

Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement in the Global Financing Facility: Analysis and Recommendations

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Global Civil Society
Coordinating
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“The moment young people are engaged, it will lead to their health and their participation in nation-building, and in building a stronger Africa. This is not just about health. Inclusion in national and global decision-making is not just as a matter of inclusion, but a matter of necessity.”

– Youth representative, Nigeria –

I. Introduction

Background

The Global Financing Facility (GFF) aims to help close the funding gap for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH) by serving as “a facility that harnesses the strengths and financial resources of a wide array of partners.”¹ With more than 40% of the world’s population under 25, and almost half the world’s youth population in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia,² including adolescent and youth needs, voices, and insights in the planning and implementation of global health and development programs, including the GFF, must be a top priority.

Although global mortality rates have declined since 1990 for young people ages 10-24, the rate of decline has been lower than for young children. The fastest growing risk factor for poor health in young people is unsafe sex, and complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death among adolescent girls in developing countries. Despite these disturbing health indicators, young people aged 10-24 have the poorest health care coverage of any age group.^{3 4}

In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an inclusive and holistic approach to meaningful adolescent and youth engagement (MAYE) is vital to ensuring that programs and policies, strategies and funding streams, and organizations and partnerships are successful, and ultimately fuel progress that benefits all. There is broad recognition that young people have a right to participate as equal partners in the strategy design, development, rollout, and evaluation of policies that impact their lives.^{5 6} For example, in January 2019, over 170 organizations signed on to the [Global Consensus Statement on Meaningful Adolescent & Youth Engagement](#), which defines key principles of MAYE as well as resources to support development partners in implementation.

To date, MAYE in the GFF has varied across countries. There are important lessons to be learned about how to strengthen MAYE throughout the GFF partnership to achieve the best health outcomes for women, children, and adolescents. In addition, with the GFF Investors Group’s recent time-bound Technical Advisory Group (TAG) formed to develop an action plan to support country-led efforts to improve

¹ Global Financing Facility in Support of Every Woman Every Child: Business Plan. June 2015.

<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/598311437686176148/1515268-GFF-Business-Plan.pdf>

² How is the World’s Youth Population Changing? World Bank, April 2017. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/chart-how-worlds-youth-population-changing>

³ Our Future: A Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing. *The Lancet*, May 2016.

<https://www.thelancet.com/commissions/adolescent-health-and-wellbeing>

⁴ Global patterns of mortality in young people: a systematic analysis of population health data. Patton GC, et al. *The Lancet*, 2009. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(09\)60741-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(09)60741-8/fulltext)

⁵ Aiming High: 10 Strategies for Meaningful Youth Engagement. Frontline AIDS, 2016.

<https://frontlineaids.org/resources/aiming-high-10-strategies-for-meaningful-youth-engagement/>

⁶ Global Consensus Statement Meaningful Adolescent & Youth Engagement. PMNCH, International Youth Alliance for Family Planning (IYAFFP), and Family Planning 2020 (FP2020), 2018. <https://www.who.int/pmnch/MYE-statement.pdf>.

adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR), it is an opportune moment to examine and improve MAYE in the GFF.

This paper seeks to: i) outline best practices in MAYE from existing literature and other global and national health initiatives; ii) highlight examples from several GFF countries to better understand existing challenges and opportunities in MAYE; and iii) make recommendations for enhancing MAYE in the GFF moving forward, at both global and country levels. While this paper focuses on key structures, processes, and stakeholders that are part of the GFF (i.e. the GFF Secretariat and Investors Group, country level multi-stakeholder country platforms, development of Investment Cases etc.) the lessons and recommendations are applicable across all aspects of the GFF partnership and framework, and for all stakeholders engaging in the GFF. Additionally, the GFF plays just one part in the broader health and development architecture, but there are many other initiatives and stakeholders that can also benefit from the lessons and recommendations outlined in this paper.

Analysis of Youth Engagement: Methodology

To better understand youth engagement in the GFF process to date, and to help inform recommendations and priorities for strengthening it, The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (PMNCH), on behalf of the Civil Society Coordinating Group (CSCG) for the GFF and the GFF youth constituency, commissioned Global Health Visions to undertake a brief review of existing literature and documentation on MAYE and to compile highlights of youth engagement in the GFF in four countries – Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Uganda. To inform this process, Global Health Visions completed interviews with 14 stakeholders across the four countries (including youth, civil society, and GFF liaison officers), and gathered inputs from the GFF Civil Society Steering Committee, to assess the level and type of MAYE in the GFF, as well as MAYE in CS coalitions, and the programmatic focus and outcomes of youth-led initiatives related to the GFF and RMNCAH. This analysis provides insight on successes and challenges in youth engagement, as well as lessons learned and recommendations for enhancing MAYE in the GFF. There are limitations to drawing conclusions from a limited set of interviewees and countries. Therefore, this analysis is not meant to be exhaustive. However, clear themes and lessons emerged from the interviews and desk research which can help to inform planning for enhanced youth engagement with the purpose of improved planning and implementation of Investment Cases moving forward.

The World Health Organization and PMNCH defines ‘adolescents’ as individuals in the age range of 10-19 and ‘youth’ as ages 15-24.⁷ ⁸ ⁹ PMNCH’s adolescent and youth constituency’s membership includes individuals up to age 30; and the criteria for the selection of the GFF youth alternate representative to the Investors Group includes the age range of 18-30. For the purposes of this paper, we will use the terms ‘youth’ or ‘young people’ to include all between the ages of 18-30.

II. Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement: We Know What Works

The lived realities of young people around the world make them effective leaders, key informants, and impactful changemakers. With fresh ideas and visionary approaches to move the needle forward, young

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Adolescent Health and Development. The World Health Organization, http://www.searo.who.int/entity/child_adolescent/topics/adolescent_health/en/

⁹ Youth Power, Meaningful Youth Engagement. Youth Power. <http://www.youthpower.org/youth-engagement-cop>.

people are a valuable resource in global health and development as experts in their own right.¹⁰ A multitude of organizations and initiatives have outlined effective approaches to meaningfully engaging youth, and it is important to understand the appropriate terminology, core tenets, and lessons of partner approaches when considering how to strengthen MAYE in the GFF.

MAYE recognizes that various power structures may limit the role and influence that young people have in decision-making processes.¹¹ In order to effectively engage and support young people in country-led GFF processes, MAYE should include:^{12 13 14 15 16}

- ✓ **Rights-based, safe, and transparent process:** Effective MAYE must be free from coercion, transparent, and grounded in child and youth rights. It must take place in a safe environment where young people are respected as equals and their views are valued. Safeguarding also includes taking into account youth mental health considerations and child protection measures, as appropriate.
- ✓ **Clear framework for engagement:** A clear framework for young people to voice their concerns should be outlined from the start and should include leadership roles. Youth should be regularly consulted on whether or not they feel that their opinions and ideas are being valued and effectively incorporated, if there are ways MAYE could be better implemented, and if they feel supported both financially and as a contributing member of the group.
- ✓ **Inclusive language and rooted in equality and diversity:** Inclusive language should be utilized in all proceedings. The core principles of gender equality – ensuring that girls and women have equal representation – should be central to the MAYE structure. MAYE should also be respectful of all young people’s varying backgrounds and identities.
- ✓ **Skill building and growth opportunities:** It is also important to continually build the skills of young people through mentorship support and learning opportunities. This process helps to strengthen and nurture young people’s abilities to make effective decisions as experts and creates a reciprocal environment where they feel supported and valued.

Even with many tenets of MAYE being widely shared, and a push for the health and development sectors to embrace the leadership capabilities of young people, many barriers still exist. From cultural norms to misguided information and tokenistic approaches, many young people still feel that their voices are not given equal weight and that safe spaces that foster learning and engagement are few and far between.¹⁷ Solely having a youth program, or a young person holding a seat within a partnership, does not mean MAYE is taking place. A closer examination into the power structures at play, the level of trust to let adolescents and youth lead and make decisions, and the commitment to transparency are all key indicators that will help to shed light on how the entity or organization is engaging young people.¹⁸

¹⁰ “Youth Engagement in Development: Effective Approaches and Action-Oriented Recommendations for the Field.” *USAID*, Jan. 2014, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JP6S.pdf?utm_source=youth.gov&utm_medium=federal-links&utm_campaign=reports-and-resources

¹¹ PMNCH, IYAFF, FP2020, 2018.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Frontline AIDS, 2016.

¹⁴ Strategy for Youth Engagement in Internal Decision Making. Plan International, 2013. <https://plan-international.org/publications/plan%E2%80%99s-strategy-youth-engagement-internal-decision-making>

¹⁵ Engage Youth: A Discussion Paper on Meaningful Youth Engagement. Women Deliver, 2016. womensdeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Meaningful_Youth_Engagement_Discussion-Paper.pdf.

¹⁶ Adolescent and Youth Engagement Strategic Framework. UNICEF, 2017. <http://www.unicefinemergencies.com/downloads/eresource/docs/Adolescents/63792683.pdf>.

¹⁷ Women Deliver, 2016.

¹⁸ Ensuring Youth Participation in Sexual and Reproductive Health Policies and Programs: What We Know. The International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC), iwhc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/youth-participation.pdf.

One of the major concerns around MAYE is the lack of high-quality evidence on its impact.^{19 20} While circumstantial evidence supports the idea that MAYE bolsters effectiveness and produces higher quality programming, there is a need for more rigorous studies on both the frameworks of implementation and the impact it plays on enhancing outcomes.^{21 22} Even with the need for more research, as key beneficiaries of many global health programs, young people have a right to be included in the planning, implementation and monitoring of those programs.²³ Meaningful engagement of young people also allows for increased accountability and sustainability of initiatives.²⁴ With the potential to enhance MAYE throughout the GFF mechanism, the opportunity to evaluate its impacts would offer valuable insights to the global community.

"Youth should not be passive beneficiaries – they need to be active! Let them lead to bring together CSOs and other stakeholders to share their needs. Let's make them independent so we can see how we can tap into their potential."
Civil Society Representative,
Sierra Leone

III. Adolescent and Youth Engagement in the GFF To-Date

Global Level

As the GFF ASRHR TAG draft paper points out, one of the eight outcome goals of the GFF is reducing the fertility rate for adolescents (15-19 years of age), and among the 11 countries with final Investment Cases, all have identified at least one adolescent-specific indicator. However, few Investment Cases respond to the unique needs of adolescents, such as youth-friendly services, nor do they include multi-sector investments to address social and gender determinants of adolescent health across education, water and sanitation, and social protection, for example.^{25 26}

However, while ASRHR has surfaced as a growing priority for the GFF, youth engagement has not been systematic. In late 2017, youth leaders participating in an FP2020 led event ahead of the GFF Investors Group meeting joined the annual GFF civil society workshop and called for more youth engagement in the GFF process. Subsequently, the then civil society Investors Group representatives earmarked one of the alternate 'seats' for civil society on the GFF Investors Group to a youth representative. A youth representative was selected by PMNCH's adolescent and youth (AY) constituency to fill the role.

In April 2018, the youth alternate representative presented a draft AY Addendum to the [GFF Civil Society Engagement Strategy](#) (CSES) to the Investors Group, which was broadly supported. The CSES outlines strategies for enhancing engagement, such as transparent, inclusive, and accountable representation of CSOs, including youth, in both global and national platforms guiding the GFF process. This guidance is also

¹⁹ USAID, Jan. 2014

²⁰ IWHC.

²¹ USAID, Jan. 2014.

²² What's the Evidence? Youth Engagement and the Sustainable Development Goals. Plan International, 14 Jan. 2019, plan-international.org/publications/youth-engagement-and-sdgs.

²³ USAID, Jan. 2014.

²⁴ PMNCH, IYAFP, FP2020, 2018.

²⁵ GFF Monitoring Strategy, https://www.globalfinancingfacility.org/sites/gff_new/files/documents/GFF-Results-Monitoring-Framework.pdf

²⁶ Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: The GFF's Support to Accelerate Action. Draft for discussion at the 8th Investors Group Meeting, April, 2019.

outlined in the [Guidance Note: Inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Country Platforms in Support of Every Woman Every Child](#). The AY Addendum, however, more specifically outlines the ways in which youth and youth-led organizations can be adequately represented and meaningfully engaged in global and country-level processes to contribute to meeting GFF and country-specific goals. In November 2018, a constituency of nine youth representatives from GFF countries attended the annual GFF civil society workshop in Oslo, Norway. The youth representatives played an active role as presenters, facilitators, and participants, and they utilized the time to align around key priorities for enhancing youth engagement in the GFF and meeting with key stakeholders on the GFF Investors Group and Secretariat to begin discussing those priorities. A youth speaker also participated in the GFF's high-level replenishment event in Oslo.

Country Level

Youth engagement varies significantly across GFF countries, based on a variety of factors. This includes where each country is in the GFF process, existing mechanisms for civil society and youth engagement in government-led processes, youth engagement in CSO coalitions or multi-stakeholder working groups, the existence of a coalition(s) or network(s) of youth-led organizations and the capacity of that network, funding for youth engagement, and cultural acceptance of youth engagement in policy and program planning. Most GFF countries do not have official youth representation on the government-led multi-stakeholder country platform; of note, Malawi does have a youth representative on their country platform, though stakeholders from Malawi were not interviewed for this paper. Annex 1 highlights four country examples (Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Uganda) of how youth are being engaged in GFF processes at the national level, and how they are coordinating amongst themselves and with civil society. A summary of the current challenges, lessons, and recommendations for improving MAYE in the GFF across countries can be found in section IV.

IV. Lessons and Recommendations

The Value of Youth Engagement

Young people have important contributions to make to the GFF. These contributions can make the GFF more sustainable, innovative, and accountable, and ensure that it is reaching one of the most critical beneficiaries with services and supplies that meet their needs. Stakeholders who were interviewed and provided inputs for this paper emphasized that not only do young people deserve to be at the table to participate in planning, implementation, and monitoring, but they also provide **unique perspectives** about the challenges and issues that youth and adolescents face, which are often misunderstood. They have **connections to communities at the grassroots level** which can inform policies and programming to make them stronger, and also ensure that information and services reaches those most in need. Many young people are technical experts, advocates, and community leaders, irrespective of their age, and should be valued as such.

Stakeholders also pointed out the importance of engaging young people for the **sustainability of the GFF**. If the younger generation is engaged in the process from the beginning, they will feel invested in the success of the GFF and it will encourage more young people to share the successes of the GFF and mobilize resources. The ripple effects have the potential to last for years, as the engagement process will contribute to building their capacity to effectively support policy processes, contributing to the long-term success of the GFF and advancing RMNCAH in their countries.

"It can lead to sustainability of the GFF – I believe that. You build our capacity now on GFF, this will be a benefit for the whole GFF."
Youth Representative,
Sierra Leone

Young people also have an important role to play in **accountability**, as beneficiaries of the mechanism and advocates with strong community connections. One of the key recommendations of the 2017 Independent Accountability Panel for Every Woman Every Child is to harness the power of young people to hold [Global Strategy](#) stakeholders to account at global, regional, and national levels.²⁷ While data and evidence on AYSRHR interventions and financing are limited,²⁸ GFF stakeholders noted that youth can work closely with communities to monitor the implementation of services that are youth-friendly and responsive to their needs, including through tech innovations. Youth are also motivated to track progress and keep partners accountable.

Challenges with MAYE in the GFF

Common challenges in MAYE were raised by stakeholders across GFF countries. These challenges, outlined below, represent important learning opportunities for identifying bottlenecks and areas for improvement that will ultimately contribute to a stronger GFF with better outcomes.

- **Representation and value-add:** In each of the GFF countries profiled for this paper, there is no official youth seat on the multi-stakeholder country platform. This significantly limits the ability of young people to drive decision-making, support implementation, and participate in monitoring to ensure that the GFF adequately addresses the health needs of adolescents and young people. While youth are engaged in the CSO coalitions and working groups associated with the GFF, this may dilute their voices and limit their direct contributions. Stakeholders indicated that many government representatives don't fully understand the value of engaging young people in policy processes.
- **Resources to support effective youth engagement, coordination, and feedback loops:** Resources to support meaningful youth engagement, coordination, advocacy, and accountability are limited. Though a few strong youth leaders, organizations, and coalitions exist, and a number of young people have been engaged with CSOs in the GFF, much more support is needed to allow youth representatives to share information and engage a broader constituency of youth. Stakeholders report that youth-led organizations and coalitions in GFF countries do not have sufficient financial resources to support robust communication channels, meeting space and travel support for advocacy and action planning that engages sub-national youth, and staff time to take forward implementation activities that will support Investment Cases and country goals.
- **CSO support for youth engagement:** Across all of the countries interviewed, youth stakeholders indicated that while civil society has played a critical role in supporting them, they still feel they have had to continue pushing for their voices to be heard among CSOs. Youth representatives expressed that civil society has also had to fight for their engagement in the GFF, therefore they should be supporting youth "rather than making them go through the same fight." At the same time, civil society representatives indicated that they are trying hard to engage young people, but they may not always know the right focal person to engage from youth-led organizations. There may also be a lack of

"We can't have 10 youth representatives on a given platform. We need to develop the culture of feedback and gathering input."

Civil Society
Representative, Nigeria

²⁷ Transformative Accountability for Adolescents. Independent Accountability Panel, 2017. <http://iapreport.org/2017/>

²⁸ Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: The GFF's Support to Accelerate Action. Draft for discussion at the 8th Investors Group Meeting, April, 2019.

consistency in who is attending meetings from one particular youth organization or network, and variable levels of preparation and feedback loops between alternating representatives, leading sometimes to confusion and a lack of continuity. Stakeholders also indicated that competition among CSOs, and among youth-led organizations, for funding and recognition is real, which sometimes leads to poor communication and information sharing among CSOs and among youth; although this kind of competition is understandable given the tight funding landscape, ultimately it does not benefit anyone.

"In Africa, we still believe that elders must be the only leaders. We are not seen as being intelligent and resourceful in decision-making."
 Youth Representative,
 Nigeria

□ ***Cultural norms equate age with expertise:*** Stakeholders in several countries indicated that there are long-standing social and cultural norms that value elders. Consequently, young people are not inherently valued for their expertise or opinions, particularly in high level decision-making related to health and development policies and financial planning.

Recommendations

Building on what we know works in MAYE from existing literature, stakeholder interviews, inputs from the GFF civil society Steering Committee, and priorities outlined by the GFF youth constituency, the following recommendations highlight key areas of focus that GFF stakeholders at global and country levels can implement to ensure that young people can effectively contribute to improved GFF outcomes.

GLOBAL / REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Global youth representation

To ensure that the interests of adolescents and youth are effectively represented in key GFF strategies, approaches, and investments, youth need to have a dedicated youth seat and alternate on the Investors Group, distinct from civil society, and opportunities to participate in relevant global meetings. Global-level representation also sets an important example for how young people are valued as equal contributors in the GFF partnership. Young people should select their own representatives to participate in global platforms and forums with rotation and diversity being important selection factors to avoid having the same youth representatives always participating in global processes. Similarly, youth should be meaningfully represented and engaged in all global civil society structures related to the GFF, including CSCG Working Groups.

"In PMNCH, our constituency has the same weight as other constituencies – this gives us an even voice; we have a balanced seat at the table."
 Youth representative,
 Uganda

2. AY Addendum to the Civil Society Engagement Strategy and Action Plan

An important part of aligning the diverse stakeholders engaged in the GFF across global and country levels is the endorsement of a common strategic approach by the leadership of the GFF. While the CSES outlines principles and approaches for effectively engaging CSOs in the GFF, inclusive of youth-led organizations and coalitions, the AY Addendum, up for endorsement at the April 2019 Investors Group, outlines more specific approaches for ensuring that the voices of young people can be effectively leveraged in support of common goals. The AY Addendum will also need to be supported by a resourced action plan which maps out concrete activities for different partners; a draft of this action plan is being developed by the GFF youth alternate representative to the GFF Investors Group, supported by a number of youth engaged in the GFF in countries and the CS Steering Committee.

3. Resources for consultation, coordination, and action

Meaningful and effective youth engagement requires resources so that youth participants in global and country platforms can engage with and fully leverage the inputs of a diverse and far-reaching youth constituency. These resources include financial and technical support, as well as time and space for regular meetings with the GFF youth constituency to define and assess youth GFF engagement, establish modes of communication to ensure adequate representation, and to support the implementation of coordinated action in support of GFF Investment Cases. Without resources and support for these types of consultation and feedback mechanisms, youth engagement is tokenistic, rather than meaningful, and the GFF will not benefit from the diverse voices that young people bring.

4. Cross-country learning, capacity-building, and empowerment

Young people engaging in the GFF have critical expertise, connections with communities, and innovative ideas to contribute to enhancing results. However, they also seek opportunities for learning from colleagues in other countries and capacity-building, particularly in the areas of advocacy, civic engagement, accountability, and budget tracking. Global and regional partners have an important role to play in supporting and facilitating these goals through training, webinars, blogs, and communication platforms for coordination and information-sharing. Building their capacity will also contribute to their empowerment as leaders, both now and in the future.

COUNTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Country platform youth representation

As with global representation, youth should have a dedicated seat(s) on the country platform that guides decision-making about the GFF, in alignment with the recently launched [GFF Country Implementation Guidelines](#). While representation alone does not constitute meaningful engagement, it is an important first step in giving young people the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise, and it has the potential to shift perceptions around the value of youth voices in policy processes for the GFF and beyond. Youth representative(s) should be selected by their own constituency through a transparent process, and they must be given the capacity to engage meaningfully. Youth representatives should be involved in clearly defining their roles and the ways in which young people can support GFF implementation.

2. Mapping of youth-led organizations and coalitions, and dedicated youth structures

Each country context will dictate the appropriate structures for supporting MAYE in the GFF beyond country platform representation; however, a rapid mapping of existing youth-led organizations and coalitions represents an important starting point for understanding the landscape of young people who can be tapped to support and engage in the GFF process, and the existing structures that can be built on to support coordination. Youth-led coalitions may also benefit from their own working groups, meeting spaces, and coordination structures, though they should continue to work closely with civil society to avoid duplication. Innovative and low-cost solutions such as WhatsApp and Google Groups should be leveraged to support communication and consultation.

3. Strategy and/or action plan for GFF Engagement

Stakeholders in GFF countries (e.g. youth together with government, civil society, GFF Liaison Officers etc.) must work together to outline and support clear and specific mechanisms for youth engagement and roles for young people in supporting the GFF. This may include a country-specific GFF AY engagement strategy and/or action plan that outlines how and when young people can be involved in the GFF. Strategies and action plans should be developed through a consultative process with a wide range of youth on the GFF, with particular focus on those at the sub-national level; specific activities and financial resources should be identified for youth to support the implementation and monitoring of the GFF Investment Case, for example through resource mobilization, community engagement, demand generation, or social accountability.

4. Alignment and coordination with civil society

Continuing to cultivate a culture of information sharing and coordination among CSOs and youth is critical to the GFF partnership, and to ensuring CSOs and youth can amplify the many common goals and priorities. Civil society should continue supporting MAYE in CSO coalition structures around the GFF, while ensuring that their voices are meaningfully and adequately represented. Several stakeholders also noted that mentoring programs between CSOs and youth-led organizations may offer important opportunities for engagement and capacity building.

"While they are integrated within the CS coalition, their voice may be drowned. They would benefit from having a separate space, structure, workplan, representation."
GFF representative,
Senegal

V. Conclusion and Next Steps

In the coming months, continued progress is expected to improve youth engagement in the GFF. Though there have been challenges to date, the global community is poised to take advantage of this opportune time to leverage the partnership model of the GFF to bring young people into the policy dialogues that will shape their health and their future.

This month (April 2019), the AY Addendum to the CSES will be presented for official endorsement at the GFF Investors Group meeting. In addition, she and the CSO Investors Group representatives will be working closely with the GFF Secretariat this year on the request to have an official seat(s) for youth on the Investors Group. A group of young people engaged in the GFF, in alignment with the CSCG and PMNCH's AY constituency, has also worked to develop a GFF AY Engagement Action Plan to guide specific actions and activities for taking forward the AY Addendum and the recommendations in this paper. These steps and plans for the future, created by young people who are currently involved in the GFF, showcase their leadership and commitment to MAYE as a way to fuel progress within the GFF. It is also important to recognize the ripple effects and enhanced progress that can be achieved if more young people are effectively and meaningfully engaged in the GFF mechanism.

While the GFF looks to expand, and with impressive strides having been made to date, now is the time to look at approaches that allow for even more sustainable and impactful outcomes. Through the meaningful engagement of young people, the GFF will see valuable contributions to the knowledge and expertise that feed into sustainable future planning, greater accountability, and enhanced support for, and buy-in from, young people who will serve to spur progress at both global and country levels. But it is not just about the benefits to the GFF. Young people have a right to be involved in the decisions that will impact their lives and the lives of generations to come.

Annex 1: Country Highlights

NIGERIA

- **Youth engagement in the GFF process:** Youth engagement in the GFF in Nigeria is fairly nascent. Youth do not occupy an official seat on the government-led multi-stakeholder country platform which oversees the GFF process and the implementation of Nigeria’s Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF); however, advocacy efforts are underway to establish youth representation. After consistent advocacy efforts with government, civil society now has two seats on the country platform. Historically, youth engagement in policy planning has been limited and not widely accepted in Nigeria, with a general lack of understanding of the value of youth engagement. However, stakeholders indicate that this may be slowly shifting.
- **Youth engagement in the CSO platform:** Starting in 2018, civil society made an important first step in strengthening youth engagement by including a youth representative on the CSOs GFF working group – a committee of the Health Sector Reform Coalition (HSRC), hosted by HERFON; other young people may attend working group meetings as observers. CSOs have also supported youth-led organizations to participate in national accountability processes, such as the review of the National RMNCAH-N (GFF) Investment Case, and the development of the working group’s 2019 workplan focused on monitoring GFF and BHCPF funds. However, stakeholders suggest that some CSOs may still not fully recognize the value of youth engagement or see it as a priority. Challenges persist with coordination among youth-led organizations and coalitions participating in CSO working groups and processes, in part due to funding constraints.
- **Youth capacity and structures for coordination and advocacy:** Resources to support youth coordination, advocacy, accountability, and capacity building are limited, which restricts the ability to fully leverage the inputs of a diverse and far-reaching youth constituency beyond the national level. However, there are several strong and active youth-led organizations and coalitions in Nigeria engaging RMNCAH and GFF-related activities. Education as a Vaccine, for example, serves as the youth representative on the GFF CSOs working group. They have developed a strategy to guide their work on the GFF (with support from PMNCH), including analyses of the BHCPF operation manual, state-level implementation plans, and the National Health Strategic Development Plan II to assess gaps related to adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (AYSRHR). Nigeria Youth Champions for Universal Health Coverage (NYC4UHC) is a coalition of youth representatives from six states which is advocating for youth representation in health-related decision-making at national and state levels and participating in GFF accountability processes.

“The members think that because they were all youths at one point themselves, that they know about the youth issues and problems; but we are starting to see a paradigm shift.”
Civil Society Representative, Nigeria

SENEGAL

- **Youth engagement in the GFF process:** While engagement began late, youth are now engaged in many aspects of the GFF process in Senegal. However, they do not occupy an official seat on the multi-stakeholder country platform. Youth were not involved in the development of the GFF Investment Case, for example, but they were invited to participate in its validation and launch. There are youth representatives that are part of the CSO coalition working on the GFF, and on the multi-stakeholder Commission for Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health – both of which are part of the GFF platform. However, young people do not have direct access to decision-making processes for the GFF.
- **Youth engagement in the CSO platform:** Youth-led organizations are an integral and important part of the CSO coalition working on the GFF. They have a dedicated thematic working group on ASRHR. However, stakeholders report that either there are not enough youth engaged in the CSO platform, or that youth are invited to engage but they do not because of limited time, capacity, or a clear workplan with ownership of their role and priorities.
- **Youth capacity and structures for coordination and advocacy:** Following the participation of a young woman representative from Senegal in the GFF Civil Society Workshop in November 2018 in Oslo, she held two follow-on meetings with key youth networks in Senegal – Right Here Right Now and the Youth Roundtable on AYSRH – to share and gather information and inputs about the GFF. The group now has a WhatsApp group and hopes to develop a GFF-related workplan to guide their activities and ongoing coordination, but they have been limited by resources to do this.

"Youth organizations are part of the CS coalition, but the use of the CS coalition is sub-optimal by young people – not because there are not enough youth in the platform but rather because youth are drowned among other priorities."

Youth Representative,
Senegal

SIERRA LEONE

- **Youth engagement in the GFF process:** Sierra Leone is in the process of strengthening its country platform to be more inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders, including CSOs and youth, other ministries within government, and academia, among others. To date, neither civil society nor youth have held an official seat on the platform. While there has been a historical lack of engagement of youth in policy processes in Sierra Leone, stakeholder interviewed suggest that this is changing because of the GFF, with interest from the Ministry of Health to better understand how youth are contributing to advancing RMNCAH in the country and what roles they can play in supporting the GFF.
- **Youth engagement in the CSO platform:** Health Alert has been leading much of the CSO engagement and support of young people's engagement in the GFF process. Approximately 20 youth organizations participated in the first training and consultation with CSOs on the GFF in 2017. Furthermore, Health Alert engaged youth-led organizations in district-level training and sensitization on AYSRH, in support of the GFF Investment Case priorities (supported through PMNCH's catalytic GFF grants in 2018). CSOs and youth-led organizations have also worked side by side on health budget advocacy. However, some stakeholders indicate that while CSOs are including young people in their activities and

"We discuss issues that affect youth in the GFF, so we should open a place in the discussion so we have their buy-in and we understand the issues and the barriers. The GFF is creating a platform for this recognition."

GFF Representative,
Sierra Leone

supporting them with meeting and office space, youth need their own spaces and funding so that their voices can be heard independently.

- **Youth capacity and structures for coordination and advocacy:** Youth-led organizations like Action for Youth and Children's Network and Youth and Adolescent Reproductive Health and Nutrition Network are coalitions of motivated and committed young people advocating at the community, district, and national level for youth-friendly services, comprehensive sex education, and other youth priorities that are critical to address Sierra Leone's health challenges and advance RMNCAH. They are well-positioned to play an important role in advocacy, implementation, and accountability in support of the GFF.

UGANDA

- **Youth engagement in the GFF process:** The engagement of youth in Uganda's national multi-stakeholder country platform is not systematic; they have participated in some meetings about the GFF, but youth don't have an official seat on the platform. Stakeholders report that there may not be a clear Terms of Reference guiding who is involved in the country platform and defining the roles of different stakeholders. Youth are engaged in the National Working Group on Youth and Adolescents within the Ministry of Health and indicate that this feels like a more welcoming space for their ideas and inputs.

"I have a vision that all youth clearly understand the GFF and are able to act and advocate as informed youth, not just youth participation as tokens."

Youth representative,
Uganda

- **Youth engagement in the CSO platform:** Young people have a representative that sits on the Steering Committee of the RMNCAH coalition, led by World Vision – the CSO coalition leading civil society engagement in the GFF. A civil society engagement strategy was developed by the coalition and endorsed by the government in 2018. Youth representatives were involved in the development of the strategy; however, some stakeholders feel that young people were not adequately consulted, while others note that many were invited to participate.
- **Youth capacity and structures for coordination and advocacy:** There are a number of coalitions of youth-led organizations, with varying degrees of capacity, leadership, and funding to support their work. Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum (UYAHF), and AFRIYAN are two robust networks that have been leading much of the youth engagement in the GFF, but many alliances and coalitions are project-based, leading to inefficiencies and a lack of continuity in youth coordination in Uganda. UYAHF recently held a GFF youth training and consultation in January 2019 which was also attended by representatives from civil society and government. The consultation provided important, basic information about the GFF which many youth-led organizations did not have; there was an appetite to develop a youth action plan on the GFF and RMNCAH, but resource constraints have limited the follow up.