

# MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

FOR  
YOUTH &  
SEXUALITY  
**CHOICE**



**Position Paper**

## INTRODUCTION

Meaningful youth participation (MYP) is at the core of CHOICE's being: it's a vital part of our mission and vision, as well as an important strategy in all our work.

### **CHOICE MISSION STATEMENT**

CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality is an ambitious and bold youth-led organization. We advocate for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people worldwide, and support them to meaningfully participate and to voice and claim their rights.

### **CHOICE VISION**

**WE WANT TO LIVE IN A WORLD IN WHICH ALL YOUNG PEOPLE:**

- ... openly and safely express their sexuality and who they love.
- ... freely enjoy the pleasures of sex if, with whom and when they choose.
- ... are sexually healthy and can make well-informed choices about their sexual actions.
- ... can openly and safely choose if, with whom, when and how to have children.
- ... meaningfully participate in decision making that affects their lives and the lives of their peers.

**WE WANT TO LIVE IN A WORLD IN WHICH  
THE CHOICE IS (Y)OURS.**

CHOICE's work on young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and MYP is based on our core assumption that meaningful youth participation in SRHR decision-making, organizations and in all phases of programs and policies at all geographical levels, can empower young people and improve their SRHR reality. The idea that MYP is beneficial for young people's SRHR around the world is, however, not the only reason we think MYP is important. At CHOICE, we believe that MYP in itself is a human right across all areas (and not just SRHR). This paper serves to outline the CHOICE vision on MYP. It contains CHOICE's definition of MYP, why we think MYP is important, what CHOICE does to support MYP, and, last but not least, what YOU can do to improve MYP at your organization or in your work.

## WHAT IS MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION (MYP)?<sup>1</sup>

Young people are diverse rights holders, and meaningful youth participation is a right of all young people by the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*.<sup>2</sup> MYP means that young people can participate on equal terms with adults, or work independently, in organizations as well as in all stages of programming and policy-making: design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. For this reason, mechanisms must be in place for young people to have an active role, in which their voices are heard and respected. When participation of young people is truly meaningful, it benefits the young people, the program, policy or organization, and society as a whole.

## WHAT ARE YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS (YAPs)?

A concept that is often used in combination with MYP, or even confused with MYP, is Youth-Adult Partnership (YAP). YAP is a form of MYP, and encompasses a partnership between young people and adults, where both parties have equal decision-making power. Importantly, young people and adults are seen as equal partners, who recognize the value and contribution of both parties. Both young people and adults are meaningfully involved at each step of the way, each bringing their own, unique expertise and skillset. Following this definition, then a YAP would always involve MYP. However, young people can participate in a meaningful way while working independently and not sharing their decision-making power with adults – so MYP does not always involve a YAP.

**“We think MYP-YAP is also about providing understanding to strengthen each other (for example, by supporting skills, knowledge, experience, etc) and to not let each other down. We really know the process is not easy, but we have to make it work!”**

**- Triani Augustini Margareth Nainggolan (Former Program Manager Aliansi Remaja Independen, youth-led organization and CHOICE partner, Indonesia)**

### MYP can take different forms:

- Young people are appointed a role and informed
- Young people are consulted and informed
- Adult-led, shared decisions with youth
- Youth-led, adults have no decision-making power
- Youth-led, shared decisions with adults
- Youth-adult partnerships

<sup>1</sup> Instead of referring to MYP, some organisations refer to working with a ‘Youth Centred Approach’ (YCA). The youth-centred approach is a systemic endeavour to mainstream meaningful youth participation; recognise young people as diverse and autonomous rights holders, and key influencers of their own destinies and that of their own societies; and to place young people at the centre, not just treat them as beneficiaries. ‘Youth-centeredness’ is used to describe the extent to which an organization has mainstreamed young people at all levels. (ASK Alliance, “Essential Packages Manual”, 2016, [http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Essential%20Packages%20Manual\\_SRHR%20programmes%20for%20young%20people\\_%202016.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Essential%20Packages%20Manual_SRHR%20programmes%20for%20young%20people_%202016.pdf)). For more information on the Youth-Centred Approach, check the website of IPPF [http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/ippf\\_youngatheart\\_english.pdf](http://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/ippf_youngatheart_english.pdf)) <sup>2</sup> UNICEF, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child-Friendly Language. (<https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrechillfriendlylanguage.pdf>)

## CORE ELEMENTS OF MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The six different forms of MYP are represented in the *Flower of Participation*, developed by CHOICE with support from YouAct. These different forms are built using five core elements: information, voice, freedom of choice, decision-making power, and responsibility. The extent to which each of these core elements is present, determines which form of MYP is in place. For example, in 'young people are appointed a role and informed', young people have freedom of choice and receive some information, but the other core elements are not present. In 'youth-led, adults have no decision-making power' all the five core elements are very present. The six different forms of MYP, and the five different core elements of MYP, are further explained in the Flower of Participation, which can be found [here](#).

No matter which form of MYP is in place, it is important to remember that young people are an extremely diverse group; their experiences, challenges, and opportunities can vary greatly, based on their real or perceived gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression etc. CHOICE believes, that for youth participation to be truly meaningful, it is important to involve young people from diverse backgrounds; we do, however, acknowledge that it can be challenging to engage a diverse group of young people.

As mentioned in its definition, MYP means involving young people at all levels and stages of organizations, programs, and policy-making. Often, young people are only involved in the implementation phase of programs – for example, young people can be involved in an SRHR program as peer educators. However, to be able to say that young people are meaningfully participating in a program (or organization, or policy process) it is equally important to involve young people in the design stage of a program or policy, and similarly, the monitoring and evaluation phase. From the perspective of a young person, his/her participation in only one of the phases can, in fact, still be very meaningful. For example, a young person is consulted throughout the design phase of a program and thereby meaningfully involved. However, young people do not participate in a meaningful way in the implementation and evaluation phase, so we do not say that the program fully integrates MYP.

## WHY IS MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

There are many reasons to support MYP. First and foremost, young people have a fundamental right to meaningfully participate, which we at CHOICE believe is reason enough in itself to support MYP. Beyond this, there is clear evidence that MYP benefits:

- **Society in general**
- **Young people's development**
- **And specifically, young people's SRHR**

This evidence was found, among other sources, through operational research conducted under the Access, Services and Knowledge program (ASK, 2013–2015). The ASK program was a Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs-funded program by AMREF Flying Doctors, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, dance4life, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Rutgers, Simavi, and Stop AIDS Now! (now Aidsfonds), that aimed to enhance the uptake of SRH services by young people in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Pakistan, and Indonesia.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> More information on the ASK program: <http://www.rutgers.international/programmes/programmes-archive/access-services-and-knowledge>.

### CONVENTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**ARTICLE 12** | You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

**ARTICLE 13** | You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

**ARTICLE 14** | You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.

**ARTICLE 15** | You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

**SOURCE:** UNICEF, *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Child-Friendly Language*.

## PARTICIPATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has guaranteed that participation is a fundamental right for all young people.<sup>4</sup> The CRC recognizes young people as autonomous rights holders, who have their own group of rights independent from the family. The treaty is legally binding and states that those who have ratified the treaty are encouraged to periodically report to a special committee of experts on how they are implementing the treaty in their country.<sup>5</sup> The CRC caused a fundamental shift in how the world looked at children and adolescents: instead of solely vulnerable, passive beings, they are now regarded as active agents, who should be given opportunities to be heard.<sup>6</sup> Youth participation is represented in article 12 of the CRC. Similarly, articles 13 (the right to freedom of expression), 14 (the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion), and 15 (the right to freedom of association and assembly) are also strongly related to MYP. Article 12 – 15 of the CRC are shown in the box on the left.

## MYP BENEFITS SOCIETY

- Through MYP, young people gain important knowledge on how certain procedures, decision-making processes, and governance structures work. This can lead to more active citizenship. Young people may increase their formal political participation, informal political participation (on communal but also (inter)national level), and their involvement in broader social issues (for example, climate change, discrimination, etc.). MYP is also believed to build skills and attitudes that are important in creating and maintaining a healthy democratic society, such as tolerance, cooperation, and healthy disagreement.<sup>8</sup>
- Young people can strengthen organizations; research undertaken in Pakistan showed that when organizations hired young people as staff, the work environment became more creative, passionate, and flexible to changes and new ideas.<sup>9</sup>
- Young people can bring a new perspective, for example when young people are more progressive than adults. In Indonesia, a local organization reached out to LGBT youth, because this was considered to be an important target group by the young people involved in the organization.<sup>10</sup>
- MYP can empower adults; through working with young people, adults' own commitment, energy and confidence is enhanced, and they become better attuned to the needs and concerns of young people.<sup>11</sup>
- MYP can reduce generation gaps, by creating more understanding between young people and adults, and enhancing their cooperation.
- MYP can lead to more effective/efficient policies; for example, the need for inclusiveness will be put on the agenda, prioritized, and facilitated.

4 O'Donoghue, J. L., Kirshner, B., & McLaughlin, M. (2002). Introduction: Moving youth participation forward. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2002(96), 15–26. 5 UNICEF, Convention on the Rights of the Child. Frequently asked questions ([https://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30229.html](https://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html)). 6 Sorbring, E. (2009) The Child as Active Agent in Conflict Situations. (<https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:232542/FULLTEXT01.pdf>) 7 See 2. 8 See 4. 9 Mushtaq N., Younis F., Raza S., Jamshaid W. & Reeuwijk M. van, 2016, "Operations Research on Meaningful Youth Participation in Pakistan", Rutgers ([http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational\\_Research\\_pdf/24.%20MYP\\_Pakistan\\_final.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational_Research_pdf/24.%20MYP_Pakistan_final.pdf)) 10 Singh A., Faiqoh, Zuhra, Putu Natalya N., Talata Farida C., Nugroho S., Mujoko A., Alfian Novianto D., Tabrani Al-Ikhlās I. & Reeuwijk M. van, 2016 "Operations Research on Meaningful Youth Participation in Indonesia", Rutgers ([http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational\\_Research\\_pdf/27.%20MYP\\_Indonesia\\_final.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational_Research_pdf/27.%20MYP_Indonesia_final.pdf)) 11 ASK Alliance, "Essential Packages Manual" (2016) ([http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Essential%20Packages%20Manual\\_SRHR%20programmes%20for%20young%20people\\_%202016.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Essential%20Packages%20Manual_SRHR%20programmes%20for%20young%20people_%202016.pdf))

### **MYP BENEFITS THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

- MYP can lead towards empowerment of young people, by enhancing their confidence and by teaching them important life skills. Research conducted in Ethiopia showed that young people who participated as peer educators in an SRH program became more confident, which enabled them to talk in meetings and discuss issues around sexuality with their parents.<sup>12</sup>
- MYP can lead to the economic empowerment of young people specifically. Through MYP, young people can attain certain professional skills (i.e. negotiation, public speaking) and knowledge (i.e. budgeting) that can be of value in their (future) employment. This also came out of the research conducted in Ethiopia: young people's participation increased their public speaking skills, their confidence to speak in meetings, and their assertiveness.<sup>13</sup>
- In some cases, job opportunities for young people are created, or young people get their job as a next step after their volunteer work.

#### **In addition, MYP can contribute towards:**

- Young people's personal development: for example, by supporting an increased intercultural understanding and more critical thinking.<sup>14</sup>
- Young people's ability to build/strengthen their network, through their collaboration with youth and adult organizations. This can also be important for young people's social wellbeing: they are able to make new friends. For example, young people involved in an SRHR program in Indonesia stated that they felt a 'tightly knit kinship' with their teams.<sup>15</sup>

**"At individual level, leadership, empowerment, feeling you're part of an international community, that your voice is heard, that you're being connected with the whole community and getting support from peers and adults: all these things have an impact on one's own individual and professional development."**

<sup>12</sup> Singh, A, Shewangizaw Tafesse, H., Ali, A.M., Legese Bekele, K., Gamachu, M. & Reeuwijk, M. van, 2016, "Operations Research on Meaningful Youth Participation in Ethiopia", Rutgers ([http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational\\_Research\\_pdf/6.%20MYP\\_Ethiopia\\_final\\_0.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational_Research_pdf/6.%20MYP_Ethiopia_final_0.pdf)) <sup>13</sup> See 12. <sup>14</sup> Campbell, C., Gibbs, A., Maimane, S., Nair, Y., & Sibiyi, Z. (2009). Youth participation in the fight against AIDS in south Africa: From policy to practice. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(1), 93-109. <sup>15</sup> See 10.

## MYP SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE'S SRHR

- MYP will lead to more effective SRHR programs and policies with regards to young people's SRHR, since young people themselves are best able to voice their needs, realities, and opinions.<sup>16</sup> For example, in Senegal, involving young volunteers created a new openness to talk about issues related to sexuality among young people, that in turn increased the uptake of SRHR services.<sup>17</sup>
- MYP can greatly enhance the reach, attractiveness, relevance, and effectiveness of advocacy on SRHR-related issues (and beyond), since advocacy that is meaningfully informed by young people is more likely to take into account their actual lived realities, and to ensure that their needs and opinions are reflected. In Ethiopia, advocacy efforts led government institutions to decide to hire youth development agents and train 30 health workers in youth-friendly health services.<sup>18</sup> Another best practice on MYP in SRHR advocacy is the Youth Ambassador SRHR.<sup>19</sup>
- The legitimacy of programs will be increased if young people are meaningfully involved – having young people involved can make the program more accepted within a community as well as by other stakeholders. In this way, the program can increase its influence.
- By being meaningfully involved in an SRHR program, young people increase their knowledge on SRHR-related topics, as was demonstrated by research conducted on MYP in Indonesia.<sup>20</sup> This knowledge in turn enables young people to make more informed decisions regarding their own SRHR.

**BEST PRACTICE**  
**BEST**  
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**BEST**  
**BEST PRACTICE**



**MYP best practice: The Youth Ambassador SRHR**

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF (2002) Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis, ([https://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_4447.html](https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_4447.html), last checked 14/12/2016) <sup>17</sup> Chau K., Solange Mbaye, Diagne S., Konate D. & Reeuwijk M. van, 2016 "Perceptions of Participation: an assessment of a youth participation model in Senegal", Rutgers & ASBEF ([http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational\\_Research\\_pdf/3.%20MYP\\_Senegal\\_final.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/Operational_Research_pdf/3.%20MYP_Senegal_final.pdf)) <sup>18</sup> See 12. <sup>19</sup> To read more about the work of the Youth Ambassador SRHR, visit her Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/YouthSRHR/> <sup>20</sup> See 9.

## HOW DOES CHOICE WORK ON MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

MYP is at the core of CHOICE's work; CHOICE, together with her partners, works on MYP in different ways:

- CHOICE aims to be an example for other youth-led organizations by itself being a youth-led organization
- CHOICE, together with its partners, strengthens the capacity of young people to meaningfully participate in different activities, programs, or policy processes
- CHOICE strengthens capacity of and connects other youth-led organizations to one another, therefore building on a worldwide youth movement
- CHOICE, together with its partners, strengthens the capacity of adults to enable them to meaningfully involve young people

### BY BEING A YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATION

First of all, CHOICE is a youth-led organization with only young people (16–29 years old) as board members, staff members and advocates. While, as can be seen on the Flower of Participation, we do not believe that 'youth-led, adults have no decision-making power' is the only possible form of MYP, CHOICE has deliberately chosen to have a strict cut-off point at the age of 30. In doing this, CHOICE aims to be an example for other organizations: CHOICE demonstrates that young people can build a successful and sustainable organization which is becoming a key player in international spaces. However, we do believe that working together with adults is crucially important: we do not want young people to participate only in a 'separate space', and we acknowledge that we can learn a lot from 'older' people. Therefore, while all our organizational members are young people, CHOICE works together with adult organizations for all its programs.

### BY CAPACITATING AND EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

CHOICE aims to empower and capacitate young people to become meaningfully engaged in (SRHR-related) processes. Firstly, CHOICE strengthens the capacity of, and stimulates peer-to-peer learning among its own youth advocates, and encourages them to meaningfully participate in training and (international) advocacy events. Secondly, CHOICE works closely with its partners, other youth-led organizations around the world. Together, we strengthen capacity and empower young people in many different places. We do this, for example, by providing training, developing resources, and arranging mentorship for young people. For example, CHOICE has developed youth-friendly resources on how to be involved in UN advocacy processes, like the '[\*So you are going to the UN\*](#)' infographic.<sup>21</sup>

### BY STRENGTHENING AND CONNECTING OTHER YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS

Supporting other youth-led organizations is at the core of CHOICE's work. CHOICE partners with youth-led organizations in Asia and Africa. Partner organizations learn from CHOICE's experiences, challenges, and opportunities of being a youth-led organization. We try to strengthen these organizations and enhance their sustainability, by providing them with funding and technical assistance on a wide range of topics, including organizational development. In addition, CHOICE takes on a connector role: we aim to build a strong and sustainable youth movement that connects youth-led organizations working on SRHR around the world. For example, CHOICE organizes a connector week, where our partner organizations come together to share experiences and best practices, and work on collaborative future strategies.

# TRAINING TRAINING TRAINING TRAINING TRAINING



Training at COALIZÃO,  
CHOICE partner organization in Mozambique

## BY CREATING AWARENESS AND CAPACITATING ADULT ORGANIZATIONS ON MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In addition to supporting and building a movement of youth-led organizations and networks, we strengthen the capacity of adult organizations on MYP. We can only do this by working together with adult organizations in a process of mutual learning, for example in program alliances. Together, we assess organizational structures on youth friendliness and how to improve this, so that young people do not face barriers such as lack of time, money, and energy. This is also something we do with our youth-led partners. For example, in 2017, CHOICE partners conducted a training on MYP to the (adult) organizations of their in-country SRHR alliance. Because participation is a dynamic and ongoing process, it requires personal commitment from everyone involved (both youth and adults).

## BY ACTIVELY ADVOCATING FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In its advocacy work, CHOICE, together with its partners, does not only advocate for young people's SRHR, but also for MYP. We actively advocate for MYP on all different geographical levels and in all phases of decision-making processes, focused on (but not limited to) processes that affect young people's SRHR. This can take many forms, from grassroots advocacy conducted by our partners in communities, to lobbying for more MYP at the United Nations in New York.



**"OUR ORGANIZATION CHANGED AS AN INSTITUTION, FOR INSTANCE THE WAY WE WERE OPERATING BEFORE WAS MORE LIKE USING MODELS OF TOKENISM. USING SOME MODELS LIKE THE FLOWER, WE STARTED TO REALISE THAT IN ORDER TO DEVELOP A PROGRAM WE NEEDED TO GO TO THE GRASSROOTS, GO TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND LISTEN TO THEM, GIVE THEM A PLATFORM, SO THAT WE TAKE THEIR VOICES ON BOARD IN PROGRAM CONCEPTUALISATION."**





# CASE STUDY

## ADVOCATING FOR MYP AT THE COMMISSION on the Status of Women (CSW)



Meeting with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Whilst attending the 61st session of the CSW and the pre-Youth Forum, it was evident that there was a shrinking space for youth advocates to meaningfully participate in the development of policies and outcome documents from the pre-youth forum. In response, CHOICE (in collaboration with other advocates within the Young Feminist Caucus), drafted a statement with accompanying recommendations calling for greater MYP at CSW. This statement was shared widely and the recommendations circulated amongst country delegations through coordinated youth advocacy. As a result, we secured a meeting with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and the executive team, to discuss tangible ways of implementing our MYP recommendations ahead of the 62nd session of CSW in 2018.

**"YOU CAN ACTUALLY ASSESS YOUR PROGRAMS TO SEE HOW YOU'RE INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE. IT HAS HELPED US TO ENSURE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY INVOLVED AND NOT JUST SAYING WE ARE INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE. IN THE FUTURE, WE ALWAYS WANT TO HAVE YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED."**

- PRAMESWARI PUSPA DEWI (FORMER NATIONAL COORDINATOR ALIANSI REMAJA INDEPENDEN, YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATION AND CHOICE PARTNER, INDONESIA)

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO INCREASE MYP?

- Increasing MYP starts with understanding MYP. So, make sure you learn everything you can about MYP, for example by checking out all of CHOICE's resources.<sup>22</sup> Then, spread the understanding throughout your organization, program, or alliance.
- A very helpful tool to discover different forms of MYP is the *Flower of Participation*. As explained, MYP can have different forms. The Flower of Participation is a useful tool to explore different forms of MYP, and helps you to understand the five elements of MYP: information, freedom of choice, voice, control, support, responsibility, and autonomy.
- Assess how young people are involved in your organization. By using the 'MYP in organizations' checklist<sup>23</sup>, you can check what you're already doing to enable MYP and what your organization can improve. Remember, young people should be meaningfully involved in all phases of programs and policy-making: design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

<sup>22</sup> All CHOICE's resources on MYP can be found here: <https://choiceforyouth.org/our-results/meaningful-youth-participation/> <sup>23</sup> In addition to the 'MYP in organizations' checklist, there are also checklists on 'MYP in Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programs', 'MYP in Youth Friendly Health Services Programs' and 'MYP in advocacy programs' and 'MYP in other programs', which all can be found here: <http://www.choiceforyouth.org>

- Integrate MYP in your organization, program or alliance. Create sustainable positions for young people, and make sure you have a MYP policy in place. MYP should be structural and measurable, so that the status and progress of MYP can be evaluated.
- Strengthen capacity of young people. To be able to work with adults on equal terms, young people might need capacity strengthening; for example, by providing more information about the (SRHR) content, being trained on budgeting, or learning about policy processes. For MYP to work and be successful, it is important to invest in the young people involved.
- Strengthen capacity of adults as well; it's not only young people that might need capacity strengthening. For adults in the organization, working with young people might be new, and they might not understand the purpose, or how they can work with young people in an effective and youth-friendly way. Research conducted in Kenya showed that young people who participated in Community Health Committees felt that their views were not taken seriously by older community members.<sup>24</sup> For MYP to be successful, it is crucial that adults involved understand the power relations at play when working with young people, so that young people and adults can work together on equal terms and be equal partners.
- Make sure to create and sustain an enabling environment for MYP. An enabling environment for MYP consists of multiple elements: commitment from adults, policies on MYP, financial means, a safe space, youth-friendliness, and flexibility (with regards to time). All of these elements are important for MYP to flourish and can be found in the *Flower of Participation*. For example, meetings should be held at a time that suits young people – this can, for example, mean after school or work hours, in the evenings or in the weekends. In addition, make sure to allocate the necessary (financial) resources that are necessary to enable young people to participate. For example, research done in Kenya showed that young people were sometimes unable to participate in the Community Health Committee, because they did not have the financial means for the transport to attend the meetings.<sup>25</sup>
- Invest in youth-led organizations and youth leaders, and spread the word! After reading this position paper, the important role that youth-led organizations play in working on all kinds of issues simply cannot be underestimated.

<sup>24</sup> Ndayala P., Wafula C.O., Chesire F., Evelia H., Kuya J., & Westeneng J., 2016 "Exploring the factors that influence meaningful youth involvement in the health care system management in Western Kenya", Rutgers & GLUK ([http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/12\\_MYP\\_Kenya\\_fi-nal\\_NV.pdf](http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/12_MYP_Kenya_fi-nal_NV.pdf)) <sup>25</sup> See 14.

### **CHECK OUT OTHER RESOURCES!**

Do you want to learn more about MYP, youth-led advocacy, or SRHR in general? On our website you can find many more resources: [www.choiceforyouth.org](http://www.choiceforyouth.org).

### **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR A NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

Do you have questions, great examples of MYP you want to share, or do you feel you need more information? Feel free to contact us! You can find CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality at [www.choiceforyouth.org](http://www.choiceforyouth.org) or contact us at [info@choiceforyouth.org](mailto:info@choiceforyouth.org).

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