HER VOICE

GLOBAL NETWORK OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

# HER VOICE FUND

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022-2023

# Acknowledgements

Y+ Global and the HER Voice Fund team would like to thank every incredible, articulate and empowered Adolescent Girls and Young Woman who has been influencing change in structural systems, punitive laws and policies, gender and harmful norms that are related to our health and rights in our diversity. To our relentless grantees (AGYW-led/serving community-based organisations), Country Leads and HER Voice Fund Ambassadors, we are grateful for providing the safe environments and platforms to co-create and co-lead together with AGYWs as they tackle critical advocacy issues related to our health and well-being. We would also like to thank the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and ViiV Healthcare Positive Action for their ongoing support and their review and input into these amazing annual reports; and Programme Management Unit-Maximina Jokonya, Emilia Madzinga and Oliver Muindi, for generously sharing their time and expertise to support the success of this project.

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# 1 Executive summary

HER Voice Fund formally launched its 2022-2025 Strategy in January 2022, outlining our key strategic objectives and advocacy priorities affecting AGYWs in our diversities, including challenging punitive laws and policies, gender inequalities and the intersectionalities with other issues affecting adolescent girls' and young women's (AGYW) vulnerability to HIV. The strategy outlines our theory of change, which is based on four key pillars:

1. **Grant making**
2. **Advocacy**
3. **Leadership**
4. **Organisational strengthening**

PMU have changed the structure of our report to align with the 4 the four pillars outlined in the Strategic Plan.

During the 8 month implementation period from 1 July 2022 to 28 February 2023, HER Voice Fund Project Management Unit (PMU) **awarded 91 grantees** and country leads with an average of 4330 Euros per grantee in 13 priority countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This represents a small decrease of 3 grantees from the 94 supported in the 2021/22 implementation period, largely due to other commitments by the organisations.

**Grantees were requested to align their application objectives with the three overarching advocacy themes below- from which they selected one or two themes – to ensure more coordinated and strategy advocacy work:**

- Increase access to and quality of programmes and services for AGYW (52 grantees)
- Improve the social, cultural and legal environment for AGYW (24 grantees)
- Increase empowerment and participation of AGYW (48 grantees).

The themes provided guidance on each grantees' **advocacy objectives** with important priorities including increasing access to HIV treatment and prevention; access to contraceptives; youth friendly services; engagement of young mothers; sexual and gender-based violence; economic empowerment; and cervical cancer screening. In total, 49 369 AGYW were reached face to face during this reporting period, an increase from the 34 874 AGYW reached last year and representing a 29% increase. Over 2% of these 49 369+ AGYW hold **positions of leadership and influence** on national technical working groups and policy fora, fulfilling positions such as vice-chair-person, chairperson, secretaries, lead mobilisers, and CCM board members and Her Voice Fund supported their meaningful participation and engagement. Please refer to the indicator 8.2 and 8.3 for further breakdown in our diversity. In terms of retention of AGYWs, 861 AGYWs have continued with the project since Her Voice Fund's inception in 2020.

With the Grant Cycle 7 of Global Fund currently taking place across countries, HER Voice Fund Ambassadors have been supported to amplify our voices and priorities to ensure that key issues relating to our health and rights are included in each country funding request to the Global Fund. An example of how Ambassadors are engaging in this process is included under indicator 7.2. To further strengthen AGYW's engagement, participation, and advocacy through these processes, HER Voice Fund supported AGYW to develop campaign materials and briefs with key asks and messages related to the change they wanted to see, for instance, a grantee in Eswatini - Khulisa Umntfwana (established by the Queen Mother of Eswatini)- supported four AGYW to develop a brief, highlighting the major gaps and challenges that AGYW were facing as a result of the closure of the One Stop Centre, providing support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). After engaging the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs with this advocacy ask and drawing their attention to the increase in SGBV, unsolved sexual assault cases and jurisdiction issues following the closure of the centre, the Siteki One Stop Centre was re-opened.

Due to the high numbers of AGYW accessing SGBV services at the centre, they subsequently opened three additional One Stop Centres across Eswatini to respond to the need. The AGYWs leaders further identified a need within the One Stop Centres to supply survivors of SGBV who come to the centre for services with dignity packs and other SRH commodities, At the end of the implementation period, the AGYW champions had successfully established five (5) donation from business entities and  commitments from two (2) non-governmental organisations.

In relation to the fourth key pillar on **organisational strengthening**, continuous mentorship and technical assistance to grantees have been very effective with more visible growth being witnessed in relation to grantees' organisational capacity, including in relation to fundraising and organisational sustainability. Overall, 30% of the grantees managed to successfully apply for other funding during this reporting period, with technical support from HER Voice Fund PMU- for example, in crafting the proposal or supporting the application with a recommendation letters. The Project Advisory Group (PAG) had an opportunity to review the assessments logs that were submitted by country leads, Ambassadors and HER Voice Fund Project Management Unit.

They noted significant differences in capacity levels and reach between different grantees and recommended focusing on the capacity development of grantees in 2023 to strengthen the consistency of their implementation. The PAG made a strong recommendation for the PMU not to let go of any grantees, but rather to invest in supporting capacity building and development initiatives, particularly for less experienced organisations who may be unfavourably compared to the more established organisations. Another recommendation was around improved communication between country Leads, Ambassadors and grantees.

The PMU has also focused on strengthening the organisational capacity of HER Voice Fund, specifically in relation to addressing the priority of diversifying and scaling up the funding base, identified in the Strategic Plan. In the first quarter of 2023, the PMU supported a mapping exercise to identify potential funders in the area of AGYW and SRHR/HIV for discussion with the Steering Committee. The work on fundraising is ongoing and the PMU are working closely with fundraising colleagues at the Global Fund.

Post COVID 19, grantees continued to be innovative in consistently engaging and serving AGYW in all their diversity. However, at the PMU, we encountered a **challenge** relating to the process of opening a bank account in South Africa as it took almost 11 months for the bank account to be operational. The process further delayed the disbursement of funds to grantees which was planned for June 2022. To mitigate the challenge, PMU managed to receive support from Y+ Global Netherlands in the form of pre-funding the first instalment of the grantees. With this support, grantees managed to start implementation by 1st of July 2022.

At the national and local level, additional challenges faced by grantees included:

- **An increase in drug abuse in most part of Cameroon** where two of HER Voice Fund grantees experienced with young people in our diversity including AGYWs. There is need to explore more into collaborations with other organisations focusing on this scope of work and implement awareness campaigns but also to refer them for more support.
- **Increased opposition from the community:** In some parts of Kilifi and Homabay County, parents, religious leaders and community gatekeepers are reluctant to allow their AGYW to learn about sexual reproductive health rights and services. To make matter worse, these opposition are well funded and able to lure AGYWs to attend their season largely due to poverty background and the drive from AGYWs to provide food for their siblings and children. There is to identify and map out these opposition in each area especially in Kenya context where opposition is well recognised as a significant barrier. The grantees need to be empowered with more information and statistics and evidence to back up every intervention being implemented. Strengthen collaboration will support in having more voice and change the communities perspectives.
- **Punitive laws that criminalise our LGBTQI communities.** Two grantees in Uganda have faced numerous threats for their own lives and those AGYWs in our diversity they offer services to. In November, Uganda government issued a public warrant for these organisations to be hunt down and brought before the law. PMU has since been supporting the two networks, to stay safe, do no harm to the AGYWs themselves and stay in hiding whilst the situation is currently on-going. There is need to explore more opportunities on how these two organisation can implement their activities for 2023 without doing any harm.

For 2023 opportunities, PMU will focus on strengthening Namibia and Mozambique which have demonstrated potential with further capacity building and strategies tailor-made for them. Project Management Unit (PMU) has the following proposals to implement in 2023:

- Working closely with Global Fund AGYWs Advisors for these two countries to strengthen identification of key decision-making platforms, how to approach them and create channels of collaborations.
- There is a potential that these two countries could be prioritised for AGYW Organisational Development through the curricula HER Voice Fund developed in collaboration with PATA.
    - For Mozambique, it will be ideal to work with a consultant based in Mozambique, who understand the scope and have been engaged in the CSO space so that they action points for the grantees after training could be better shaped with clear outcomes.

    - Need to go through the technical partners such as UN Women and UNAIDS to further explore avenues for AGYWs engagement and participation.
- **For Namibia**, grantees will be increased from 4 to 8, to further strengthen their presence and coordination at country level.
    - PMU has introduced the grantees to National Network of People Living HIV-Tanoka and Ministry of Health and Social Services representative. They have started to collaborate and plan together on Adolescent and Young people engagement and participation during the Grant Cycle 7 Funding Proposal.
    - This partnership will create avenues for grantees in Namibia to further engage at key decision making processes. We identified and speaking to ARASA whose head office is in Windhoek to further stablish those opportunities for more engagement at different key decision making platforms.

For Namibia, we are going to change the Country lead as we identified the current still needs growth and capacity hence looking for a well stable AGYW-led/Youth Led will enhance the coordination in Namibia.

# 2 Grant making

In this reporting period, HER Voice Fund Project Management Unit (PMU) awarded a total of 91 grants -averaging 4330 Euros per grantee – across the 13 priority countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This represents a small decrease of 3 grantees from the 94 supported in the 2021/22 implementation period, as a result of additional demands on some of the organisations.

**In the current reporting period, we shifted our focus to provide more support to in-country processes and impact, aligning the activities with three overarching themes, with grantees selecting either one or two themes:**

- **Increase access to and quality of programmes and services for AGYW –** by scaling up programmes, interventions and referral mechanisms related to AGYW in the HIV response, including gender-based violence services, integrated HIV and SRH services and the provision of comprehensive sexuality education. (52 grantees)
- **Improve the social, cultural and legal environment for AGYW –** by addressing socio-cultural constraints and economic factors that drive gender inequalities and predispose AGYW to gender-based violence and HIV infections; and by influencing relevant policy and legal frameworks. (24 grantees)
- **Increase empowerment and participation of AGYW –** by increasing access to social protection and economic empowerment programmes for AGYW, and by encouraging and promoting AGYW participation in national HIV and SRH programming and policy implementation processes. (48 grantees)

These themes provided guidance on each grantee's advocacy objectives; key issues included: increased access to HIV treatment and prevention; access to contraceptives; youth friendly services; engagement of young mothers; sexual and gender-based violence; economic empowerment; and cervical cancer screening. For instance, in Zimbabwe, Africaid supported 8 Young Mentor Mothers (YMM) by training them on cervical cancer. The YMM then engaged 156 of their peers who are pregnant and breast feeding adolescent girls and young women living with HIV during the subsequent 3 month reporting period, during their routine activities such as clinic and home visits, support groups and m-health platforms (SMS/phone calls/WhatsApp) to determine literacy levels and the barriers to accessing cervical cancer screening and treatment services. The YMMs successfully mapped out district cervical cancer service points, to which they referred pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent girls and young women living with HIV. They further engaged the Ministry of Health and Child Care and OPHID Trust Zimbabwe, for the provision of cervical cancer screening for the 156 young mothers referred. 87 of these young mothers received screening services, with two suspected cases further referred for diagnosis. However, this has posed a challenge since cervical cancer services are not available at provincial level.

For HER Voice Fund to become more efficient in the administration of funds, PMU managed to open a bank account in South Africa. This process took almost 11 months for the bank account to be operational, delaying the planned disbursement of funds to grantees for June 2022. To mitigate this challenge and the impact on grantees, PMU received support from Y+ Global Netherlands to pre-fund the first instalment of grantees, allowing them to begin project implementation by 1st of July 2022. Moving the administration from the Netherlands to Cape Town in July 2022 will facilitate quicker disbursements of funds to grantees in future; previously it took approximately 14 days for funds transferred from the Netherlands to reach a country in Africa. Basing the administration in South Africa is also strategic for resource mobilisation, situated in the centre of the HIV epidemic, where HIV prevalence amongst AGYWs[1] is at its highest.

# 3 Advocacy

Every meeting, workshop, conference, and event now begins with the same introductory line that every two minutes in 2021, an adolescent girl or young woman was newly infected with HIV (UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022), before going on to discuss the diverse challenges that continue to impact the lives of AGYW in all our diversity. As an example, in Homabay Country in **Kenya**, AGYW are exchanging intergenerational sex for clean water and fish to feed their siblings in a child-headed home. By comparison with other counties in Kenya, Homabay has received significant investment, with funding from key donors such as PEPFAR, Global Fund, EGPAF, AIDSFonds, and home to many civil society organisations. The big question therefore remains, where are we getting it so wrong if AGYW continue to face these realities? There is an increasing risk of glorifying these numbers and insufficient focus on developing constructive, holistic interventions that respond effectively to AGYW's actual needs. In one of the meetings implemented by CATAG, -HER Voice Fund grantee - in Homabay, AGYW highlighted that implementers are not really listening

to their needs, but instead are coming in with their one-off and already designed programs that do not meet the needs of AGYW.

HER Voice Fund has been cognisant from the outset that engagement and participation is a process, inclusive, and involves establishing the roots and creating and maintaining the space for AGYW in all our diversity. Once we have established that space, advocacy becomes more vibrant, more targeted to the real needs and clear outcomes can be achieved because AGYW are included within the system and participate in decision making spaces. The aspirations drawn from the country profiles provided guidance for grantees to align their advocacy efforts to respond to some of the key emerging issues facing AGYW in all our diversity.

**In this reporting period, grantees were requested to align their application objectives with the three overarching advocacy themes below- from which they selected one or two themes – to ensure more coordinated and strategy advocacy work:**

- Increase access to and quality of programmes and services for AGYW (52 grantees)
- Improve the social, cultural and legal environment for AGYW (24 grantees)
- Increase empowerment and participation of AGYW (48 grantees).

CATAG, implementing in Homabay, focused their advocacy work on the third strategic priority of increasing the empowerment and participation of AGYW. Since 2020 when HER Voice Fund was launched in Homabay, they have continued to engage with 130 dedicated AGYW. The training and continuous mentorship of these AGYW has resulted in them reaching out to a further 6310 AGYW as peers with information on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and menstrual hygiene management.

CATAG managed to engage AGYW in different technical working groups, resulting in the development of three key policies;

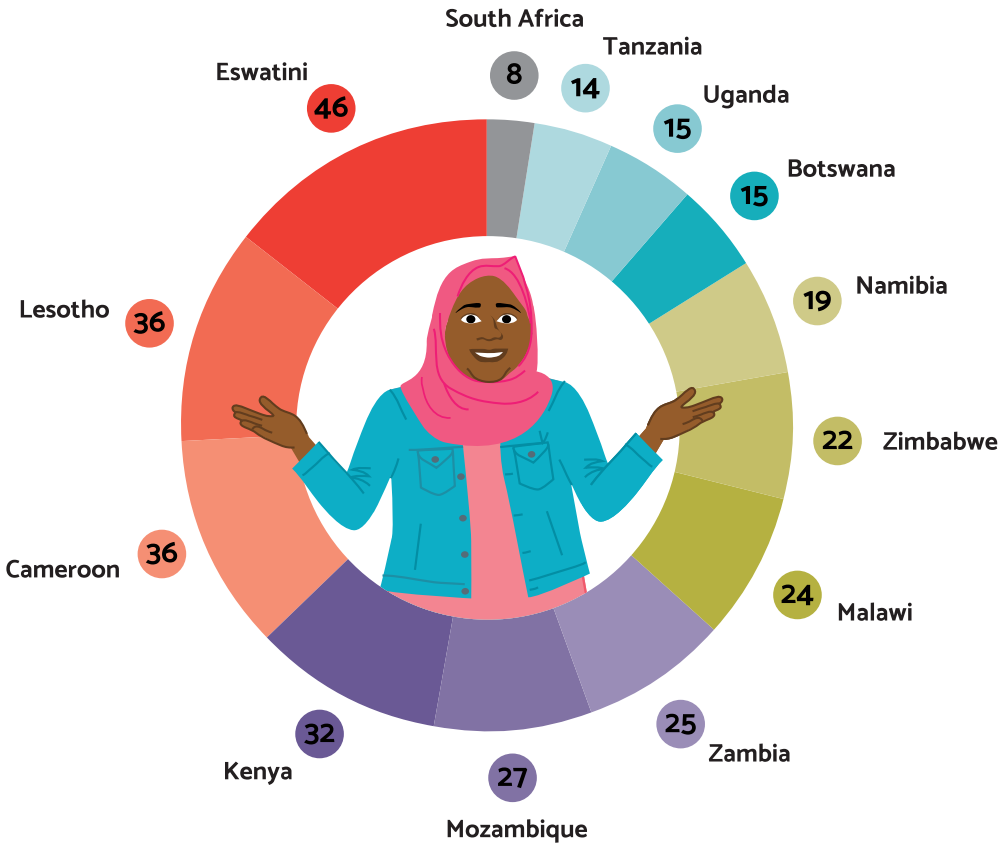
1. The Gender Based Violence Policy which will be launched on the 1st of March 2023,
2. Adolescent Strategic Plan which was developed in partnership and collaboration with other civil society organisations in Homabay; and
3. Five AGYW have continuously been involved in the development of the County Integrated Development Plan 2022-2027 (the portfolio the new Member of Parliament for Homabay), including taking part in public participation where they were able to include development issues that will directly benefit AGYW and other young people in the county.

Another important advocacy success highlighted by CATAG, was in response to shortages of SRH commodities – for example, contraceptives and family planning methods, HIV testing kits-including self-test, menstrual hygiene supplies- experienced by local clinics. AGYW advocated together with service providers at district level for these services and commodities to be available at county level. This resulted in over 2140 AGYW accessing contraceptives and other SRHR services. 84 accessed HIV testing services, with 11 AGYW testing positive and initiated on treatment. The local health facilities also reported an increase in AGYW testing positive for other STIs. The Homabay Civil Societies Partnership acknowledge the need for a more holistic approach to AGYW health, hence the development of the Adolescent Strategic Plan.

With inequalities widening, there is no doubt that AGYW will continue to be at the centre of a converging health crisis that threatens our health, safety, and well-being. The advocacy approach that is going to yield results will require more intentional collaborations, having a common, unified AGYW agenda and above all, creating a structured movement building with clear outcomes in relation to AGYW health and rights issues. HER Voice Fund will continue to support AGYW in this mandate, amplify their voices, build their capacity and hold policy makers accountable.

## 3.1 Number of national and sub-national bodies, processes and events where AGYW participated through HER Voice Fund resources to influence the advocacy agenda.

**Fig 1. Number of national and sub-national bodies, processes and events where AGYW participated**



The graph above illustrates **319 key decision-making events and processes** where AGYW participated with support from HER Voice Fund. These include PEPFAR COP Processes, Global Fund processes, Indaba forum, Health financing meetings, Eastern and Southern Africa Commitment on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, amongst other strategic platforms. Through these processes and bodies, AGYW successfully advocated for key issues such as AGYW safe spaces; HIV prevention and treatment interventions; prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and support for survivors; economic empowerment and livelihood; gender inequalities and punitive laws that prevent AGYW from accessing services related to their health and rights.

One country to highlight is **Eswatini**, which has been on an ascending trajectory with an increase from 25 processes and events where 282 AGYW participated last year, to 46 events and processes, supporting the engagement of 345 AGYW this year. One of the critical successful factors for Eswatini is centred around having a clearly aligned advocacy agenda and a well-coordinated effort as a consortium. The key milestones are compelling, demonstrating impact and stories of change. For instance, SNYP+ - Country Lead for Eswatini - coordinated all the grantees to agree how to effectively engage during the PEPFAR COP 23 processes. AGYW representatives from all the grantees were invited to a training on 'Understanding what PEPFAR COP processes is and what is the strategic entry point'.

**Three AGYW were further nominated and supported to engage with other CSOs in the Country Operational Plans processes. By the end of the Eswatini COP 23 Processes in February 2023, the AGYW, with support from the country lead, had successfully advocated for the following key asks to be included in the final draft:**

- HER Voice Fund model is proposed to be implemented further alongside DREAMS, as key two interventions that have proven to work for AGYWs in our diversity in Eswatini.
- Three One Stop Centres that Khulisa Umntfwana – HER Voice Fund grantee – successfully advocated for to meet the demands of AGYW experiencing SGBV in the country have been prioritised, promoting safe spaces for AGYW. Funding for these 3 centres was proposed under PEPFAR COP 2023.
- The alignment of age of consent for family planning and HIV testing to at least 12 years.

There have also been demonstrable results in Eswatini at grantee level. For example, during this reporting period, SAFAIDS built capacity of 19 High school Head girls and 9 out-of-school AGYW, developing their advocacy skills to support the national call to strengthen Menstrual Hygiene Management in Eswatini. AGYW continue to be left behind in terms of access to menstrual hygiene facilities and commodities. Through this advocacy intervention, the AGYW Indaba built the advocacy capacity of AGYW leaders to advocate for the strengthening of the national response to menstrual hygiene and the removal of tax on menstrual products in Eswatini. SAfAIDS, with support from the Ministry of Education, identified 20 schools and worked with 19 of head girls who were invited to participate in the Indaba. 9 out of school AGYW from different constituencies representing AGYW living with HIV, LBTI AGYW, AGYW in

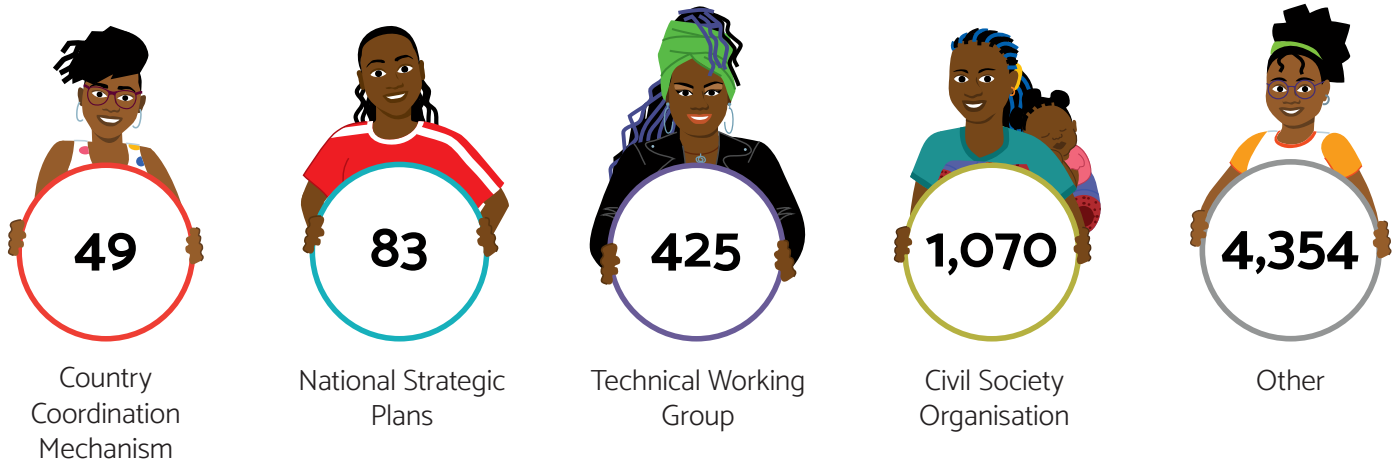
tertiary institutions and those in youth serving organisations also participated in the Indaba. A total number of 38 young people attended the indaba; 36 of these were AGYW and 2 men.

The event was covered on the National TV evening news; the following link covers the AGYW National Indaba from 31 minutes https://youtu.be/bqM8xysIFuk It includes 2AGYW advocating on Eswatini TV for the government to remove tax on sanitary products, to ensure toilets in schools are fitted with sanitary disposal facilities; and for schools to provide sanitary pads in the same way as they provide toilet paper, as it is equally essential. The TV coverage reached over 350 000 viewers (according to news coverage statistics) and 1 755 views on youtube. The TV coverage started a national discussion on the need for Eswatini to strengthen Menstrual Hygiene Management, with other partners including The AIDS Healthcare Foundation, One Billion Rising and other civil society organisations in Eswatini joining the movement. The advocacy efforts were supported by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and informed the next level of intervention, where the girls targeted the Parliamentary Health Portfolio with their advocacy efforts.

10 Members of Parliament (MP) were further engaged to propose a motion in parliament on the exemption of tax on sanitary products and for improved sanitary facilities in schools, The MP for Mhlangatane (Madala Mhlanga) committed to raise the motion in the House of Parliament on the tax exemption of sanitary pads. He also committed to conduct regular visits to local schools in his constituency to assess the needs for menstrual hygiene management. The MP for Mahlangatja (Musa Ngcobo) committed to ensure that AGYW in his constituency receive adequate information on Menstrual Hygiene, while other MPs agreed to support the the motion for tax exemption on sanitary products and to provide dignity packs in schools, especially in rural areas. The Health Portfolio Committee Chairperson confirmed that, following a consensus by the committee, the motion for tax exemption on sanitary products has been tabled as a priority for discussion in parliament in 2023.

## 3.2 Number of AGYW representatives supported by HVF to participate in relevant decision-making platforms, including CCMs, NSPs, TWGs, and civil society meetings through the development of speaking notes, advocacy briefs, presentations, etc.

**Fig 2. Decision making platforms**



The graph shows a total of 5,981 representatives supported by HER Voice Fund to participate in a range of different decision making platforms. This includes 49 AGYW engaged in CCM level meetings, 83 AGYW engaged in National Strategic Plan consultations, 425 engaged in Technical Working groups, 1070 at civil society meetings, and 4354 AGYW participating in other local and national meetings related to HIV, gender, and SRHR.

As an example, in **Cameroon**, Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and Education Plus' initiative have been prominent key priorities. HOVUCA - grantee in Cameroon- advocated for AGYW to be part of the ESA Commitment to CSE advocacy in Malawi. HOVUCA was subsequently tasked by Ministry of Education Cameroon to deliver CSE to AGYW in schools in Yaoundé for 8 weeks, reaching over 1700 AGYW in 5 secondary and high schools in Yaoundé[1]. These CSE sessions covered life skills, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, SRHR, and GBV issues that affects AGYW in all our diversity, with the aim to promote conscious and positive decisions about health and sexuality. The sessions were well received by students and principals. HOVUCA also engaged with key stakeholders including 2 MPs, representatives of the National AIDS Committee (NACC), UNAIDS, the Ministry of Women empowerment and the family (MINPROFF), Department of Family Health (DSF), Society for Agriculture and Sustainable Development (SASDEV), Cameroon Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (RECAP+) and the Ministry of Education. AGYW presented their advocacy brief promoting better access to CSE to meet the needs for AGYW, including those in higher/tertiary education.

**In Zambia**, ZYP supported AGYW to influence the national advocacy agenda, aligned to their selected theme: increase empowerment and participation of AGYW. 2 AGYW participated in the development of the National Adolescent Health (ADH) Strategy for 2022-2026 and were engaged in consultative meetings with the writing team supported by Ministry of Health and partners. 1 AGYW was then supported to attend the Validation meeting of the Draft ADH Strategy for 2022-2026 and another 2 AGYW attended the National ADH Technical working Group (TWG) meeting to review the strategy and agree design. Key priorities for AGYW identified in the National Adolescent Health (ADH) Strategy were then taken to the National Strategic Plan review, which took place in preparation for the Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 funding request. 3 AGYW were supported to participate in the national dialogues on the National AIDS Strategic Frameworks (NASF) that were held in Livingstone and Choma Districts. These dialogues were held to get input from several constituencies on the strategies to be adopted in the NASF 2023 to 2026. An additional 2 AGYW were also supported to engage in PEPFAR COP23 processes, advocating for key issues affecting AGYW. This included participated in Dialogue meetings, stakeholder's engagement meetings, training workshops and planning meetings organised by civil society towards development of the key asks towards COP focus for 2023.

The two AGYWs were further supported to participate in national dialogues where they advocated specifically for:

1. HIV prevention package including PrEP, PEP, Rings,
2. Comprehensive sexuality education and
3. Sexual reproductive health services and package.

1. For more information, Click here to see evidence of work for Mario Academic complex; click here for Mevick Bilingual Grammar School; click here for Franky High School and click here for CSE in Collége Ebandan.

As a result of these AGYW being empowered, well articulate and confident, they were selected to represent young people in our diversity during the regional PEPFAR COP23 meeting in Johannesburg; their attendance was supported by HER Voice Fund. The ZYP case study clearly demonstrates the achievements of AGYW in influencing policies, laws, and programs. It also demonstrates the importance of HER Voice funding to overcome the logistical and financial barriers to AGYW participation. Please see section 7 Leadership for a detailed example of HER Voice Fund Ambassador participation in Global Fund Grant Cycle 7 funding request.

## 3.3 The process of developing an advocacy agenda for AGYW has been well supported, resourced and implemented.

The recently launched In Danger: UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022 report highlights the widening inequalities which are stalling progress in the HIV response. With one more AGYW being infected with HIV every two minutes, it calls for more urgency to explore innovative strategies that enable engagement as well as access to services by AGYW in all our diversity. In response, HER Voice Fund has intensified our support to AGYW to engage in key decision-making platforms to advocate for key priorities relating to their health and rights.

For example, in **Tanzania**, PEPOHUDA supported AGYW to develop an advocacy agenda: Civil Societies, Media, Local and District Authorities fighting for Justice and Dignity of AGYW Domestic Workers' Movement, aligned to the second advocacy theme of improving the social, cultural and legal environment for AGYW. PEPOHUDA conducted consultation meetings with 20 AGYWs to identify key issues affecting AGYW in Zanzibar Catchment areas. One of the prominent issues raised related to AGYW from rural areas being trafficked to town to do domestic work whilst underage and under-paid. The AGYW planned to target Councillors, Women human rights lawyers, Doctors, Officials from Gender based desk Pemba north region Police headquarters, Relevant Government Officials, Journalist/ Social Media and domestic workers themselves with their advocacy. Their strategic objective was to rescue and reintegrate 20 AGYW (aged 15-28) in domestic work to prevent them from facing long hours, poor pay, inhuman treatment, and physical and sexual abuse that can lead to unintended pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. They conducted advocacy with key stakeholders, paralegal lawyers and Government ministries, amplifying the key issues in relation to trafficking and domestic work. As a result of their advocacy an AGYW Domestic Workers Union was established at the District level, with 20 AGYW registered. Media reporting is more sensitive and supportive of Domestic Workers, recognizing their contributions to the economy. More information is available through youtube media links:

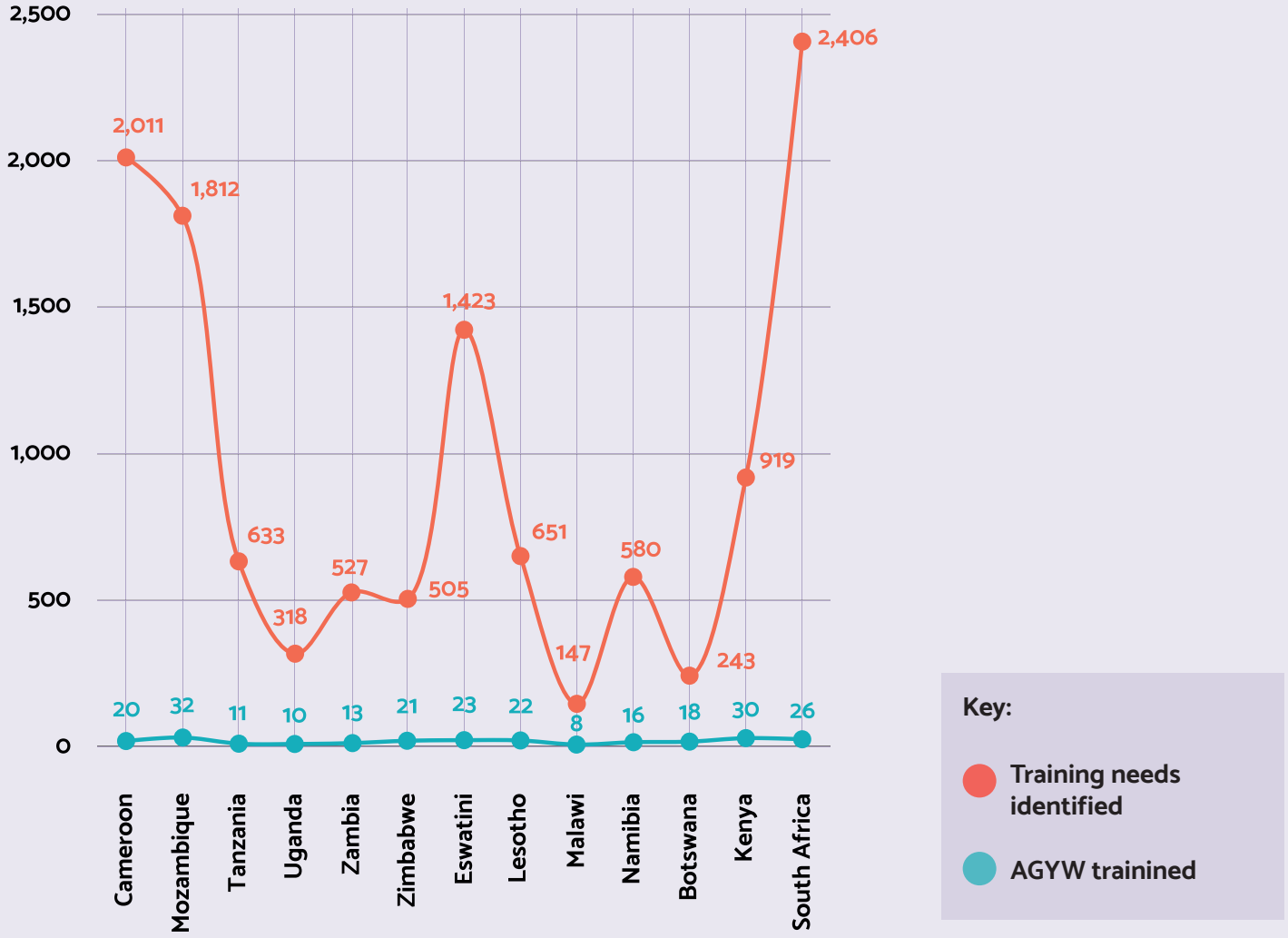
- **https://youtu.be/ILTWoHzPMgc**
- **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NgrG6Ivbms**

On average, each grantee managed to support AGYW to develop at least 2 strategic advocacy agendas, with AGYW leading and participating in the process across the 13 priority countries. Advocacy agendas were developed aligned with the three overarching themes from the country profiles-as demonstrated by the example above, focusing on issues including SRHR, SGBV, and access to HIV prevention and treatment. In **Mozambique**, HER Voice Fund grantee ASSCODECHA provided

strategic support to AGYW to develop their advocacy agenda on unlawful charges in the maternity sector, aligned to the first theme on increasing access to and quality of programmes and services for AGYW. Health providers illegally charge maternity fees for women giving birth, with those who do not/cannot pay facing ill treatment and abuse by health care workers and experiencing obstetric violence. If they refuse to pay, young women are transferred to other Health Units that may be significant distances away, risking the danger of giving birth on the street or even forced to have a caesarean delivery. ASSCODECHA supported AGYW to implement a survey to understand more about their maternity experiences and the factors that need to change. The survey results were further developed into a brief which was shared with the management of the Health Centers of Unit A, Matola Gare, Machava 1, Ndlavela. As a result of this meeting, there has been an improvement in service delivery in maternity wards with health care workers treating young women with greater respect.

## 3.4 Training/mentoring delivered in response to identified needs to strengthen grantees/AGYW participation in HIV and SRH policy, advocacy and decision making fora.

Fig 3. Number of training needs identified vs AGYW trained



In order for AGYW to participate meaningfully in policy, advocacy and decision-making processes, HER Voice Fund provides capacity building for AGYW in all our diversity, to actively contribute to key strategies, programme design, and implementation related to their health and rights, particularly focusing on SRHR, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and access to HIV prevention and treatment. 250 trainings were delivered by grantees across 13 countries, equipping 12,175+ AGYW with skills, knowledge and confidence to further advocate for issues related to health and rights. Capacity building took different forms, including curricula trainings, peer to peer mentorship, engagement on digital platforms such as WhatsApp etc. For example, as a new grantee, Youth Gate-**Zimbabwe** trained 83 AGYW, including young LBTQ women, with a specific focus on;

- Integrating young LBTQ women and young key and vulnerable population issues on HIV and SRHR strategies and related policies
- Advocating for inclusion of young LBTQ women issues, specific needs and priorities in HIV programming and SRHR issues
- Sensitisation training of decision-making fora (National and Subnational bodies CAF, KP Forum, TWG and CCMs) on the real lived experiences of young LBTQ women.

The training included SOGIESC basic training and sensitization of the LBTQ women themselves to use the right language to ensure that no one is left behind when accessing services, as a result of discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The example of Zimbabwe is particularly interesting as young LBTQ women are not recognised in Zimbabwe and current legislative laws criminalise same sex relationships. The training focused on different policies in Zimbabwe, especially those that relate to health service provision and how these can best respond to the needs of LBTQ women. It was strategically important to highlight the needs of LBTQ women in relation to service provision, in light of the on-going GC7 Cycle 7 of the Global Fund and PEPFAR COP23 processes. The training was also beneficial as it led to mapping of different health service providers that cater for LBTQ women and discussions around how to continue to work with them to promote inclusive services and ensure that no one is left behind. As a result of the training and subsequent mapping of LBTQ service provision, key issues affecting the LBTQ community were subsequently in the Zimbabwe National Aids Strategy document, representing a remarkable achievement and transformative moment for LGBTQ in the country.

## 3.5 An AGYW-endorsed advocacy agenda (supported through HER Voice Fund) has been used to inform Global Fund and other national level decision making bodies, processes and events.

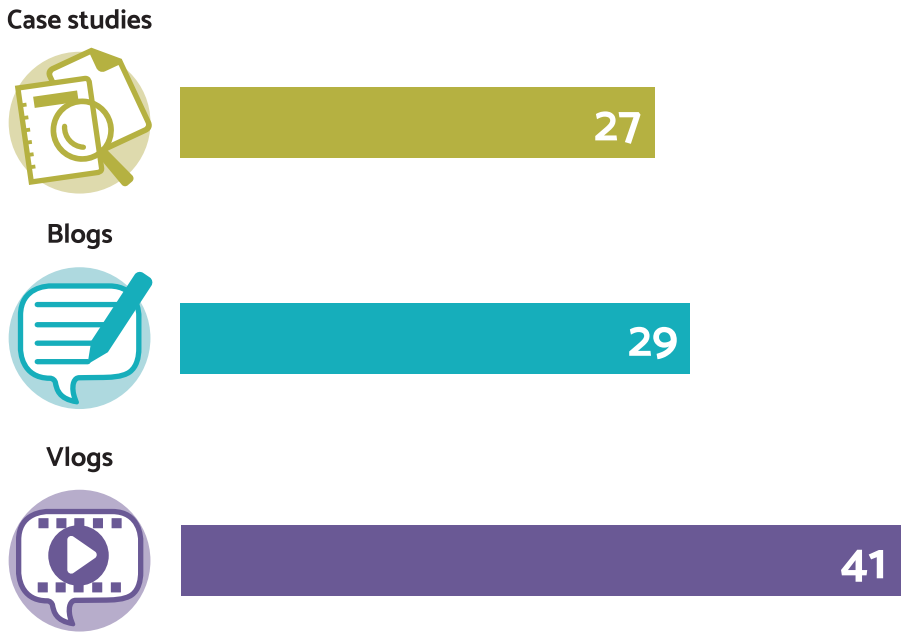
SWO – a grantee in **Cameroon** – continued to support AGYW to advocate for their meaningful participation and involvement in HIV policy and decision-making programming (both locally and nationally), resulting in positive changes, specifically at the Regional Technical Group (RTG) for HIV and the Northwest Special Fund for Health (NWSFH). One AGYW representative was involved in the planning meetings to mark International World AIDS Day (WAD). As a result of her leadership during WAD planning meetings, 6 more AGYW leaders were invited to participate in the evaluation of the National Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2022. AGYW raised the need to ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of AGYW in the next CCM and the educational and economic empowerment of AGYW to enable their participation in policy fora.

In **Malawi**, Life Concern (LICO) supported two AGYW, two district Government Officials (Director of Planning and Development and District Youth Officer) to participate in the regional consultation meeting to review the National AGYW Strategy. Partners such as GIZ, Spotlight Initiative and LISAP, LICO, Chitipa Restoration Program and Help a Child also attended. During the meeting, AGYW proposed the introduction of programmes for girls who dropped out of school and adolescent mothers who are often unable to re-enter or complete school. These girls need to be supported with a comprehensive bursary scheme through the 5% bursary allocation in the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Secondly, they proposed that the government should consider allocating a certain percentage of funds within its annual national budget towards AGYW response at national, district and community levels. Thirdly, AGYW programmes should develop clear inclusive strategies that leave no one behind, especially AGYW living with HIV and those with disabilities. Lastly, they proposed the inclusion of mental health and suicide into the AGYW strategy, as one of the key priority areas because of the increasing importance of this issue for young people, especially AGYW.

The most significant change seen as a result of HVF grantee advocacy is the meaningful engagement of AGYW in the review process of the 2018-2022 National AGYW strategy. The strategy phased out in July 2022 and the review process has been initiated to facilitate the smooth transition into the next strategy. The process of developing the 2018-2022 AGYW strategy did not engage AGYW and consequently was not well received by the target population, which impacted upon its implementation success. LICO - with support from HER Voice Fund - played a critical role in ensuring that this process was not repeated in the development of the new strategy, ensuring that AGYW were supported to participate meaningfully in the review process. This was the first process of its kind in Malawi were AGYW contributed towards the improved coordination, systems strengthening, accountability and M&E for evidence-based programming, aligned with the key advocacy theme of increased empowerment and participation of AGYW. LICO will continue to advocate for the 4 key priorities proposed in the new AGYW strategy and health finance budget.

## 3.6 Documentation produced capturing AGYW participation, learning and outcomes.

**Fig 4. Experiences captured**



The infographic above illustrates a total of 97 documented experiences of AGYW participating in HER Voice Fund supported activities, including 27 case studies, 29 blogs and 41 vlogs produced across 13 countries. Whilst these experiences have been published on different digital platforms with links provided by grantees, two examples of a policy and a blog are provided below to illustrate the impactful change taking place across 13 African countries.

In **Uganda**, the National Health and HIV/AIDS Policy does not include challenges faced by AGYW living with disability regarding access to SGBV services. IDIWA, a grantee in Uganda, supported 20 AGYWs in Kaliro to identify some the current challenges experienced as a result of this gap in the national policy including;

- Neglect by parents when AGYW are sexually abused or raped, due to misconceptions on disability
- Discrimination from SRH conversation and education, forced sterilization and other medical procedures and coercive practices
- Long waiting times for, and fragmented care within, SRH services
- Inaccessible physical environment and communication barriers (lack of sign language communication)
- AGYW with intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, the visually impaired, and the deaf are denied their reproductive rights by forcing them to use modern contraceptive methods of family planning.

The consultation with AGYW living with disabilities concluded that without a Kaliro District Policy on Disability and Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services, cases will continue to increase without any practical and legal binding to those perpetrators against the law. The AGYW engaged the paralegals in the development of the Kaliro District Policy on Disability and Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services. Advocacy activities included key stakeholders, parliament and CSOs who are working in HIV and SRH responses. The policy was approved by the District Executive and Technical Committees on 20th December, 2022. This policy was the first of its kind and targeted the most vulnerable people in the community. The district committed to:

- Prioritise the issues affecting people with disabilities;
- Address social norms, sexual and reproductive health and rights and promote the integrity of women and young people with disabilities
- Prevent and address gender-based violence against women and young people with disabilities
- Strengthen research to support policy dialogue and programming
- Mobilise domestic and foreign resources and increase technical support for effective provision of disability inclusive Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Services.

As a result of having this policy, paralegals have been actively supporting AGYW with disabilities to report cases SGBV cases to local council courts, health centres, police, and social workers. Between July-September 2022, 15 GBV cases were identified, with an additional 24 cases identified during the following quarter. Some of these cases are solved by the paralegals themselves through Alternative Dispute Resolution with the involvement of local council courts, while others are referred to other service providers, such as the Probation Office. Cases that cannot be handled at those levels are forwarded to Police, and Judicial Courts by IDIWA's legal officer.

In **Cameroon**, the economic empowerment of AGYW within the project boosted morale and inspired their personal development and leadership. The economic empowerment and provision of start-up kits to AGYW aimed to strengthen the economic resilience and social status of 15 AGYW by December 2022, through training and provision of start-up capital for small businesses. The project trained 15 girls, with practical skills in small business management, financial record keeping and social protection. Amongst the 15 beneficiaries, four are living with HIV. Following the training, the 15 girls received work material and equipment as start-up capital to the sum of 45.000 frs each. The start-up kits were given to those girls who had already mastered specific skills - including baking, traditional dress making, fashion design and hair dressing- but lacked the capital to start up. As part of the purchasing process of the start-up kits, AGYW were asked to provide a list of all their specific business items and then went to the market with the Programs Coordinator to select their items themselves to promote their self-confidence, decision making and empowerment.

This activity has been a breakthrough in the lives of most of the girls. One of the girls, has taken her hairdressing and wig business to another level. With the start-up capital, she bought a wig making stand and established her business Glam Studios by Abi where she offers a range of hair/wig services including braiding, wig installation, bridal hair and styling and wig making and has opened a glamorous beauty salon in the Region. The money she earns from her business supported her to participate in the World AIDS day event and she was also able to support the transportation of her friend to the celebration ground. Two other girls strengthened their dress making and pastry making businesses, which allowed them to buy sufficient internet data to participate in UNESCO's Inter Regional and global advocacy on Girl Child's Education, promoting comprehensive sexuality education. They participated in a regional selection process, sharing their SRH stories and had the opportunity to influence girls' education at the global level.

# 4 Leadership

## 4.1 Development of Her Voice Fund's Ambassador Leadership programme, building capacity, confidence, and skills of young female leaders over time.

We Matter, Value Us guidelines aligns closely with HER Voice Fund principles on recognising the expertise and power of AGYW in all our diversity, and the importance of ethical empowerment, meaningful engagement and leadership of AGYW in decisions that affect our lives. With the Grant Cycle 7 of Global Fund currently taking place across countries, HER Voice Fund Ambassadors have been supported to amplify and raise our voices and priorities to ensure that key issues relating to our health and rights are included in each country funding request to the Global Fund.

For instance, in **Malawi**, HER Voice Fund Ambassador (Grace) participated in the Grant Cycle 7 funding request. The AGYW-Youth CCM constituency engagement meetings and Malawi Network of AIDS Service Organisations (MANASO) consultation meetings

which were held in December and January respectively gave AGYW a platform to raise and prioritise issues they are facing around HIV, SRHR and GBV. The meetings, which were led by the HER Voice Fund Ambassador with support from the Principal Recipient-World Vision and GIZ Back up Health, provided a platform for AGYW to share Global Fund NFM3 successes, challenges, lessons learnt as well as to prioritise AGYW issues to be considered in NFM4 and they reached over 300+ AGYW. Meetings were conducted in Lilongwe, Salima, Dedza, Blantyre and Machinga and resulted in AGYW (through the CCM youth representative) documenting the priorities which were then shared with the Principal Recipient for the HIV grant (World Vision), PEPFAR, National AIDS Commission, GF Funding request Civil Society Consultant and MANASO.

**With support from Tovwirane – a grantee in Malawi – and HER Voice Fund PMU, the HER Voice Ambassador managed to ensure the following key priorities were included in the final Funding request;**

1. Capacity and Leadership Buildingl: Support capacity building for all sector coordinating bodies (youth, AGYW, PLHIV, women, private sector and faith) to enable them to mentor and coach their affiliates in the implementation of the TB, HIV and Malaria programmes
2. Community Led Monitoring: Capacity building for the grassroots youth-led/ serving CBOs to CLM processes. The Youth Led responses for young people to hold policy makers accountable
3. Differentiated HIV testing services: Community based testing outside of KP and AGYW programs
   - Mobilize KPs for HIV testing
   - Expand community based testing using KP and AGYW programme model
   - Community based testing for AGYW and their male sexual partners
     - Create linkage to HIV treatment and care by peer navigators for AGYW who are found to be HIV positive
     - Assess risk of HIV infection among the AGYW and their male sexual partners.
     - Link the AGYW and their partners to prevention services for those found to be negative.
4. Prevention Package for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) and Male Sexual Partners in High HIV Incidence Settings:
   - Increase demand for condoms among target populations through prevention communication, information and demand creation, branding, and empowerment.
   - Increase service uptake among the AGYWs and their male sexual partners in the institutions of higher learning on PEP, PrEP, SRH, condom and lubricants.
   - Train peer educators and YCBDA on integrated HIV prevention services to increase service uptake among AGYW and their sexual partners.

5. HIV prevention communication, information and demand creation for AGYW and their sexual partners in high HIV incidence settings
   - Orient media personnel on HIV service delivery for the AGYW and their male sexual partners to create demand.
   - Conduct mass media campaigns for AGYW and their male sexual partners on HIV using community-based, digital/social media.
   - Conduct community outreach by using the "stop the van" model to create demand and provide comprehensive on-site HIV, SRH services (full-service community delivery) and to AGYW and also young boys in the four priority districts especially in peri-urban and growth points
   - Support peer educators, youth networks and clubs to conduct monthly demand creation activities create demand and distribute (prevention services : condoms, PEP/PrEP, SRH,GBV services and lubricants targeting in and out of school AGYW, ABYM and Youths.
   - Conduct monthly community awareness and sensitization meetings
   - Reviewing/development of IEC materials
   - Use internet/social media to create demand campaigns
   - Conduct social life skills sessions targeting both in and out of school AGYW and ABYM using peer educators and YCBDAs.

The example of the HER Voice Fund Ambassador's leadership in Malawi is replicated across the13 African countries. In Eswatini, HER Voice Fund Ambassador (Simphiwe) has been at the forefront of PEPFAR COP 23 processes together with the Sikhulile- an AGYW who sits in the CCM representing the youth constituency. Their success is demonstrated in indicator 6.1 on the key priorities they managed to advocate being included in the final Eswatini COP draft.

The increased capacity, confidence and skills of HER Voice Fund's Ambassadors over time is demonstrated through their considerable successes in advocacy, already outlined in Section 6. In addition, the Ambassadors demonstrate leadership in their role monitoring and supporting grantees' efforts at country level.

The successful implementation of HER Voice Fund Strategy 2022-2025 requires a collaborative approach, with support from Country Leads and Ambassadors. Country Leads play a leading role in the coordination and implementation role of HER Voice Fund in each of the 13 priority countries to ensure that the grantees' work aligns closely with our Strategy; responds to the priorities of AGYW in all our diversity; and also contributes to achieving national targets relating to HIV, SRHR and AGYW programming. Country Leads and Ambassadors provide critical support to grantees during the application process to ensure that this aligns with both HVF strategic priorities and the mandate of their own organisation.

For instance, Brenda HER Voice Fund Ambassador Kenya was able to support the grantees during the development and review of the work plans, budget and reports that were shared by the grantees. Importantly this process made it easier to track the progress made by the grantees during the monthly check-in meetings. It also ensured

that the workplans developed by the grantees were aligned to the actual needs of the AGYW based on the county profiles. To this end for AGYW related advocacy they collaborate with other youth led organizations, with Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Health NASCOP, Organisational Alliance supporting some of the advocacy efforts. 5 AGYW from Angaza grantee were selected to be part of the development of the County Integrated Development Plan, which included a focus on advocacy, for example, promoting AGYW involvement of CSE in school and Sustainable SRHR and HIV commodities in facilities (test kits, treatment and condoms).

Country Leads, together with HER Voice Fund Ambassadors, also support grantees by providing virtual monthly check-in calls, daily phone calls as well as site support and supervision. For instance, the HER Voice Fund Ambassador for Zimbabwe was invited by HOPE for Adolescents and Youth during their HIV and AGYW advocacy training session. She contributed to the development of the HIV Risk Assessment toolkit with HOPE for Adolescents and Youth as part of their project under HER Voice Fund. The Risk Assessment toolkit aligns well with Phase 1 objective of the HVF Strategy that supports movement building in the HIV response and celebrates the leadership of AGYW and bringing together key stakeholders in the development and implementation of advocacy agendas.

Country Leads and Ambassadors also engage key stakeholders to amplify the project. This includes submitting quarterly reports to government ministries such as NACs, UNAIDS, Ministry of Health, Women Affairs and Gender, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education and attend the key stakeholders meeting representing.

For example, in **Zimbabwe**, the Country Lead-ZY+ engaged UNAIDS, UNICEF, NAC, ACT and introduced key stakeholders to amplify the project. UNAIDS invited ZY+ to the SRH symposium meeting on 11th – 13th of October 2022 to talk about HER Voice Fund's work that is funded by Global Fund, Uproot Scorecard and the Ground UP project. This was an important opportunity for HER Voice Fund consortium, creating partnership opportunities and securing funding related to 2gether4SRHR initiative. ZY+ further strengthen linkages amongst grantees and key stakeholders implementing in Zimbabwe. Two grantees-Youth Gate Zimbabwe Trust and Hope for Adolescents and Youth were supported by the country lead to engage in advocacy spaces that is the CAF, MIPA meetings.

**To promote ethical and meaningful engagement and participation of AGYW in our diversity, the country lead facilitated and supported:**

- 2 AGYW to engage in CCM level meetings by attending and listening to SR ad PR update meetings to acknowledge ad experience the processes.
- 3 AGYW LBQT to engage in National Strategic Plan consultations ZNASP.
- 2 AGYW to engage in technical working groups on the age of consent on access to services who attended the public hearing the on the amendment bill on access to services.
- 4 AGYW participated in additional civil society meetings, (NAC coordination meetings) and a further 3 were engaged in other CSO partnership meetings.

The *Taking the Lead: High* – Level Meeting on Championing the Priorities of Women and Girls in the HIV Response facilitated five Ambassadors participating in-person. They managed to interact with First Lady of Tanzania, UN Women Executive Director, Female Ministers from diverse countries on the key issues related to AGYW in the HIV response was the highlight for the leadership program. Prior to this event, 13 HER Voice Fund Ambassadors participated in leadership training-codesigned by UN Women and HER Voice Fund, with key focus on

1. Pathways of power and what it means to be a transformative leader to achieve gender equality in the HIV response;
2. Understanding opportunities and challenges facing AGYW activists in influencing the HIV response;
3. Transformative feminist leadership approaches in the HIV response;
4. Modalities and approaches for local-level financing and stakeholder mapping in the HIV response; and much more.

Key achievements during this implementation period were numerous and included Ambassadors participating during a UN Women session during AIDS2022 where she shared Stories of Leadership: Making an Impact for Women and Girls in the HIV Response and during the High-Level Meeting on Championing the Priorities of Women and Girl in the HIV Response, including BBC recording of Millicent Sithalie and UN Women Executive Director, on the key issues related to AGYW in the HIV response.

We have witnessed some remarkable successes over this period of the development of HER Voice Fund Ambassadors leadership and capacity over a relatively short period of time. One notable example is Ndiilo Ndiolekwa- former Namibia Ambassador - going on to publish 3 books and forming her own NGO which was subsequently selected to be one of the HER Voice Fund grantees in Namibia. In addition, Tambudzai -former Zimbabwe Ambassador- is now fully employed by Global Network of People Living with HIV, leading their Community Engagement and Love Alliance Programmes. 2023 implementation period will continue to bring new stories and successes from our Ambassadors as a result of continuous capacity building and mentorship.

## 4.2 Development of Ambassador Angels mentorship program to support and mentor Ambassadors by experienced African Young Women Leaders.

The first year of the Ambassador Angel programme started in August 2021, which was considered the trial period. In June 2022, Ambassador Angels and their mentors met in Cape Town. This was an important opportunity to reflect on the programme, discuss how to improve the Angels programme, design commitments, indicators, outputs, and outcomes for both the Ambassadors and Angels. The programme is an essential pillar of HER Voice Fund's work and it was important to reflect on what was working well and what was working less well. Ambassadors were also encouraged to understand that the mentorship programme has to be intentional from both sides and should not feel like an additional task. Ambassadors worked in three groups to visualize and share what they would like the Ambassador Angel programme to look like and what they would bring to the table to ensure it worked.

Some of the indicators that were suggested included;

1. Angels will support Ambassadors to understand their wants, needs, and the kind of support needed to achieve their life goals. This will include personal, professional, emotional and physical goals. Ambassadors and Angels will create a vision board for the whole programme, making it easy to understand the progress made over time.
2. Angels will identify ( educational, personally, entrepreneurship) opportunities -
3. Angels will support the professional growth of Ambassadors-Ambassadors will submit their CVs 3 times this year to gain professional work.
4. Include counselling classes to support Ambassadors and Angels for Mental Health support
5. Angels will support Ambassadors with a transitional plan: Formal employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the Ambassadors.

PMU have witnessed the crucial importance of the mentorship relationship for the Ambassadors as it fostered growth in these young leaders' personal and professional lives. HER Voice Fund Ambassadors now develop monthly bullets that can be found on Y+ Global social media, highlighting their monthly key achievements, following agreement by Angels and Ambassadors. At PMU level, we have witnessed how the Angel's Programme provides vital and strategic leadership/mentoring to strengthen HER Voice Fund Ambassadors roles with skills, knowledge, and opening up different platforms and places of influence.

As a result of the programme, 90% of our Ambassadors have received professional mentorship, supporting them to apply for permanent professional jobs, with these leaders thriving in their new roles. On average, Angels held 2 sessions with Ambassadors every month, both in person and virtually. In addition, the programme offers the flexibility to cater for all the Ambassadors' needs, including relationships, and to seek advice and support. In an effort to promote Angels' skills and leadership qualities more broadly, PMU have created their profiles and uploaded them on her-voice-fund-ambassador-angels page (**https://www.yplusglobal.org/her-voice-fund-ambassador-angels**).

**The following quotes from Ambassadors illustrate the impact of the program:**

*My Ambassador Angel has been so intentional about ensuring that I meaningfully and actively participate in local and international platforms that allows me to grow and to recognise the brand that I want to build for myself. She has been supportive in ensuring that we turn the goals we have written on our vision boards into practical actions to ensure that we achieve the personal and professional goals we have set for ourselves. She organised professional support by arranging for a meeting with a recruiter who enlightened me on how to write a CV and career advice on how to position myself to getting into graduate's programme for 2024. My Angel gives me opportunities to allow myself to shadow her so that I can learn, and she challenges me a lot. We are currently working on making me a good speaker as she has seen that I have good potential, but most of the times fear overcomes me. We had multiple check-up calls with my Ambassador Angel to go through the work plan, discuss the plans for the rest of the year, how I am dealing with the exams and how I can find balance.*

(Gracious Lekgoathi, HVF Ambassador South Africa)

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*Through the guide of my Ambassador Angel and her making me follow through my ambitions, I can see my financial life taking a better direction where for this period, I have financially invested in a number of portfolios ( 4 to be specific) that include agricultural sector.*

(Nthabeleng  Ntshekalle, HVF Ambassador Lesotho)

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*With support from my Angel, I was recognised for the work I do in Botswana and in the continent, I have been featured in a few print media publications. I got featured in 'The Responsible Citizen Magazine' (one of only 2 print magazine in Botswana with a 2 page spread) on the work I do with the country lead and my support to grantees as #HERVoiceFund Ambassador and in 'The Guardian' Newspaper.. This is a highlight as most of young leaders in the country do not get the opportunity to share the great impact they make in their communities.*

(Millicent Sethaile, HVF Ambassador Botswana)

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## 4.3 Documenting Ambassadors' Journeys over time, and key achievements as a result of HER Voice Fund input/contribution.

### Gracious-HER Voice Fund Ambassador for South Africa Journey:

Gracious Lekgoathi, 21 years old, originally from Limpopo South Africa, a context deeply rooted in traditional and harmful norms,joined HER Voice Fund Ambassadorship in August 2021. Below she illustrates her journey during that time in her own words:

#### *Personal growth*

*If I were to name this chapter, I would name it 'coming into my own'. I came out of my comfort zone and faced my fears of speaking publicly and engaging with people. I am slowly finding comfort in being comfortable around people and engaging with them by being interested in their stories and realizing there is power in networking. I am more confident and I am firm about the goals I set for myself .The highlight of this journey will always be my confidence and how it continues to grow with every engagement I am part of. Moreover it has been about finding my inner voice to help me overcome moments where I feel like an imposter on this journey. During the UN training I was able to start conversations with other people. I have also made significant progress in controlling my thoughts, most of the times I don't get so many things done because I overthink them and lately, I have practised acting spontaneously instead and the results are always better. Through the UN Women leadership training, I have not only learnt how to become a better advocate, but I have also learnt the importance of need to prioritize self-care to nurture my being so that I can allow myself to rest to enable me to get more creative.*

#### *Professional growth*

*I would like to name this chapter 'taking up space' because I have grown tremendously in the past months and serving as the HVF Ambassador has elevated me. I got so many opportunities to participate in local and international platforms that keeps on giving me clarity on what I want as my brand and how I would like to be remembered once I am done with my role. Participation in sustainable development and gender equality conversations also gives me direction on how I would like to use my degree in civil engineering once I obtain it and how I can make it align with my role as an advocate for the health and rights of adolescent girls and young women. This mind set has truly changed how I show up for my studies and it truly allowed me to work harder and yearn to be the best at everything I do.*

*This past semester I managed to pass three of my modules with distinctions, this was because of the support I received from my Ambassador Angel who has been very pivotal in my leadership journey. Through this platform I also get the opportunity to sharpen my public speaking skills and I am gaining more confidence to be in the public eye. Doing radio and TV interviews has reminded me of my dream to one day be a TV presenter early in my childhood. I would stand in my grandmother's lounge and pretend to be speaking to people or mimic my favourite presenter, thus this platform awards me with the opportunity to learn how things are done and what it takes to be exceptional. The highlight of this journey was being able to confidently transition from being a girl who always wanted to be in the background to being a bold facilitator. Winning the UN*

*Women #breakthebias competition showed me the power digital media has in this current generation and how I can monetise on it, thus I will be exploring more ideas on how I can continue to grow my social media pages as a digital content creator. Other opportunities this year have included:*

*The participation in the Anglophone Africa Civil Society and community groups regional meeting hosted by EANNASO to learn more about the good practises on successful engagement of communities in the Global Fund country dialogue processes and in the Global Fund grants currently being implemented under NFM 3 and C19RM to inform approaches to NFM4 funding request development. From the Global Fund we had the Head of External Relations and Communications and the Head of Political and Civil Society Advocacy. The discussion was firstly about the impact of the Global Fund in South Africa in the context of the HER Voice Fund, where I shared my story of success as the Ambassador.*

*Secondly it was about what we would like to see being done after the Global Fund secures at least US$18 billion. I also spoke about the need to prioritize the linkage between SRH-HIV services and using an integrated approach for delivering youth friendly services to adolescent girls and young women. I participated in a high-level civil society meeting hosted by GFAN Africa to engage decision makers (including the presidency, Ministry of Health, SANAC and civil society) on a developing country plan with a women's perspective lenses for the 7th replenishment of the Global Fund and the country's plan to pledge. I further participated in a webinar on how the AGYW can engage more in the Global Fund NMF4 processes. I gave opening remarks on why it is important to have AGYW needs, and priorities represented during the processes and how we can get involved.*

*I attended the International workshop on HIV and Adolescence, where I presented an abstract during poster presentations to showcase the work of HER Voice Fund with AGYW .The abstract was on "Using research approaches to increase access to contraception services by AGYW in Marricune district in Mozambique", conducted by the HVF Ambassador Marcia and grantee Child Life in Mozambique. I also gained knowledge about the best practises and services available in the HIV response for AGYW and young people. I participated in the preparation meeting for the UN Women, taking the lead in the regional high-level meeting held in Tanzania where the focus was on championing the priorities of women and girls in the HIV response. The engagement was on how support can be given to AGYW for improved access to HIV and health services, addressing the barriers AGYW face in the HIV response and how our engagement and participation in decision making spaces can be promoted.*

*To conclude this narration, I have become the "Amandla girl". This has been a long-awaited moment ever since I took up my Ambassadorship role; my desire has always been to impart girls and women with skills to enable them to stand their ground in whatever situation they might find themselves in. Leading up to the Leadership and Advocacy camp, the country lead challenged me to practically come out of my shell and step into my full capabilities by giving me a slot to facilitate an advocate for change session at the camp.*

*It was my first time facilitating such a long session with a topic that can be a bit challenging to grasp but I owned up to the challenge. I facilitated the advocates for change training to educate AGYW more about advocacy. This training made them realize that it is important for them to know and understand their rights to become successful advocates and agents of change in their communities. I loved that they challenged the protest I made as an icebreaker during our session and how they were ready to act. I found being an advocate for change facilitator /trainer to be a very liberating experience, and I cannot wait to do this more.*

# 5 Organisational strengthening

## 5.1 Increased capacity of HER Voice Fund to support grantees/ AGYW to participate and contribute to movement building and advocacy campaigns to improve their health, wellbeing and rights.

HER Voice Fund PMU has established systems in place to facilitate effective support and mentorship to grantees, with the focus on Linking and Learning platforms. PMU facilitated 6 monthly learning calls, where different grantees shared lessons learnt. To further equip grantees, HER Voice Fund organised a webinar to understand the opportunities available within the Community Engagement Strategic Initiative. Bi-weekly WhatsApp trainings were also facilitated, focusing on each country and the key areas where they needed more support, for example, "doing advocacy with a difference".

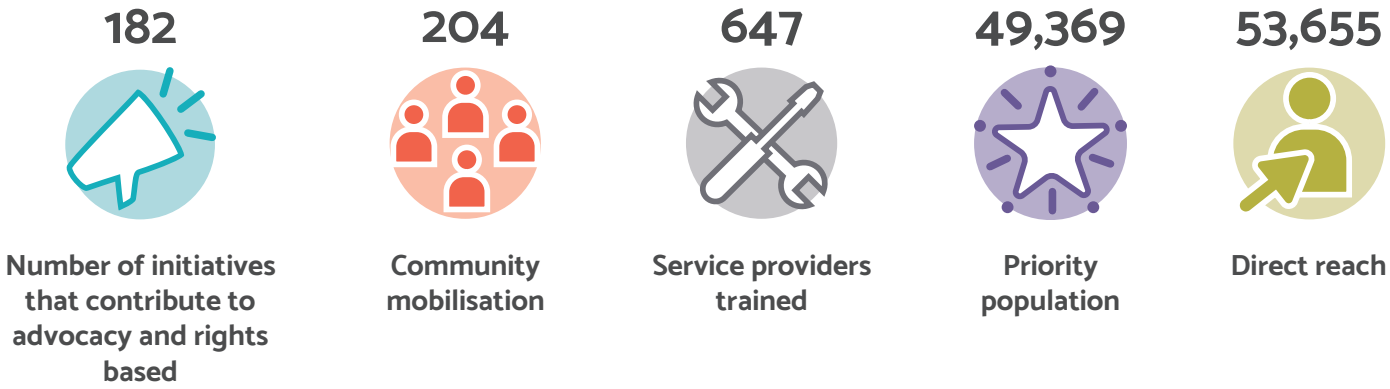
Continuous mentorship and technical assistance to grantees have been very effective with more visible growth being witnessed in relation to grantees' organisational capacity, including in relation to fundraising and organisational sustainability. Overall, 30% of the grantees managed to successfully apply for other funding during this reporting period, with technical support from HER Voice Fund PMU- for example, in crafting the proposal or supporting the application with a recommendation letter. For instance, ASSODECHA in Mozambique successfully applied for PEPFAR grant, on the basis of stronger systems strengthening through HER Voice Fund PMU. In addition, Zimbabwe consortium (involving 6 grantees)were supported by PMU to apply for a Community Led Grant to UNAIDS. Whilst they are waiting for the response, the boldness and confidence of applying for this bigger grant was attributed to the skills and knowledge gained as a result of the technical support from PMU. Y+ Kenya - Country Lead for Kenya - conducted a grantees' needs analysis in terms of organisational development and systems strengthening (ODSS), after successfully securing funding from Kenya Red Cross to support this activity. This work will continue in 2023 to respond to the findings of the assessment and meet grantees' identified needs.

Within the PMU, we have initiated work to strengthen our organisational capacity in order to realise the ambitious vision set out for HER Voice Fund in our Strategy 2022-2025, specifically in relation to addressing the priority of diversifying and scaling up our funding base. In the first quarter of 2023, the PMU worked closely with a consultant to conduct a mapping exercise to identify potential funders in the area of AGYW and SRHR/HIV. The results of the mapping were discussed with the Steering Committee; this work on fundraising is an ongoing priority for 2023 and beyond, and the PMU are working closely with fundraising colleagues at the Global Fund to agree priority funders to target and next steps.

In 2023, HER Voice Fund is looking forward to the launch of AGYW Organisational Development Curricula that was developed with leadership of AGYW, PATA and the Global Fund. Operationalising this curriculum will help to strengthen the organisational internal systems, empowering more grantees to apply for funding, both domestic and internationally. In order to motivate and appreciate grantees' efforts, PMU is looking to develop a reward system where at the end of each implementing period, well performing grantees will receive a certificate from HER Voice Fund. Another reward could be to sponsor one grantee to a conference, for example, the ICASA conference in December 2023.

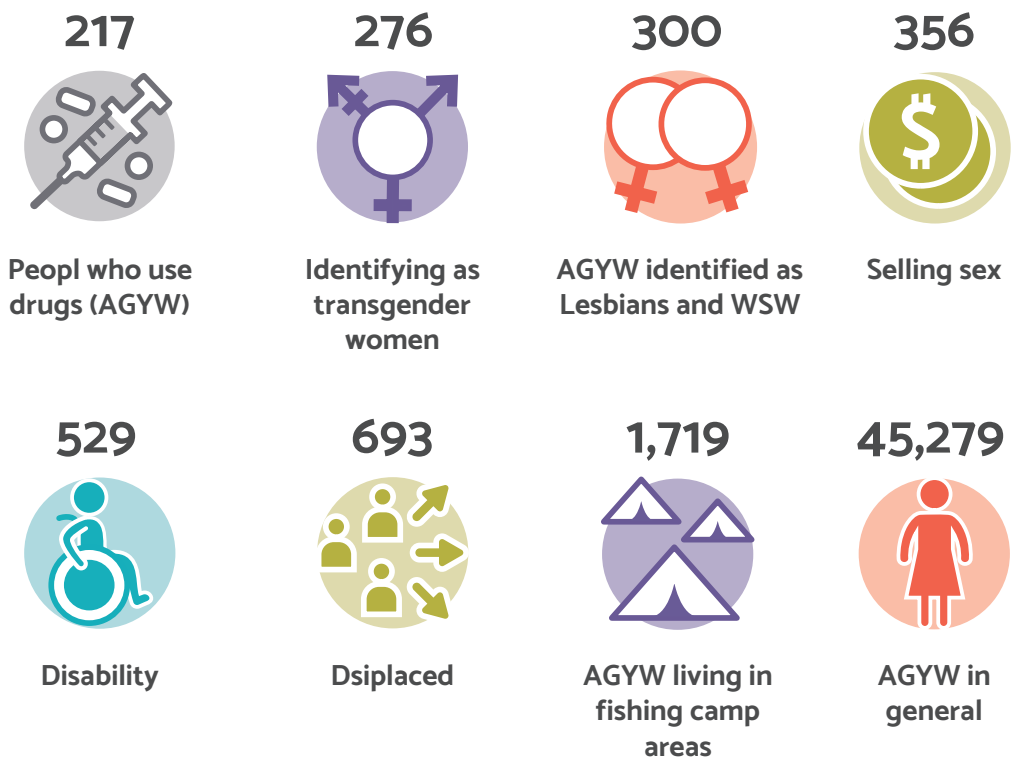
Progress on ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Indicators for the year 2022/23 on HER Voice Fund main service Agreement

Fig 5. ViiV indicators



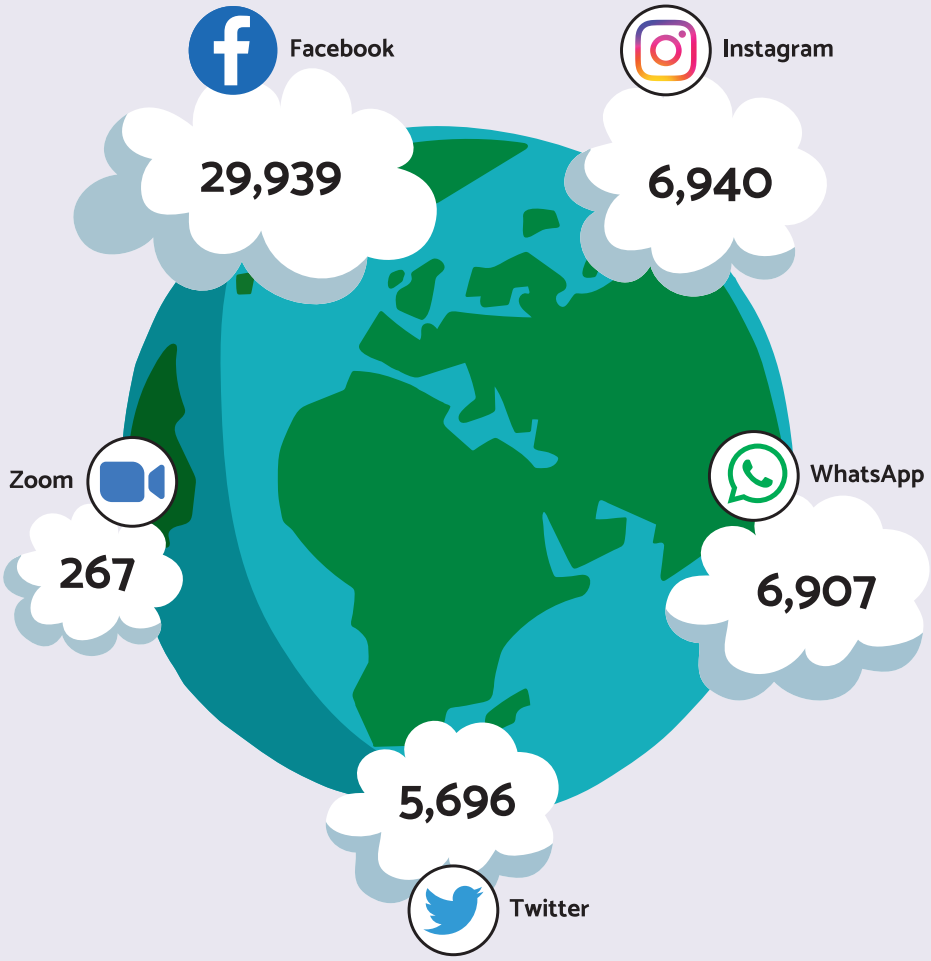

Progress on Y+ Global HER Voice Fund Indicators for the year 2022/23 on HER Voice Fund main service Agreement

Fig 6. Key population reach



## 5.2 From the total number of AGYW for the year 2022 period, how many were reached through digital platforms.

Fig 7. Social media reach




**Development of partnerships & movement building. How have you engaged with external partners and/or other HER Voice Fund countries and partners during this reporting period? What difference has this made?**

HER Voice Fund had the privilege of meeting with the President of Organisation of African First Ladies on Development (OAFLAD), in November 2022 at the Namibian State house. The discussion centred on how we can leverage, create movement building around working with First ladies on advancing the key issues affecting AGYW across Africa. The first activity on promoting collaboration and movement building with Africa Reach, will take place on International Women's Day in March 2023, where we are planning to welcome the honourable First Lady from Nigeria and HER Voice Fund Ambassador.

HER Voice Fund collaborated with Women4Global Fund, Voix Essentiali and AidsFonds International to support the Global Fund's 7th Replenishment advocacy process. In collaboration, we developed a critical document, '**Understanding the 7th Replenishment for the Global FundFight For What Counts: Women's Rights and Gender Equality**,' with the aim of informing and equipping AGYW constituencies in countries on how to participate during the replenishment. The collaboration developed twelve advocacy letters which were submitted to different governments and entities, including the UK, Germany, Sweden, European Union, European Commission, Canada, and Norwegian governments. Moreover, HER Voice Fund Ambassadors were trained on social media, focusing on content creation and support to develop their advocacy messages during the **#WhatCountsForMe** campaign, resulting in 12,768 interactions. The main targets for the campaign included governments, private donors, and the EU Commission, with key messages on why they should replenish the Global Fund, with a particular focus on the needs of AGYW related to our health and rights. For more information about the campaign, visit **Her Voice Fund**.

HER Voice Fund/University of Cape Town (UCT) collaboration continued in the reporting period where Ambassadors, grantees and AGYW from Cameroon, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, and Mozambique participated during the in-country visit by the UCT team. The findings from this UCT initiative will be instrumental for HER Voice Fund to advocate for AGYW key priorities during the on-going Grant Cycle 7 across 13 African countries. The findings will not only strengthen our voice but will also shine a light on the current gaps in AGYW programming and how each key player-governments, donors, implementers- should start to prioritise AGYW needs related to our health and rights.

HER VOICE