



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Making Global Fund money work for young people in the HIV response

In many parts of the world, the HIV epidemic has a new face: the face of a young person. The promise of the next generation could be dramatically restricted without smart, targeted investments in reaching these young people, particularly adolescent girls and young key populations. While the Global Fund has made young people a priority in its narrative, this has yet to translate into meaningful engagement at the country level. Those limits were very much on display at the recent, 33rd meeting of the Global Fund Board: almost no young person was present, even on the margins of the two-day encounter.

The limited engagement of young people in Global Fund decision-making processes extends to the country level. Only a handful of country coordinating mechanisms have youth representation and there are only a few youth-led organizations engaged as sub- or sub-sub-recipients of Global Fund grant money.

So how do we turn the Global Fund into a youth-accessible, youth-inclusive organization, mindful of the complexities in the mechanism and the entrenched constituencies keen to retain their seats at the table? To reach young people, it's not just about social media, or celebrities, or catchy memes and gifs. It's about opening up dialogue to people who may not be able to leverage years of training to solve problems but who can trade on their experiences here, and now.

In 2014, The PACT (a coalition of 25 youth organizations from all over the world), in collaboration with UNAIDS and The Global Fund Secretariat launched the toolkit "Making the money work for young people". The toolkit aims to inform young activists working on HIV issues, members of country coordinating mechanisms (CCMs) and other key stakeholders about the importance of involving young people in decision-making — as well as targeting them with the right kind of activities — within the Global Fund ecology.

The toolkits were piloted at workshops in Honduras, Nepal and Zimbabwe by Youth LEAD with support

from NORAD, and thus far have had just the kind of impact we were hoping for: young people who are already involved in their country's response to AIDS now have a better sense of how the Global Fund works at country and can get more involved in decision-making, M&E and advocacy in general.

If knowledge is power, giving young people the tools they need to understand the Global Fund will be transformative. At each of the three workshops we saw a deepening understanding not just of the \$4 billion spent annually by the Global Fund but where the gaps were, and where young people needed to get involved to fill those gaps.

The Global Fund is on the right track, coordinating a youth-focused session during the recent Board meeting and helping to facilitate relationships between young civil society activists, donors and government officials. Now it's time to turn those relationships and discussions into action, and transform the participation by young people into something real, meaningful and long-lasting.

We are the future, both of the epidemic and of the response. Challenge us. Teach us. Engage us.

Gaj Gurung is a member of Youth LEAD and Ricardo Baruch is a member of the PACT. The opinions in this commentary are their own.

[Read More](#)
