MEASURING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
GUIDANCE FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING YOUTH PROGRAMS

A young girl in Madagascar answers a question at an event about preventing gender-based violence.
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The Youth Engagement Community of Practice (YE CoP) managed by YouthPower Learning has worked to define meaningful youth engagement, developed messages for "pitching" youth engagement to different stakeholders, and discussed effective strategies for engaging diverse youth in program design, implementation, and evaluation. With the recent release of the Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit, the topic of measuring and evaluating youth engagement came to the forefront. While measuring youth engagement is discussed in the Toolkit, members of the YE CoP believe that there was more to say about illustrating the value of including youth in the development of the programs that serve them.

To help development organizations and other actors more effectively measure youth engagement, this resource provides a list of possible 'targets of measurement' that could be adapted for measuring engagement of youth in programs, community groups, and governing bodies.

The measurement statements are listed in the table. Individual programs or organizations can use these measurement statements as standards or leverage them to develop indicators for monitoring and evaluating

youth engagement. Community groups or government bodies can use them to set goals for youth participation and inclusion. Finally, young leaders can use them to determine how well the institutions around them are working with youth. Following this list of measurement statements is some advice and guidance from those of us who have grappled with the issue of measuring youth engagement.

MEASUREMENT STATEMENTS

The measurement statements are classified at three levels: youth, program or organization, and enabling environment. Youth-level statements set a standard or aspiration for youth engagement from the perspective of youth, and focus on topics such as type of engagement, level of engagement, and satisfaction with engagement. Program or organizational statements look at how programs or organizations are engaging youth, what resources they are dedicating to youth engagement, and what outcomes are resulting from these efforts. Enabling environment statements focus on viewing youth engagement from the parental, community, and government perspective; this includes such things as support and commitment to youth engagement, policies in place, and related outcomes. It is useful to note that, although the three types of measurement statements

are listed in a column within the same table, they are not presented in any particular order, and there is no relation between measurement statements in the same row.

Each of the statements can be used 'as is' for setting youth engagement standards or can be adapted to be a measurement indicator. For example, 'youth are actively engaged in program design' can be turned into 'number or percentage of youth actively engaged in program design.' Or the statement 'the program/organization spends a certain percentage of its budget on youth engagement' can be turned into 'the program/organization spends

10% of its budget on youth engagement.' This allows the user of these 'targets of measurement' to apply them in a contextually appropriate manner.

When using these measurement statements, it is also important to define terms. For example, at the Enabling Environment level, what constitutes "openness" to engaging youth among community governing bodies or institutions? Defining "open" should be based on knowledge of current practices and norms in the target context. Adapting to the target context is critical to measuring what is intended to be measured.

YOUTH LEVEL	PROGRAM OR ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	ENABLING ENVIRONMENT LEVEL
Youth are actively engaged in program design.	The program/organization creates opportunities for youth engagement.	Community governing bodies and/or institutions are open to engaging youth.
Youth are actively engaged in program implementation.	The program/organization has youth engagement policies in place.	Community governing bodies commit to including youth members.
Youth are actively engaged in program monitoring and evaluation (M&E).	Staff spend time supporting youth engagement in planning, implementation, and evaluation.	Community governing bodies and/or institutions commit financial resources to supporting youth engagement.
Youth are engaged in governing or decision-making bodies.	The program/organization directs resources toward supporting youth engagement.	Community governing bodies and/or institutions allow youth to contribute to decision making.
Youth are satisfied with their level and type of engagement.	The program/organization spends a certain percent of its budget on youth engagement.	Community governing bodies and/or institutions have the capacity to engage youth.
Youth feel a strong connection to their peers, families, and communities as a result of their engagement.	Youth and adults work together to set guidelines and implement activities.	Community governing bodies and/or institutions are satisfied with level and type of youth engagement.
Youth increase their skills and competencies as a result of their engagement (e.g., their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors).	The program/organization welcomes youth input into funding decisions.	Community governing bodies and/or institutions allow youth to provide input into how funds and resources are allocated.
Youth have opportunities to make community contributions e.g. (social justice, civil society, and volunteering).	The program/organization is satisfied with youth level and type of engagement.	Local and national institutions have a representative level of youth participation.
Youth are actively engaged in politics and vote.	The program/organization has youth-friendly materials and processes that encourage participation (e.g., language, phone apps, activities)	Community institutions (e.g., libraries, sports, church, school) have a high level of youth engagement and participation.
Youth participate in service learning or community service projects.	The program/organization makes changes to its activities or services based on youth input.	National youth policies and laws are in place.

YOUTH LEVEL	PROGRAM OR ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	ENABLING ENVIRONMENT LEVEL
Youth are knowledgeable about how to mobilize people and resources.	A diverse group of youth, representing all affected populations including the vulnerable and marginalized, is engaged in the program/organization.	Government has a formal mechanism for gathering youth perspectives on a regular basis and communicating them to governing institutions at the local/sub-national/national level.
Youth-led organizations are created and operating.	The program/organization has a transparent and democratic system of selecting youth representatives to decision-making bodies.	Government has a policy stating that youth are to be permanent members of governing/decision-making bodies.
Youth are members of youth-led or youth-focused organizations.	The program/organization hosts meetings and other activities at times and places that enable young people to participate.	Community leaders see youth as credible and competent.
Youth-led organizations are networked with each other.	The program/organization sees improved program outcomes due to more youth managed activities.	Community members recognize that youth can positively impact the community.
Demonstrated youth-led models are adopted by other groups.	The program/organization supports youth-led groups.	Parents support their youth in engaging with community and government institutions.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING THE MEASUREMENT STATEMENTS

When applying these 'targets of measurement' statements, YE CoP members offer the following advice:

1. Classify adapted measurement indicators as outputs (products) or outcomes (benefits or impacts).
2. Have young people provide input or decide on what standards or indicators are used and how they are measured.
3. Disaggregate measurement indicators by age, sex, disability, and socio-economic status. For those that are measuring the level and type of youth inclusion, consider disaggregating by education level to ensure representation of various populations of youth, including those most marginalized.
4. For measurement indicators, consider using 'the change in number or percent' versus only 'number or percent' to capture differences over time.
5. When measuring youth engagement in committees and decision-making bodies, assess whether these opportunities for youth voice are actively sustainable. There are many committees that include youth that exist on paper but do not actually meet or are not sustainable mechanisms for youth engagement.
6. Make sure that measurement statements chosen allow you to get to the 'quality of youth engagement' as well as the 'quantity or level.' Albeit harder to do, it is important to ensure that opportunities for youth inclusion are not tokenistic.
7. When setting targets and measuring youth engagement in monitoring and evaluation, ensure efforts are made to design the system, collect and interpret the data.
8. When measuring improvements in program outcomes as a result of youth engagement, consider how to control for the youth engagement in the design of your study. This could be done by comparing two programs with and without youth engagement. It could also be done by examining the outcomes of a youth program before and after youth engagement strategies are initiated.
9. When measuring the skills and competencies youth develop as a result of engagement, consider knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors such as leadership, communication, public speaking, goal setting, facilitation, coordination, confidence, and planning.
10. Share your results with the YE CoP, YouthPower Learning, and others! We want to be able to learn from each other, so as you test these and other measurement statements, communicate what you have learned.

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USAID YouthPower Learning generates and disseminates knowledge about the implementation and impact of positive youth development (PYD) and cross-sectoral approaches in international development. The project leads research, evaluations, and events designed to build the evidence base related to PYD. Concurrently, YouthPower Learning employs expertise in learning and knowledge sharing to promote engagement and inform the global community about how to successfully help transition young people into productive, healthy adults. YouthPower Learning supports the implementation of the 2012 USAID Youth in Development Policy to improve capacity and enable the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to, and benefit from, more stable, democratic, and prosperous communities.