that focused on, among others, transformative messaging, incorporating GTA within MIYP during community engagements, using GTA tools like the Power Walk and

Declaration here: <https://menengageafrica.org/publication/3rd-menengage-africa-symposium-youth-declaration/>

Value Clarification. Using the skills attained, the different country teams have built the capacity of CBOs on GTA and have provided technical capacity through small grants initiatives to integrate and employ these approaches into their interventions. For example, Uganda trained 40 CBOs in GTA and sub-granted 8 of these CBOs to apply the approach into their work.

Linking and learning through GTA dialogues and country exchange learning sessions.

In 2023, two 'GTA dialogues' were organized, as online global events focusing on mutual learning and sharing on GTA, engaging PtY CMTs and partners, as well as the MenEngage network members, GenG and RHRN 2. The two topics were 'transformative messaging' and 'engaging men and boys'. Additionally, Uganda and Malawi in 2023 carried out a virtual GTA linking and Learning. Hereby, the importance of operational research became evident for eliminating harmful practices, and this informed Uganda's operational research that will focus on FGM as a harmful practice. Plans for learning between Kenya and Ghana, between Malawi and Ghana kicked off in 2023 and the learning is to be actualized in 2024.

Tool development

As a result of a need expressed by partners to get support in the integration of GTA into their work and pro-

gramming, the 'GTA activity guide' was developed. The guide aims at supporting partners and other different stakeholders to have a GTA lens from the onset of planning an intervention and responds to the question "how do you know that an activity has components of gender transformation?". The tool supports partners to develop the practice of documenting the process of integration of GTA into interventions and enhance the follow-up and monitoring of GTA interventions in communities.

Lessons learnt

The MTE provided several lessons learned and recommendations regarding implementation of GTA in Power to You(th), that will also shape our implementation in 2024. The first one is that, because of restrictive social norms in some countries, the terminology of GTA (in particular transformative) is a barrier, as it is associated with LGBTI, and causes opposition. This means we have to be creative and flexible in our framing of GTA depending on the context. Even in some countries (Uganda, Ghana and Senegal) issues of diversity are unfortunately not comprehensively handled in the training due to sensitivity and security issues.

Secondly, the MTE revealed that there is a need to further maintain and scale capacity strengthening of CSOs, youth networks and local structures on GTA. Although we have



'Transformative messaging' and 'engaging men and boys':

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/11GKBnghit4fzwHqbVWbVBIf3FE8NpdcbzP7byZSYGu4/edit#slide=id.p1>

invested in this, more needs to be done to increase understanding of GTA and how it can be operationalized. We have noticed that some CMTs confuse GTA with gender mainstreaming, as the latter only touches on the surface of gender inequality rather than the roots (harmful social norms and power dynamics).

We learned that linking & learning between countries is an effective strategy to enhance GTA. In 2023, we have seen that our online global dialogues and a face2face meeting between Uganda & Malawi have enabled stakeholders to learn across contexts. These sessions have spurred innovation and the scaling of interventions, such as new approaches to working with cultural custodians and media. In 2024, this will be scaled to a global GTA face2face Linking & Learning Symposium, where participants will discuss the operationalization of GTA, best practice models and bringing the concepts of GTA, Southern Leadership and MIYP together to an intersectional feminist approach. In 2024 we will also focus more on documentation and sharing of best practices, to capture inspiring stories from beneficiaries, role models, champions, and youth advocates.

Our last learning was that engaging with cultural custodians has yielded positive results in gender transformative efforts. Involving community leaders, including traditional and faith leaders, who hold significant influence, is essential. Strengthening their understanding of GTA is necessary for fostering a greater appreciation of the need for change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The challenges presented by climate change highlight the intricate relationship between climate change and the realization of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Climate change not only affects the direct implementation of SRHR-focused activities but also exacerbates existing vulnerabilities among the target group. As climate change disrupts access to essential resources like water, it creates barriers that impede progress toward

gender equality and undermines the efforts to address child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and sexual and gender-based violence.

In Uganda, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Malawi, floods damaged infrastructure and disrupted access to health care systems, including reproductive health services in some PTY Districts. This made it more challenging and costly to access communities for the continuity of project activities. On the other hand, Indonesia and Kenya (mainly Kajiado) were affected by a prolonged dry season, which affected community participation in dialogue meetings and events. For pastoral communities, finding water and pasture for their livestock took priority over attending meetings. During this time, the community's expectations were high, and they would inquire about relief donations like food and sanitary towels for girls. This period also increased cases of adolescent girls dropping out of school, resulting in the promotion of FGM/C and child marriage as parents opted to marry off their girls in exchange for a bride price. The prolonged dry season in Indonesia led to a shortage of clean water for sanitation at SMPN 6 Pujut, one of the schools where PtY is implemented. Insufficient water supply meant that students could not use the school toilets, requiring them to return home for sanitary changes during menstruation. To address this challenge, Rutgers Lombok engaged in advocacy efforts, persuading the school principal to include water supply and the construction of men's and women's toilets in the usage plan. This initiative leveraged subsidy funds from the government to enhance sanitation facilities, providing a sustainable solution to the climate-induced water scarcity affecting reproductive health.

To ask attention for the interlinkages between SRHR

"I am pregnant with my fifth child, and this was not planned. My one-month family planning injection expired and due to the heavy rains, I could not access the clinic for renewal and I got pregnant" Community representative, Ghana

and climate change, PtY supported youth advocates to participate during Africa Climate Summit and the COP28, enhancing visibility for the SRHR effects of climate change, such as how severe weather events disrupt SRHR services, and contributing to global policy.

SEAH, FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

Overall the MTE revealed that PtY has made significant progress with regards to SEAH. A solid Safeguarding Policy is in place to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, bribery, and corruption by all PTY stakeholders. Country level partners have adopted and contextualized these broad guidelines. Some country partners, however, need further support to conduct a risk analysis, management and reporting of risks. To safeguard against sexual harassment cases in the remaining PtY period, the MTE recommends to also strengthen the common understanding of SEAH within the PtY consortium based on a shared language and widely understood definitions, as described in the PTY Safeguarding Policy. Therefore safeguarding/SEAH capacity strengthening sessions were conducted with PtY partners in Senegal, Malawi and Uganda. The sessions focused on defining SEAH, Safeguarding and related terms, identifying examples of the different forms of SEAH, prevention and what it means to adopt a 'zero-tolerance approach'. Safeguarding assessments were done with each of the individual CMTs prior to the training and this informed the development of a Safeguarding Policy Scorecard.

In 2023, 1 safeguarding case was reported. An investigation was done, which resulted in a resignation. Going forward into 2024, PtY will continue to focus on providing training and technical support to safeguarding focal points, fostering cross-exchange and learning among our Country Management Teams (CMT) on SEAH, and promoting a shared understanding of SEAH and safeguarding principles among our partners. Our overarching goal

is to minimize the risk of SEAH and enhance awareness of safeguarding throughout our consortium.

As PtY, we remain committed to adopting a victim-centered approach. This approach prioritizes listening to victims, avoids re-traumatization, and ensures that all responses are both timely and aligned with the principles of safety, confidentiality, respect, and accountability. By adhering to these principles and practices, we aim to create a safer and more supportive environment for all those we serve and work with.

INNOVATION

In 2023, the PtY program embraced the potential of innovation to enhance our programming to be more adaptive and responsive and to improve relevance and engagement with young people and communities. Throughout the years, the Coordination Lab collected ideas and feedback to integrate innovation more into our strategies. Following extensive consultations with stakeholders, we have worked on two key initiatives for 2023:

1. Learning On Creative Thinking And Innovation Methods:

In the partnership survey in 2022, CMTs indicated that they wanted to develop more skills and capacities, to become more innovative and be able to think out of the box. Therefore, an Innovation Trajectory was rolled out in 2023, working with 'Human Centered Design (HCD)' as an innovative method that guides the development of new approaches and prototypes, where the user is central. The trajectory unfolded in three phases:

1. *Strengthening Innovation & HCD Competencies: Equipping PtY program staff across seven countries with the tools and mindset needed for HCD.*
2. *Co-Creation of Youth-Centered Ideas: Delving deep into local contexts through qualitative research, teams gained insights for the creation of innovative solutions*

Design Challenges

Youth participation in decision making

Ghana: How might we effectively engage young people to participate in the annual planning and review meetings of their districts and municipalities so that they are aware and able to influence projects and initiatives that will benefit youth?

CSO capacity building

Senegal: How can we provide technical support and tools to help civil society players access information and resources to optimise the impact of their efforts, while strengthening their involvement with local authorities?

SGBV

Ethiopia: How might we create adequate protection mechanisms for in school adolescent and young girls, so that they could feel safer in their school environment?
Kenya: How might we effectively involve adolescent boys and young men as catalysts for change, support, and safety in the effort to reduce and prevent regressive social norms that promote sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls?

SRHR

Malawi: How might we ensure that **AGYW are provided with age appropriate sexuality education during initiation ceremonies** in order to challenge and prevent harmful practices, so that they are protected from **unintended pregnancies**.
Uganda: How might we influence community's (Parent, Religious leaders, AGYW, Cultural leaders) perceptions and attitudes on modern contraceptives for AGYW so that there is an increase in uptake in the long run?

aimed at empowering youth.

3. *Empowering Creative Confidence: As prototypes develop, winning teams gain the confidence to tackle challenges and implement innovative solutions effectively, driving meaningful change.*

In 2023, all the seven countries had their capacities built on HCD and developed a 'design challenge'. Also, the majority have completed the research phase and are currently developing proto-types of the innovation they will be rolling out. Countries indicated that this process has been quite insightful for them, with the majority having had an opportunity to test and review the assumptions they hold regarding youth involvement and SRHR.

In 2024, an innovation grant will be awarded to three countries with the best prototypes.

2. Innovating Partnerships:

With a vision to transform transactional partnerships into collaborative partnerships, we initiated a learning trajectory in 2023. This trajectory aimed to equip coordinators (in-country and global) and partners as 'partnership brokers' with the skills and knowledge needed to foster collaborative engagements characterized by shared decision-making, co-creation, and mutual accountability.

The learning trajectory comprised in-person training sessions and online meetings focused on identifying challenges, sharing best practices, and building the capacity of coordinators and program managers to facilitate collaborative partnerships effectively.

These initiatives underscore our commitment to innovation and collaboration within the Power to You(th) program. By embracing digitalization and innovation, we are ensuring that our efforts remain dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of young people and communities, thereby advancing SRHR and youth empowerment

REACHING SCALE: LEARNING, RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

The Power to You(th) program aims to reach scale through identifying and scaling up good practices, based

"This HCD approach allowed youth champions in PtY to gain a deeper understanding of their unique context and explore the significant challenges faced by their peers, such as SGBV. By actively participating in this ongoing process, young individuals have the chance to contribute their share and develop comprehensive solutions" PtY coordinator, Ethiopia

on evidence and knowledge of what works and what does not work. Having concluded its third year of implementation, the program has embarked on various initiatives to realize this objective.

Midterm Evaluation

The Midterm Evaluation (MTE) was conducted and finalized in 2023 adopting a hybrid approach, which leveraged on the expertise of internal PtY partners and external consultants. This unique strategy facilitated a collaborative co-creation process engaging all teams (countries, TWGs, Global partners) in decision-making regarding the evaluation's design, approach methodology and recommendations. Consequently, it not only ensured rigorous quality assurance and uniformity in analysis and reporting but also enabled tailored context-specific analyses and recommendations, which the teams were involved in developing during review meetings. Moreover, this holistic process significantly empowered the TWGs and CMTs to engage with their results.

In the second half of 2023, we focused on follow-up of the recommendations of the MTE and utilization of the insights for program planning and learning. Country teams developed their annual plans 2024, based on the learnings from the MTE, and they have been able to set and/or adapt targets for the remaining implementation period. In December, a joint meeting between PMEL and Communications took place, where we reflected on the MTE process and set up a task force that will focus on the development of MTE communication products in 2024.

As we prepare for the End Term Evaluation (ETE), reflections by different levels (country, regional and Global) on the MTE process were gathered. Two challenges experienced during Midterm Evaluation were:

Incomplete Data Coverage: The data collection process encountered limitations in certain working intervention locations, notably in Ethiopia's Northern region, due to

security concerns and a cyclone in Malawi. This restricted the comprehensive assessment of all targeted areas, impacting the overall reach.

Language Barriers: Language barriers in Indonesia and Senegal posed significant obstacles to effective communication and understanding of methodologies among national consultants. This hindered the application of tools, leading to delays, particularly in Senegal's advocacy maturation tool. This was later rectified through a review meeting with the country team, local and global consultant. To address this, in the ETE process, we aim to plan for translation of key documents from the start of the process.

Central Operational Research

The Central Operational Research (COR) has been a co-creation process with currently four COR trajectories ongoing in 2023: three on 'SRHR and Policy and Implementation Gaps' in Malawi, Senegal and Kenya, and one on 'Engaging Effectively with Religious Leaders' in Ethiopia. Unfortunately the trajectory on Engaging with Religious Leaders in Indonesia had to be canceled due to internal country capacity issues. PtY is aiming to have all four trajectories finished by the end of May 2024. An additional fifth and sixth COR trajectory on SGBV have started early 2024 in Ghana and Uganda. Youth researchers are part of all COR trajectories: they are included in developing the tools, data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination. The youth researchers were also taking part in the kick-off workshop held in November in Kenya, as well as in Malawi which will be held in April 2024.

Learning Sessions with Partos, MoFA and Share Net

The PMERL team actively engaged in a series of MEAL dialogue learning sessions for strategic partnerships facilitated by MoFA and Partos. These sessions provided a valuable platform for exchanging experiences relating to the MTE. The PMERL team had an opportunity to do

a presentation on the design and methodology of the PtY MTE process. The PMERL team during the reporting period actively participated in various discussions with stakeholders such as Share Net, Partos, and MoFA, where critical topics, including reporting specifications for indicators and MTE, were addressed. Also the discussions with other SRHR partnerships on shared MTR findings and lessons learned concerning topics like local ownership, risk sharing and the different layers of power dynamics were valuable.

PARTNERSHIPS AND SYNERGIES

Internal collaboration and partnership building

In 2021 the PtY partnership was setup at the global and country level, and we invested in building a governance structure and strengthening collaboration between partners in the consortium. In the beginning of 2022, a partnership survey revealed existing challenges, especially with regards to unclarity on the governance and roles and responsibilities of different structures (for example, the difference between the GMT and the Coordinaton Lab), lack of connection/cooperation between countries and challenges in connection and communication between the global consortium and Country Management Teams. Several actions were implemented in 2022 to address this, like the development of an internal communication strategy, the setup of a Country Coordinator Group, peer exchanges between countries and the development of clear roles & responsibilities for the different governance structures.

One of the issues that also came out of the partnership survey in 2022, was the challenge for global and CMT coordinators, to manage different agenda's and interests of the different organizations in the consortium. Therefore, as mentioned in the innovation chapter, in 2023 a training trajectory in collaboration with the [Partnership Broker Association](https://partnershipbrokers.org/) took place in Ghana, where country coordinators and global coordinators strengthened their skills in

facilitating good partnerships, and managing different organizational agenda's and interests. Mid-2023, as part of the MTR, an '[alliance thermometer](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vqbX-jlkYZXd_-JeDh0x36jgfMswz7hY/edit)' survey was implemented. The survey revealed that respondents gave high overall ratings of the partnership building blocks 'processes', 'strategy', 'connection and cooperation', 'learning and innovation' and 'steering culture'.

But the survey also revealed challenges. Recommendations included improved collaboration between Technical Working Groups, more clarity on the roles of Technical partners, the need for improved collaboration and coordination around events and better documentation of results. In September 2023, the outcomes from the MTE were discussed in a global partnership meeting, and concrete steps and actions were identified, which will be implemented in 2024. Examples of activities to address these challenges: The setup of a joint working group with countries and global advocates in preparation of the CSW, a joint Communications & PMEL task force on dissemination of MTE results and a separate budgetline & support for CMTs to document GTA results better.

Promoting local ownership and collaboration

The PtY country management teams continue to promote ownership of local communities, local youth and local organizations like CBOs, through several collaboration models. Each country has implemented its own unique governance and management structure. Local ownership begins with local people analyzing their situation and recognising their capacity to make change. Within the PtY program we believe that change must come from within communities and that change cannot be imported from the outside. Local youth-led, women-led and community-led partners are in the lead to create spaces for dialogue that allow the active participation of local people to identify challenges and develop their own solutions, which in the end paves the way for sustainability of our program interventions. In Ghana, for example, the program strengthens community and district Movements of Youth,

Partnership Broker Association: <https://partnershipbrokers.org/>

'Alliance thermometer' survey: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vqbX-jlkYZXd_-JeDh0x36jgfMswz7hY/edit

Local Literacy Volunteers and Model Gendered Families, who are leading the interventions at community level. In Uganda and Ethiopia, the program works with district-level Youth Advisory Committees and Project Advisory Committees, where youth representatives and other district stakeholders are engaged during planning, implementation and monitoring of activities. In Kenya and Senegal, Community Based Organizations are members of the national country Management Team, responsible for joint decision making on the program and the partnership. Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia and Uganda also mention the Small Grants Initiative, as a great example of local ownership of ideas and interventions for small community-based and youth-led groups.

External partnerships

As evident from the preceding chapters, Power to You(th) has actively collaborated with other MoFA-funded programs, both at the country and global levels, to prevent duplication of efforts and foster cross-learning among various initiatives. In the 7 countries of implementation, there is joint advocacy, implementation and learning with RHRN2, GenG, She Leads, Break Free and Make Way

partnerships. At the global level, there is joint global advocacy and exchange & learning on DWO, GTA and MIYP, especially with RHRN2 and GenG. Also, the PtY coordinator and the Amref NL PtY program lead are members of the ShareNet facilitated SRHR forum, which brings together representatives of all SRHR MoFA NL-funded programs. In the Netherlands, Power to You(th) partners work together with the SRHR lobby platform, which is a collaboration between advocacy experts from all the SRHR MoFA-funded programs.

In 2023, collaborations with the Embassies of the Kingdom of The Netherlands took place. In Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Ethiopia and Indonesia, PtY has strong connections with the embassy and meaningfully participated in strategic meetings organized by the embassy. In Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya, PtY also participated in assessments commissioned by EKN, for example the “Mapping & reflections on progresses of implementation by SCS Partnerships” assessment in Ethiopia and Third Party Monitoring and Data Quality Visits in Ghana and Kenya. In Kenya, PtY joined as a strategic partner in a dialogue forum on SRHR in Kenya facilitated by Trust for Indigenous



Culture and Health (TICAH) and the NL Embassy Youth Advisory Committee. One of the key conclusions from this meeting was that the political voice in Kenya is more dominant than scientific research. Thus, more emphasis on data driven advocacy is needed to combat the wrong information given by some leaders on SRHR. Next to this, the PtY team in Kenya participated in EKN organized Mov-ies that Matter International Human Rights Day, where they presented a short film “APONDI”, and the 8th Human Rights Defenders Awards ceremony, where PtY supported the 10-year old human rights advocate and defender Lisa Gem. Collaborating in a partnership entails harnessing synergies, exchanging knowledge, and leveraging each member’s strengths. It necessitates genuine comprehension and acceptance of diverse working methodologies. The valued contribution of MoFA NL to this partnership lies in its concerted effort to combat growing conservatism, uphold SRHR as a priority, and set a precedent for government-civil society collaboration. Moreover, the relationship between PtY and MoFA NL’s Health Advisor, Sterre van Campen, has been characterized by openness and flexibility, fostering constructive dialogue and mutual

learning. PtY is grateful for the fruitful collaboration experienced over the past year.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, 2023 was a good year, as the PTY program has made significant strides in empowering and amplifying the voices of young people across participating countries. Through our multifaceted approach, engaging youth, CSOs, societal actors and state actors, we have been able to improve AGYW capacities, strengthen CSO lobby & advocacy efforts, change social norms and influence laws & policies. This year we learned a lot from the MTE, both from the process of implementing the MTE, which was done through co-creation between several teams, as from the MTE results and recommendations. The MTE highlighted the program’s successes and areas for improvement, guiding our efforts to refine strategies and expand our reach. As we move forward into 2024, we are poised to build upon these foundations, leveraging the lessons learned and insights gained to drive even greater impact.

Annex 1: Progress on quantitative key indicators and qualitative measures that are linked to the Strengthening Civil Society basket indicators and thematic Result Framework indicators.

Link: <https://bit.ly/PTYkeyindicators>



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