

YOUth did it again! Meaningful and ethical engagement of young people in the HIV response

Why it matters.

Young people living with and affected by HIV play a critical role in the response to HIV as they have impacted so heavily. Over the years, we have seen the number of young people involved in shaping the global HIV response grow. Young people's engagement has been crucial to reducing HIV transmission rates amongst young people and improving the quality of life and access to treatment for young people living with HIV (YPLHIV). As young people directly affected by the HIV pandemic, we have so much to offer to the HIV response, to highlight our issues and challenges, to advise on how best to reach and engage our peers, and to identify innovative youth-led and youth-engaged approaches and solutions. We have energy and passion for this work, but how we partner with organisations and the way in which we are treated is critical to getting the best results.

We want young people to feel positive not have a bad experience. Find out who they are and what they want and what is their need

This leaflet has been written to introduce you the work we have been doing to produce a guideline for organisations to help them work with young people, to ensure that young people are meaningfully engaged and actively participate as partners in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and processes that affect them. The guideline helps organisations think about their work with young people within 7 areas

1. Keeping young people safe
2. Valuing the contribution of young people
3. Providing support
4. Ensuring diverse representation of young people
5. Building positive youth- adult partnerships
6. Investing in the sustainability of youth-led organisations
7. Promoting greater accountability to young people

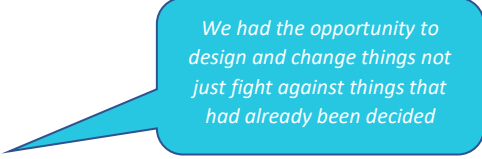
This leaflet provides a summary of the key messages in the guideline and provides questions to help you reflect on meaningful and ethical engagement and your work with organisations.

Remember you have a right to be heard and to participate in programmes, events, and advocacy but it is important you think about the types of partnership you build with organisations and that you are clear about what you expect when working as a youth advocate and activist.

We hope that these guidelines will improve the way organisations work.

So, what do we mean by 'meaningful' and 'ethical'?

When we talk about meaningful engagement, we mean that the work you do has purpose and is something you can have an impact on. It should be work that is relevant to you and your peers. It should be work where your contribution is valued and appreciated, and where you can collaborate fully. Your relationship with the organisation should be one where you are supported to learn and develop, and where you are provided with guidance and feedback.



We had the opportunity to design and change things not just fight against things that had already been decided

The work should also be ethical, this means 'done right'. You should be safe and secure in all the activities you take part in, and the organisation should take responsibility to support you and to monitor your work, to meet your expectations. Your work should be recognised and valued, and this might be through payment, stipends, grants, or opportunities for training development and progression. Organisations need to be honest and transparent about what they want you to do and should NEVER coerce or manipulate you to do things you are not comfortable doing. They should provide you with safe spaces to work where you are not at risk of discrimination or exploitation by others, and where you feel your contributions can make a real difference.

If organisations do not display these characteristics, then we hope the questions will help you consider whether this is the type of work and organisation you want to give your time to.

We asked young people about their experiences working as activists and advocates and you will see the things, they told us throughout this leaflet. They also helped create a list of things you should expect and questions to ask.

You should expect;

*Value me for what I bring
not my HIV status*

- To be kept safe and not put into situations that can make you vulnerable
- To be listened to and your contributions valued and appreciated.
- Not to be forced or coerced into doing or saying things you don't want to.
- Not to be dismissed or patronised by people;
- Not to be expected to represent all young people by yourself.
- To work on things that can make a change, not on things that have already been decided;
- To have things explained and reexplained as needed;
- To feel safe to travel to new places with proper support;
- To be assisted to participate fully in events;
- To be able to criticise and challenge without fear;
- To feel supported and protected within the organisation;
- To have choice on what you do and be able to say NO;
- To be respected in your opinions and expertise and valued as a equal team member.
- To be given space to lead an initiative and innovate;

*I saw on the programme that
I was giving a testimony. I
was uncomfortable, that
wasn't what had been
discussed but I just did*

Before you commit to working with an organisation take time to get to know them and understand the work they are doing.

- Do you want to be part of this work?
- What have you heard about how they have engaged young people living with HIV in the past?
- Do they engage with a diverse range of young people?
- What pathways do they offer to young people in their organisation?
- Do they have trainings and skills development?
- How will this opportunity benefit you?
- Have their staff been trained on working with young people?
- Do they pay for your time or have budget for the work you do?
- Are you the only young person taking part?
- Why did they choose you?

- Can you make a difference, is there space to change things?
- How will your involvement be valued?

We hope you found this helpful. Remember if you are not sure about the organisation, then talk to them about the guide and ask them to consider responding to the organisational checklist tool in the package to assess where they are. Organisations work differently with young people, some in better ways than others. If you feel there are things that can be improved on but are unsure with how to approach or discuss change with the organisation and the management here are some things to consider:

- Talk to someone in the organisation you trust and ask their advice;
- Make a case - use facts, evidence and examples to illustrate your concerns and to refer to guidelines to support your points;
- Use the guidelines and the checklists to gather examples and evidence.
- Be clear and transparent in your views and thoughts on what needs to change;
- Make a plan - suggest to an organisation what things can be done differently to make it a more inclusive for young people. Change can be a difficult concept for organisations but they must be open to it to survive.

We would love to hear about your experiences working with different organisations. You could write your own report about organisations you have worked with, and provide them with feedback you can use the checklist tool to measure the organisation. Share with us at youthengagement@yplusglobal.org

Provide a platform to be able to share personal experiences and have accountability. Hear our voices and our frustrations lack of opportunities

My advice is know your value, know what you need and never be afraid to speak out when the work load does not match the appreciation given to you. We can only stop exploitation/ manipulation and rip offs if we unite and how valuable we are.