

# Experiencing Meaningful Youth Participation in Practice

Result from a survey on Meaningful Youth Participation in RHRN

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RIGHT HERE  
RIGHT NOW

# Introduction

In April & May 2017, dance4life and CHOICE sent out a survey to the members of the Right Here Right Now! platforms worldwide. Aim of the survey was to get a better insight in the day-to-day realities of platform members on Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) and Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAP).

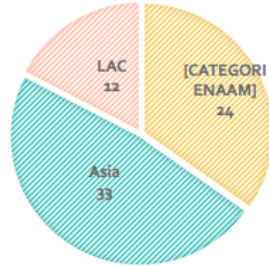
Experiences and best practices, barriers and obstacles, ideas for improvement of MYP in general and within Right Here Right Now! are amongst the topics participants reflected upon.

In total **69** respondents from youth- and adult led organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean participated. On the next page you can find some more details on these 69 respondents.



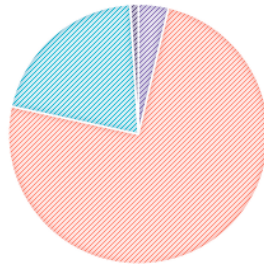
## WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Africa Asia Latin America & the Caribbean



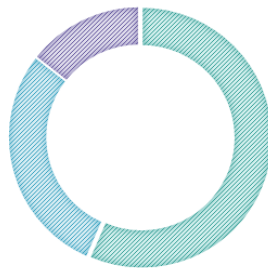
## WHAT AGE?

10 - 19 20 - 29 30 < None



## WHERE DO THEY WORK?

Youth Led Adult Led Both



# Views on MYP and YAP: Equality, Power & Mentorship

“What does Inclusive Meaningful Youth Participation mean to you?”

**This is what most people say:**

- A diverse group of young people should be included: many people mention rural youth, young people with disabilities, displaced and migrant young people, LGBTI youth, young girls and women
- The importance of involving young people in the decision making process in issues that affect them.
- The importance of involving young people in design and implementation of programs

Interesting point here is that respondents from youth-led organizations mention considerably more often the concept of “voice”, and “making their voice heard” than respondents from adult-led organizations.

**To the question “What does a Youth-Adult Partnership (YAP) mean to you?”, answers show the following elements as being considered important in a YAP:**

- Equality. Many respondents indicate that for a real YAP it is important that youth and adults are truly equal, and valued equally.
- Power. Many respondents talk about the concept of ‘power’, and how in a YAP it is important to minimize power differences.
- Mentoring. Many respondents talk about the importance of ‘mentoring’, young people learning from the experiences of adults.



**“Youth-Adult partnership refers to situations in which young people and adults come together in a certain project or initiative. In such a setting, power differentials on grounds of age are minimized for meaningful and effective partnership” (adult respondent, Pakistan).**

**“Inclusive MYP means ensuring the participation and voice of diverse youth is included in the work that we do and that we target marginalized groups of young people ensuring they benefit from training/services we offer without discrimination. Working to build the capacities of all youth in the work we do and in the strategies we employ.”  
(young respondent, Kenya)**

## **Barriers and obstacles: Lack of trust, capacities and know-how**

Bringing MYP in practice is not easy. Respondents mention a number of barriers, challenging and hampering factors. The most important ones being mentioned by several respondents to open and closed questions are:

- Negative attitudes & lack of awareness amongst colleagues of the positive effects of youth participation.
- Lack of trust in (the capacities of) young people
- Lack of capacities of young people, and lack of capacity building support.
- Lack of practical know-how on how to make MYP attractive and how to implement MYP.

In addition to this, particularly young people below 30 and respondents from youth-led organizations, provide examples of other concrete & practical hampering factors, like misunderstanding by young people of job descriptions, resources for MYP not prioritized and young people being located in a remote area which makes information flows difficult.



**“We were experiencing challenges with youth attending meetings late. This was resolved by arranging transport for those who live far away” (adult respondent, The Caribbean).**

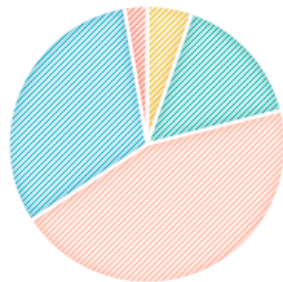
**High monetary expectations; Though the boundaries are set between governance and implementation, young people often demanded for payment. this was overcome through multiple orientation on voluntarism which is the principle virtue for the institution” (adult respondent, Uganda).**

**“Big organizations led by adult treat us as a volunteer and a beneficiary rather than as an expert and they do not trust us” (young respondent, Nepal).**

# Meaningful Youth Participation in the organization: Experience, Why and How.

## EXPERIENCE WITH MYP

- ✦ MYP is new to me and I would like to know more
- ✦ I have some knowledge on MYP but I'm unsure as to how to put it in practice
- ✦ I'm already integrating MYP in some activities/elements of my organization, but I'm struggling with further institutionalizing it
- ✦ MYP is fully mainstreamed in my advocacy and public support generation activities
- ✦ Other



Main take away from above graph: Most organisations are integrating MYP in their activities and elements of their organization, however quite a few are struggling with further institutionalizing it<sup>1</sup>.

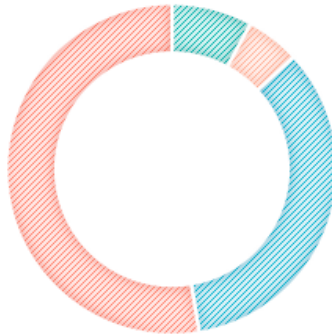
<sup>1</sup> If we compare youth-led and adult-led organizations, and the results from Africa, Asia and Latin-America and the Caribbean, the percentages are similar everywhere.





## WHY DO YOU INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE?

- ✦ It is expected from me
- ✦ It provides more legitimacy to my activities
- ✦ It empowers and capacitates the young people involved
- ✦ It is beneficial for the program results
- ✦ It is young peoples right
- ✦ I don't involve young people yet

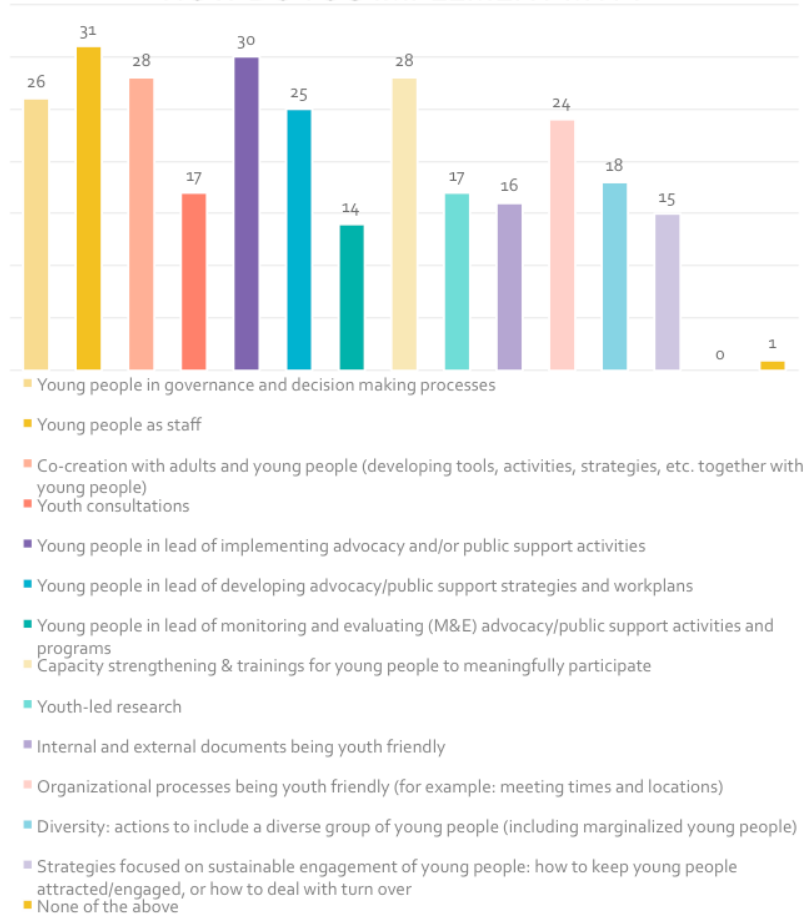


The MAIN reason for platform members to involve young people in advocacy & public support programs/activities is that it empowers and capacitates the young people involved, but another important reason is that it's a young person's right<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> If we compare youth-led and adult-led organizations, and the results from Africa, Asia and Latin-America and the Caribbean, the percentages are similar everywhere



## HOW DO YOU IMPLEMENT MYP?



Above shows that platform members have different and varied mechanisms for young people to be meaningful involved in the organization with young people as staff, young people in lead of implementing advocacy/public support activities, co-creation with young people and young people in governance/decision making in the top 3.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Comparing youth-led and adult-led organizations, and the results from Africa, Asia and Latin-America and the Caribbean, percentages are more or less similar.



## Best practices: some examples

Respondents gave beautiful examples of best practices regarding MYP and YAP in their organizations.

These focused on:

- The inclusion of young people in organizational governance structures, like the board. Some specifically mention the development of organizational policies and structures that enhanced MYP.
- Youth participation and youth-adult partnerships in the development & implementation of advocacy campaigns. Also many examples are given of young people as advocates reaching out to policy makers & other stakeholders.
- Cooperation between young people and adults in development and conduction of research. Some respondents specifically mention 'youth-led' research.
- Inclusion of diverse types of young people, like LGBT youth, rural youth and young people living with HIV.
- Young people as staff members. Respondents explain how they, through cooperation between young staff and adult staff in the organization, try to actively enhance personal leadership of young people: Young people getting the floor and space to voice and develop their own ideas.



**“Youth were given the responsibility to organize a campaign for gender based violence. The entire preparation, implementation and evaluation was undertaken by all youth from all diversities (...) they did design of campaign materials which were very effective, public sensitization and a media campaign” (adult respondent, The Caribbean).**

**“I consider MYP in RHRN pretty much meaningful. I have involved in proposal writing and revision process, as well as budget writing and revision process. As youth, I also have opportunities to give suggestions.” (young respondent, Indonesia).**

# Meaningful Youth Participation in Right Here Right Now!

## Has youth participation within Right Here Right Now! been meaningful?

→ The majority of respondents say: YES, it has been meaningful!

What is considered meaningful by respondents:

- The country planning workshop and other workshops included youth of various organizations with meaningful input and participation.
- The national platforms contain both adult-led and youth-led organizations.
- Youth-led organizations get the possibility to strengthen their capacity within the platform
- The host organization is youth-led and many of the national coordinators and other RHRN staff are young
- Young people have been involved meaningful in the proposal development phase.



## Challenges and improvements

A number of people also indicate challenges. In Asia, Africa and The Caribbean (English + French), 4 out of 40 respondents indicate that youth participation in RHRN was not completely meaningful, while this is 3 out of 6 for the Latin-America (Spanish) survey.

The following 5 factors are mentioned by all respondents as points of improvement:

1. More youth participation in Steering Committees.
2. The need to develop MYP policies, guidelines and monitoring mechanisms.
3. Building capacity of youth in the platform.
4. More need for value clarification.
5. Increase diversity of youth.



**“RHRN is making an effort to implement MYP. But in the platform, the adults are experienced and most of the youths are beginners who need to be trained. Because of this, most of the youths haven't been able to make influence.” (young respondent, Nepal).**

## **What do platform members want to learn more about?**





**“How to include young people more meaningful in governance and decision making processes?”**

**“How to work with vulnerable and at-risk youth and ensure their participation?”**

**“Sustainable engagement of youth, strategies to keep youth motivated and engaged”**

**“Youth-led research and participation of youth in research programs”**

**“How to deal with power dynamics”**

**“How to monitor and evaluate MYP and YAP”**

**“How to practice MYP and YAP in preparation and implementation of advocacy projects and activities?”**

## Conclusion

This survey provides many insights in how Meaningful Youth Participation and Youth-Adult Partnerships are seen and experienced by the respondents, both in their own organization and in the Right Here Right Now! platforms. Looking at all the answers, it can especially be concluded that elements of youth participation and Youth-Adult Partnerships are happening at all levels and are considered important by the majority of the respondents. There are beautiful examples of best practices, both at organizational level and at RHRN platform level, and the majority of respondents indicate that they consider MYP in RHRN meaningful.

However, bringing MYP in practice is not easy. The majority of respondents indicate that 'they have already integrated MYP in some activities/elements of their organization, but are struggling to further institutionalize it'. Serious barriers and challenges exist, like negative attitudes & lack of awareness of the positive effects of youth participation, lack of trust in (the capacities of) young people, lack of capacities of young people and lack of practical know-how on how to make MYP attractive and implement MYP and YAPs. One topic that comes back many times in respondent's answers is the importance of trust between adults and young people and between youth-led and adult-led organizations, which is currently not always there.

So: there is work to do! And the good news is: respondents are motivated and have many good ideas on how to improve MYP and YAPs in their organizations and the RHRN platforms. When looking at the RHRN platforms, respondents present concrete ideas on how MYP can be improved, through the development of policies, guidelines and monitoring mechanisms, increased youth participation in Steering Committees, building capacity of youth in the platform, doing more value clarification exercises and increasing the diversity of youth in the platform. Respondents indicate that they want to learn more, and great input is provided for trainings and workshops on MYP.

dance4life and CHOICE want to thank everybody that filled the survey. We will use the learning from this survey to shape tools, manuals and training sessions on MYP and YAP, and we are looking forward to do this together with you.

For questions, please contact Susan van Esch ([susan@dance4life.com](mailto:susan@dance4life.com)) or Amber van Muijden ([amber@choiceforyouth.org](mailto:amber@choiceforyouth.org)).



**“Youth-adult partnership is one of the most challenging but rewarding terms in current world now a days. Youth-adult partnerships occur when: Young people are seen as assets to their communities as much as adults, Adults create ongoing opportunities for young people to share leadership with them in community settings, youth contribute what they uniquely bring to the group and to the community, youth and adults engage as equals in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs that shape the development of youth, as well as their communities” (youth respondent, Bangladesh).**

**“young people boost and coordinate the complete component of communication in our organization” (adult participant, Honduras).**

**“If we would receive a training on MYP, it should target the older members so that they could have a better understanding of MYP. It should focus on culture and how older persons see youth and highlight the creativity, diversity and competence of youth” (young person, The Caribbean).**

**“Negative attitudes by some stakeholders towards youth led advocacy can be a challenge. Some stakeholders still thought that young people are not aware of what takes place in their communities thus being less empowered to advocate for SRHR issues” (adult respondent, Uganda).**





We are a global advocacy partnership in pursuit of the fulfilment of young people's SRHR – free of stigma, discrimination and violence. In our partner countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, and at international level, we strengthen the capacity of young people and civil society organisations for joint SRHR advocacy. Ultimately, we want to reinforce institutional accountability, and realise the adoption, budget allocation and implementation of SRHR-progressive and inclusive policies.

