



LEARNING REPORT

YOUTH CHALLENGE FUND **PILOT PHASE**



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I. YOUTH CHALLENGE FUND



The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) is an inclusive, competitive, flexible and participatory fund targeting girls and youth (15-30 years of age) in West and Central Africa. After the pilot phase of the YCF, Plan International wanted to engage youth activists to review and learn from this first phase through a learning process. This learning process focused on how to improve the responsiveness, flexibility, impact and inclusiveness of the fund while better aligning with the needs of youth activists. Key learning areas were defined and discussed throughout the process:

1. Functionality, effectiveness, and efficiency focuses on how to better adapt the fund to youth activists' realities and needs.
2. Financial support looks at how well the way payments were made matches the needs of youth activists, and how to improve or expand the funding component and respect the idea of "flexibility." This includes looking at Plan International's

internal policies and procedures.

3. Non-financial support reviews how Plan International can more effectively engage and inspire with youth activists, including standardizing support across countries.
4. Gender equality, protection and safeguarding looks at how well this was integrated, (protection and safeguarding as well) and understood by youth activists to create even more impact in future cycles.
5. Sustainability focused on understanding how the YCF could support youth activists to scale and grow their work, sustainably.

The YCF pilot provided 23 youth-led organizations in WACA with €5,000 per group. Each group received some non-financial or technical support. The pilot occurred over six months from August 2020 to January 2021, although each group ultimately only had three months to implement their projects. The model also has the following key

principles:

- **Ownership:** the YCF call girls/ young people to drive the initiative and lead the selection process and the YCF network.
- **Respect:** the YCF will respect that girl and youth-led groups know best about what they need to survive and flourish. Plan International will be a flexible partner and will adapt our own procedures to their realities as is needed.
- **Gender transformative:** the YCF will fund groups and organizations that align with Plan International in terms of transforming gender inequality. An intersectional gender and inclusion lens must be evident.
- **Boldness:** the YCF speaks girls and youth language, is designed for creative and non-conventional projects and challenge status quo in meaningfully engaging youth through its model, principles, procedures and mechanism.
- **Empowerment:** the YCF will encourage girls/youth to design creative local solutions to change the outcomes for the most vulnerable.

- **Influence:** with a huge scale up potential, the YCF showcases inspirational girls/young role models to leverage partnerships and resources.
- **Flexibility:** it not just for funding projects, but a mechanism enabling to strengthen their groups and organizations and ensuring they survive this crisis. Adapt internal mechanism to fit the YCF modalities and model.
- **Reporting:** it should be light and youth friendly.

Grantees implemented projects covering various topics, using innovative approaches, to reach more than 19,000 people directly and 100,000 people indirectly through social media and radio. 57% (13 projects) of projects included people with disabilities and 70% (16 projects) of projects included people from minority groups.

1. WHO WE ARE ?

This table will be presented as a map in the final formatted report, highlighting the location of each group and a brief summary of their project/approach.

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY
BENIN	
Barika	Fighting against children marriage
Happy Children	Entrepreneurship and empowerment for disadvantaged children
BURKINA FASO	
Association Graine de Leaders (AGL)	Fighting violence against women and girls
Association Jeunes Espoir et Solidarité (AJES)	Fighting against trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls aged 8 to 17

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY
Association Mixte Développement Economique Social du Sud-Ouest (AMDESSO)	Fighting against Covid-19
Union Nationale des Associations Burkinabè pour la Promotion des Aveugles et Malvoyants (UN-ABPAM)	Safe sexual and reproductive life
Ya-Coufa	Awareness raising on covid-19 and clandestine abortions
CAMEROON	
Hope Alive Association	Safe sexual and reproductive health rights free from gender based violence
GHANA	
Gray Network	Fighting against teenage pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, early child marriage and gender-based violence
Necessary Aid Alliance	Education and entrepreneurial empowerment of youth
GUINEE	
Club des Jeunes Filles Leaders de Guinée (CJFLG)	Strengthening girls' knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and raising awareness on covid-19
Club des Jeunes Scientifiques Francophones de Guinée	Fighting against child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)
ELLES	Fighting against child abuse
Organisation de Secours aux Handicapées de Guinée (OSH-Guinée)	Improving the lives of girls/boys living with disabilities
MALI	
Conseil Consultatif National des Enfants et Jeunes (CCNEJ)	Fighting against child marriage
KoroChiblog	Fighting against Covid-19
Association pour la Promotion des Femmes par les TIC (MUSODEV)	Fighting against gender-based violence through new technologies
NIGER	
Club des Jeunes Filles Modeles (CFJM)	Awareness raising on covid-19 and leadership, entrepreneurship for girls
Climate and Sustainable Development Action Club (CSDAC)	Youth empowerment through entrepreneurship
SENEGAL	
Association des Sans Abris West Africa (ASAWA)	Fighting against Covid-19
Réseau des Jeunes pour la Promotion de l'Abandon des Mutilations Génitales Féminines et des Mariages d'Enfants (RJPMGF)	Fighting against Covid-19
SIERRA LEONE	
Mirror Africa	Mitigating violence against women and girls
Women for Women	Fighting against domestic violence towards young women and girls

The table below presents a brief overview of projects developed by the 23 grantees and key results



achieved for each project during this pilot phase of the YCF:

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY	KEYS RESULTS
BENIN		
Barika	Barika's project named "Early & Forced Marriage and Covid 19, Let's Talk About It in the Village" addressed communication and community advocacy on child marriage during Covid19.	Communication and community advocacy actions on child marriage reached 112 people in 4 localities including 72 youth and 40 religious leaders and locality chiefs.
Happy Children	Happy Children's "Fight for Access to Better Opportunities for Disadvantaged Children" project consisted of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness raising on covid-19 as well as donation of sanitizers and masks; • training of children and young people in food processing: tomato puree, tamarind juice/ baobab and preparation of liquid soap. 	300 children and young people from 5 to 18 years old from six orphanages selected were sensitized on the causes, means of transmission, symptoms as well as health consequences of the Covid-19 and taught preventive measures. They also received training in income-generating activities that will allow them to become self-sufficient
BURKINA FASO		
Association Graine de Leaders	AGL's project named "Emergency: Fight against Violence against Women and Girls" was composed of three major activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital awareness campaign against violence against women; • Design of radio spots to raise awareness on violence against women and girls; • Printing and pasting of large-format of public posters and awareness-raising against violence against women and girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of public awareness about violence against women and girls thanks to the social media content. • Videos from well-known personalities and influencers to support the project and raise awareness on violence against women and girls.
Association Jeunes Espoir et Solidarité (AJES)	With its "Stop Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Girls aged 8 to 17" project, AJES successfully: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established 10 non-school based clubs composed of 250 out-of-school girls; • Trained 10 mentors who animated the clubs with a participation rate of 97% of the target girls; • Established 12 school clubs in 8 schools composed of 720 girls. 	970 girls (aged between 8-17), 720 in school and 250 out of school improved their knowledge and skills on children's rights, sexual and reproductive health as well as life and pre-vocational skills to resist sexual abuse and exploitation.
Association Mixte Développement Economique Social du Sud-Ouest (AMDESSO)	AMDESSO implemented the "Club de Santé Anti-Covid-19" project which consisted of combating covid-19 by youth and for youth through strengthening and empowerment of youth clubs for better sustainability of their actions.	320 educational talks on barrier measures against covid-19 for the benefit of communities.

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY	KEYS RESULTS
Union Nationale des Associations Burkinabè pour la Promotion des Aveugles et Malvoyants (UNABPAM)	UN-ABPAM's "Safe Sexual and Reproductive Life of Young People Living with Visual Impairment in Burkina Faso" project included training of young peer trainers and visually impaired youth, production of radio programs and awareness raising in communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training of 10 young peer trainers on technical animation and on themes related to the sexual and reproductive rights of disabled youth; Training of 100 visually impaired youth on the sexual and reproductive rights of disabled youth, including personal development and gender-based violence; Production of radio programs on the rights of young people with disabilities in Dioula.
Ya-Coufa	YA-COUFA conducted the "Stop Unwanted Pregnancies and Clandestine Abortions" project which consisted of the reinforcement of knowledge and capacities of adolescents based on gender, children's rights and COVID 19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training of 20 restaurant workers on covid 19, hygiene and children's rights as well as 15 door-to-door talks on COVID 19 and the rights of the child. 2 conferences on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and an outing to supervise the activities
CAMEROON		
Hope Alive Association	HOPE ALIVE project named "A Community Focused Project to Build the Capacity of Teens in some Hard-To-Reach Areas in the Bamenda III Subdivision" consisted of capacities building of teens towards achieving resilient communities with focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health Right and Gender Based Violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 500 young girls and boys trained on GBV and the various forms or types of gender-based violence and how and where to report these acts of GBV in the community 600 reusable sanitary pads provided for a community pad bank, and 400 reusable sanitary pads donated to girls
GHANA		
Gray Network	Girls Stand GRAY Network implemented the project entitled: "Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Education, a Key to Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy, Unsafe Abortion, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Early Child Marriage and Gender-Based Violence". The focus was on leadership skills, gender equality, adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights, girls' empowerment and livelihood, and girls' rights and access to justice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 500 sanitary pads, 50 t-shirts, 450 masks, were purchased and some other general expenses; 900 students were trained on life, leadership, and communication skills, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights, and rights of the girl child; Participants who were teenage mothers have formed Teenage Mother Advocates Club. They are championing the crusade to reduce teenage pregnancy in their communities and ensure their empowerment.
Necessary Aid Alliance	Necessary Aid Alliance implemented the "Education and Youth Skill Development" project through four activities which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smart Community Library/ Computer Lab Project; Girl Child Empowerment Group; Training of Trainees Education Program; Entrepreneurial Skills Training for Women (Liquid Soap & Beads Making). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting up a library space furnished with free books (appropriate for age group 6 to 18 years old), computers and internet access as a conduit to stimulate reading habits; 500 rural women, and some health workers trained in liquid soap production as an alternative source of income and to advance proper hand washing and hygienic conditions in their homes.

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY	KEYS RESULTS
GUINEA		
Club des Jeunes Filles Leaders de Guinée	CJFLG implemented the project entitled "Sexuality, Let's Talk" which consisted of running a campaign for sensitization and distribution of sanitary pads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production and broadcast of audio spots in four different dialects and the local language Production and distribution of more than 400 washable sanitary pads; Distribution of soaps and masks in this period of Covid-19 to also convey the message on this crisis; Production of a video to raise awareness in the field and to advocate for easier access to sanitary pads for girls, which was also broadcast on social networks.
Club des Jeunes Scientifiques Francophones de Guinée	<p>CJSFG's "Rural Education" project covered consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and sensitization of parents, administrative authorities, and religious leaders on the dangers of child abuse and the fight against COVID19; Capacity building of youth in the rational use of computers; Training and sensitization of women mothers, serfs, matrons, and young girls on FGM and early marriages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 66 leaders identified and trained to maintain the momentum of child protection and the fight against gender-based violence; Participants made aware of children abuse, the blatant violation of the rights of the girl child, and how to prevent the spread of coronavirus; Women trained on child abuse committed themselves by saying: «we will treat our children like kings from now on».
ELLES	ELLES implemented its project entitled "Girls in Danger" which mainly consisted of launching a campaign on social media meeting street vendor girls who are heads of families for buying all their products after discussion sessions.	Launching of NO GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE digital campaign for which Visuals, video clips and spots were designed and broadcast on all digital platforms "ELLES" and "FILLES EN DANGER" and on national television. A zoom webinar was organized to end the campaign;
Organisation de Secours aux Handicapées de Guinée (OSH-Guinée)	<p>OSH's "Improving the Lives of Girls/ Boys Living with Disabilities" project aimed to promote the rights and contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of young girls/ boys living with disabilities. Main activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 educational talks and 3 programs to popularize the rights of young girls/boys with disabilities; An advocacy workshop and; a digital campaign on the rights and accessibility of young girls/boys with disabilities to essential social services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52 people with disabilities were touched and 39,208 people were reached online; Production of a report on the living conditions of young girls/boys with disabilities, to better reach the sensibility of decision makers.

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY	KEYS RESULTS
MALI		
Conseil Consultatif National des Enfants et Jeunes (CCNEJ)	<p>CCNEJ-Mali's "The World I Dream Of" project addressed gender-based violence with the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a tool for sensitization and advocacy against gender-based violence and for girls' education; Involve parents in the promotion and protection of girls' rights; Sensitize the communities on the dangers and risks related to the coronavirus through adapted messages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities sensitized on the dangers and risks related to the coronavirus, the importance of education to fight against child marriage through adapted messages on TV, radio and social networks; Through the digital campaign 15,254 people were reached on Facebook and 2567 on Twitter.
Korochiblog	<p>Korochiblog 's project entitled "All against Covid19" focused on Coronavirus prevention and awareness through three main activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> training, awareness, and education; Raising awareness and sensitization; Organization of the poetry competition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained 30 young people on prevention against Coronavirus; Raised awareness through radio broadcasts, a series of articles written on their platform and videos on barrier measures in local languages; Organized the poetry competition on covid-19 among high schools with the participation of 25 girls and 25 boys.
Association pour la Promotion des Femmes par les TIC (MUSODEV)	<p>MUSODEV implemented the project entitled "Fight against Gender Based Violence through New Technologies" through the following phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the prototype of the «Zero GBV» application; a web platform; a mobile application for information and awareness on gender-based violence; a field campaign in Bamako followed by a digital campaign; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A prototype, a web platform and an app developed; Field campaign in the district of Bamako to demonstrate the app to the local population, with a particular focus on raising awareness about GBV and COVID-19; Digital campaign to popularize the application online before and during the 16 days of activism against GBV.
NIGER		
Club des Jeunes Filles Modeles (CFJM)	<p>The club implemented the project entitled: "Leadership and Empowerment of the Girl Child in the Covid-19 Period" focusing on leadership and capacity building through three main actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building on advocacy and peer mobilization; COVID19 prevention kit distribution; Online peer advocacy for e-learning opportunities; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced 50 masks; Conducted a three-day workshop with the participation of 25 young girls and adolescents around themes such as female leadership, female entrepreneurship and youth and adolescent health/sexual health.
Climate and Sustainable Development Action Club (CSDAC)	<p>CSDAC implemented the project entitled: "Entrepreneurship and Empowerment of Nigerien Youth to Face Unemployment in the Context of Covid-19", which consisted of training youth on content covering the following essential questions: What is Solar Energy? What is it used for and how is it used? How to benefit from this energy? What are existing solar technologies? How are they used in the world and/or in Niger?</p>	<p>Training of the 30 selected laureates. All 30 laureates had the opportunity to present their entrepreneurial project in front of a jury of the Incubator Center of the Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey (CIUAM), which finally selected the 3 best projects with a great potential.</p>

GROUP NAME	PROJECT SUMMARY	KEYS RESULTS
SENEGAL		
Association des Sans Abris West Africa (ASAWA)	ASAWA implemented the "Masks in Wax" project which consisted of training 20 young girls aged 10 to 20 years old in mask production. The target were schools and public places, street children and destitute people, etc., in Dakar and in its suburb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 young girls trained in masks production; 750 masks produced and distributed with sensitization in three public schools of the Point E commune.
Réseau des Jeunes pour la Promotion de l'Abandon des Mutilations Génitales Féminines et des Mariages d'Enfants (RJPMGF)	The association conducted an awareness campaign called "MBOLOO DAAN CORONA" which means Together, Let's Fight Corona. The aim of this campaign was to fight against COVID-19 and its harmful consequences linked to GBV (female genital mutilation, domestic violence, sexual harassment, pedophilia and rape) of which women and girls are victims in homes and in some localities, by sensitizing the population and decision-makers to work for the development and protection of women and girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 500 masks, 300 bottles of gel, 300 bottles of bleach, and 300 liquid soap have been purchased and distributed; Field activities with sensitization, home visit and distribution of 150 hygiene kits; 10 photographs, 10 videos, 12 posts of field activities (home visits and distribution of hygiene kits) and 2 Facebook Live were made.
SIERRA LEONNE		
Mirror Africa	Mirror Africa's "Effectively Mitigating Violence against Women and Girls during Covid-19 Period" project focused on Women's Empowerment with 2 main activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> educational video series podcasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendly video series (also distributed on tv) where produced and featured stories about VAWG, GBV and recommendations on working together to end GBV; Four episodes of three-minute podcast featuring gender sensitive information and recommendations on working together to end violence against women were written, recorded and produced; At least 1,000 people knowledge on VAWG and GBV was enhanced.
Women for Women	Women for Women's project entitled: "Support to Promote the Safety of Young Women and Girls against Domestic Violence in Sierra Leone" focused on Domestic Violence, and main activities included the development of domestic violence focused education and awareness raising information outreach using media platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders including an honorable member of parliament, ward councilor and other key authorities made a commitment to support the fight to end domestic and sexual violence by putting into action and practice all laws against domestic violence; Participants were able to understand their roles and responsibilities as young women in the protection of women and girls; 50 young women's knowledge was enhanced in domestic and sexual violence preventive methods.

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2. WHAT WE DO

There were 23 grantees in the YCF pilot phase, led by youth activists, from nine different West and Central African countries. Grantees were also diverse in terms of different sizes of organizations, ranging from small groups with just 5 members to bigger groups with more than 500 members. 14 organizations were



led by women/girls and almost all projects focused on issues deeply important to women and girls. The table below summarizes the inclusion of people with disabilities, minority groups, women/girls, men/boys, children and youth in grantees' different projects. These statistics were collected from the MEAL questionnaire sent to grantees by Plan International.

	PLUS DE 50 %.	ENVIRON 50 %.	MOINS DE 50 %.	100%	PAS SÛR	PAS DE RÉPONSE	AUCUN
Personnes en situation de handicap	1	10	2		1		9
Personnes issues de groupes minoritaires	5	2	9				7
Nombre de femmes / filles	13	2	1	3	1	3	
Nombre d'hommes / de garçons		3	15		1	1	3
Nombre d'enfants de moins de 18 ans	8		8	3		1	3
Nombre de jeunes (15-24 ans)	9	2	6	3	1	1	1

Also, in terms of target zones, grantees were located in urban, peri urban and rural areas, showing an important coverage of different



zones. The table below summarizes the geographic focus of the 23 organizations:

LOCALISATION DE LA PLUPART DES MEMBRES	NOMBRE DE GROUPES
Mix de lieux	14
Périurbain	4
Rural	2
Urbain	3

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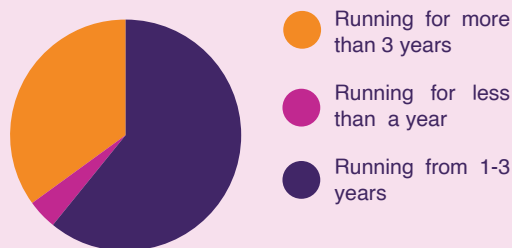
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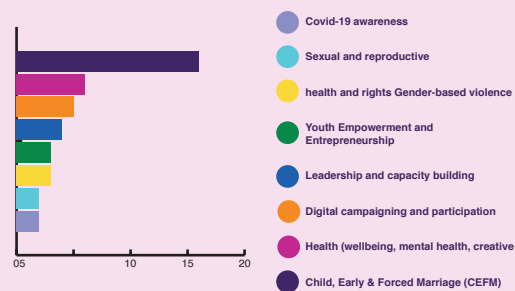
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Additionally, many groups engage with communities in different regions and/areas of their country. For example, Barika (Benin) engaged with people from four localities and Hope Alive (Cameroon) engaged with people from two (the Ntefinki and Mbefi communities).

Furthermore, most of youth groups were recently created, with 15 of the groups less than 3 years old. The graph below summarizes the approximate running period of organizations funded during the pilot phase:



Almost all grantees of this pilot phase included awareness raising on Covid-19 in their projects and some groups engaged their communities in multiple topics. The graph below shows the repartition of groups around different topics:



These topics were approached in different ways, varying from one group to another. The ways grantees approached these topics include:

- Digital campaigns;
- Door to door visits and discussions;
- Community advocacy with community leaders;
- Community education;
- Radio programs and podcasts;
- Tutoring and mentoring;
- Facilitated discussions

This diversity of experience, coverage, and project focus is evidence of the inclusiveness and flexibility the YCF.

II. HOW DID WE LEARN



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The YCF learning process included three main activities:

- Online questionnaire for youth grantees
- Online questionnaire and discussion groups with Plan International staff based in country offices and at regional and international level
- People-centered design workshop with youth grantees, held online over five days. Youth participants 'prototyped' new ideas about how the YCF could better meet the needs and priorities of youth activists

The YCF learning process was based on key principles of people-centered design and adult learning. The learning process built on the approach used to create and implement the YCF pilot phase, which involved youth activists from the design of the fund to the selection process. This shows Plan International's strong commitment to put youth activists at the center of decision-making and visioning. Plan International put the voice and perspective of youth activists at the forefront in this review, learning process and ultimate revision of the YCF model.

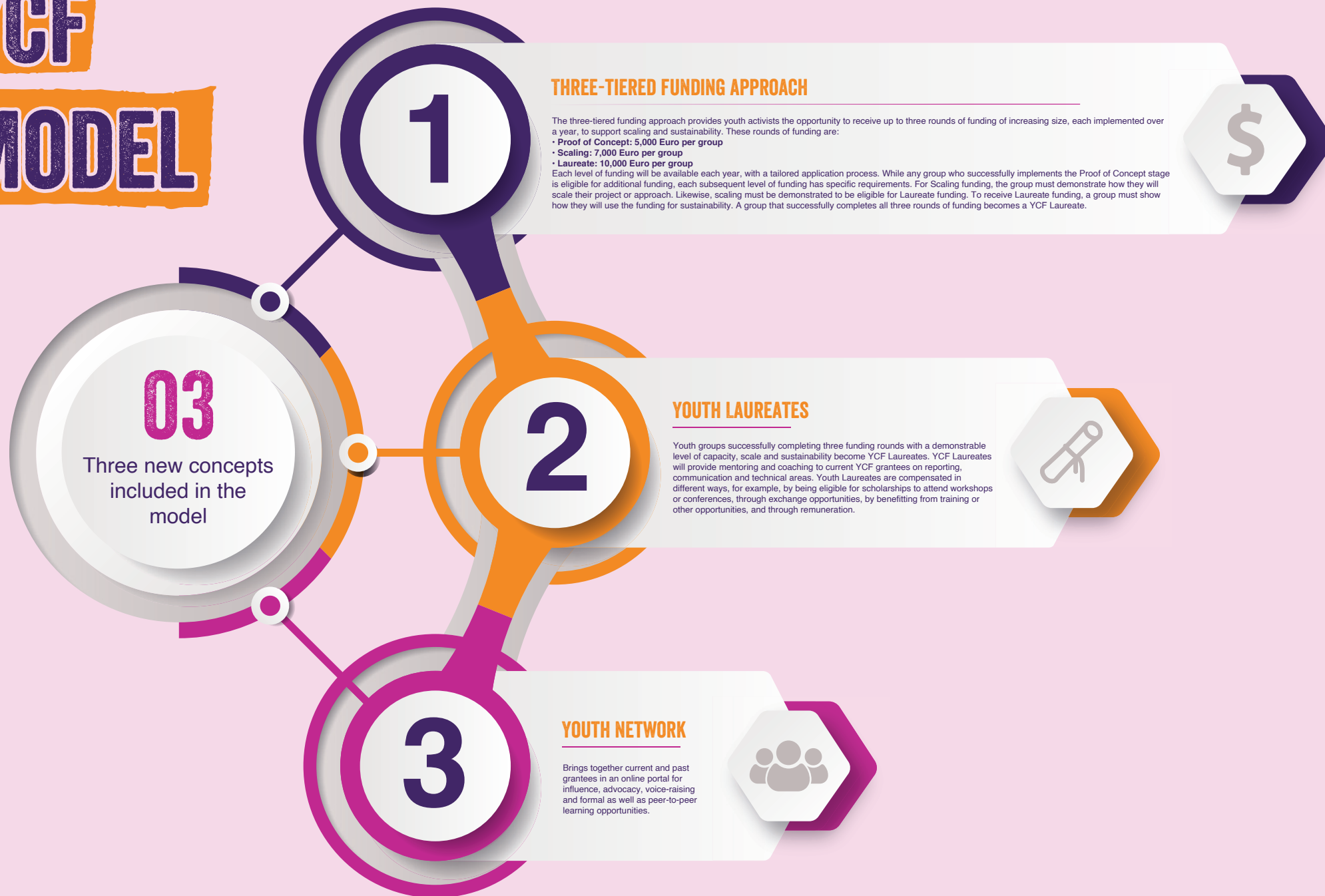
III. AN IMPROVED VISION OF SUCCESS



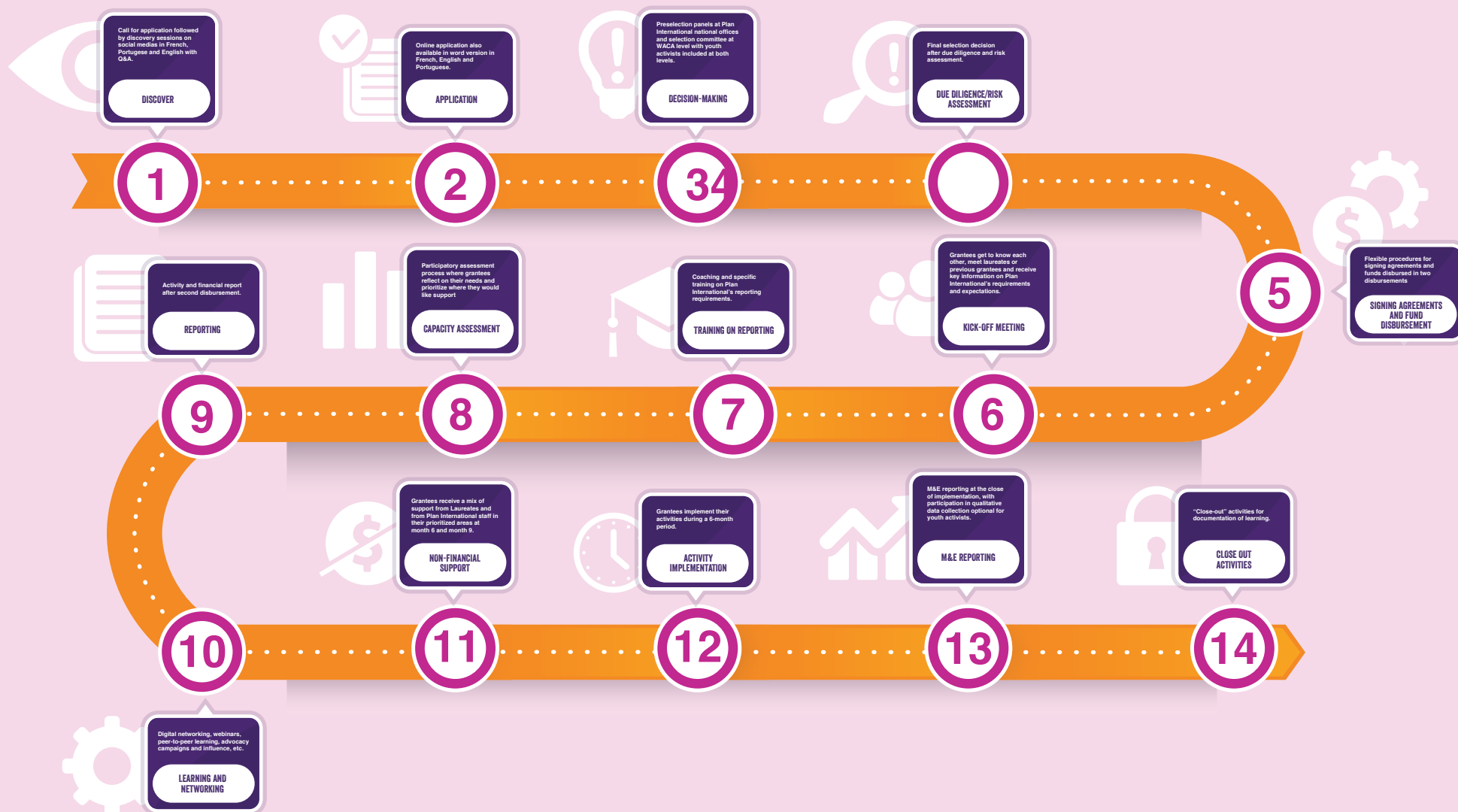
L'objectif de ce processus d'apprentissage était de catalyser, d'exploiter et de développer le pouvoir des jeunes activistes de

manière plus efficace et pour un plus grand impact. Le modèle a été révisé en conséquence.

YCF MODEL



REVISED STEPS OF THE YCF MODEL



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IV. COVID-19 AND

YOUTH

ACTIVISTS



One of the goals of YCF was to support youth activists to respond to Covid-19 in their communities. As a result, almost all projects included an awareness raising component on Covid-19 using different approaches. This included online education and information as well as working with youth and communities to produce, distribute and educate about masks and hand-sanitizer. The more innovative approaches include Necessary Aid Alliance (Ghana) training youth in soap making as a revenue generating activity, combined with education on handwashing and good hygiene behavior. Korochiblog (Mali) organized a poetry competition on Covid-19 prevention measures which was carried out in high schools with the participation of 25 girls and 25 boys.

Despite the youth activists' work to address Covid-19, they were also negatively impacted by it:

- Travel restrictions created delays, which prevented them from meeting with key partners

or to mobilize community members as planned. Despite these constraints, generally groups adapted and continued to carry out their community activities

- Social distancing measures led to the cancellation of some activities that required contact with participants, such as conferences, trainings and awareness-raising in communities. Some planned projects that were not Covid-19 related were canceled to refocus available resources on fighting the pandemic
- Some group members had difficulties paying their fees to their group due to financial hardship caused by the pandemic, which impacted the financial viability of the group

Some grantees noted that Covid-19 pushed them to use new platforms and technological solutions, which they felt was positive.

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V. CATALYZING POWER



The Youth Challenge Fund provides a unique opportunity for Plan International West Africa and Central Africa to catalyze, elevate and network youth power for greater impact, while also supporting movement creation in the region. Likewise, Plan International WACA can federate its efforts with other Plan International initiatives like Equality Accelerator, focused in South America. The international, multi-regional nature of Plan International provides a strategic opportunity to federate youth activists across regions and countries.

1. RAISING VOICES

From inception, the YCF is an opportunity for Plan International, as a partner and donor, to shift the power balance with youth activists, by putting them at the forefront of the conception of the Fund. Youth-led change processes and youth-led funding opportunities can raise youth activist voices, profiles and roles in setting priorities in West Africa. The YCF, as compared to other similar funds, is potentially more transparent, flexible and inclusive, focusing specifically on girl-led and youth-led organizations. Through the YCF, many youth activists were able to access funding

for the first time from a formal source and were able to fund the projects they developed and directed. While this seems like a simple concept, it is the full realization of youth-led visioning, voice, and priority setting. As Plan International considers future iterations of the YCF, there is an opportunity to network the youth activists who are funded by YCF into a dynamic, influential change-making body, capable of influence and greater voice.

2. HOW TO ACTIVATE YOUTH POWER

Not only did the YCF raise and elevate youth voice, but it gave youth activists power. Power to critique, power to choose, power to change. Youth activists were involved from the conception, the design, the vetting of youth grantees, and have participated in multiple opportunities for feedback and consultation, culminating in the 'prototyping' process that drove this learning approach. The prototyping process allowed youth activist to engage with each other, to exchange, and find consensus, often in interesting ways. For example, instead of proposing a competitive fund where youth activists submitted projects with differing budgets, youth acti-

vists thought it important to keep the funding amounts the same. Why? To foster a spirit of collaboration, equity and to stop feelings



of jealousy or competition. Without youth voices and youth power to drive decision making, the YCF model might look very different.



NECESSARY AID ALLIANCE / GHANA

Growing up in the rural area of the Upper West Region of Ghana, 24-year-old Mlumba Ngmenlabagna Songsore saw first-hand the challenges facing his community. After graduating from university, he wanted to get involved and be a part of the solution but did not know where to start because he did not have any funds. But he never stopped trying. It was in Kumasi that he met a black American living in Canada who appreciated his approach and wanted to help him support his initiatives to help the poor. His friend had noticed the poverty in Ghana, and those who suffered. From that moment, he would send small amounts of money from time to time to help the less fortunate with food, hygiene products and housing. At a certain point, it was necessary to move forward to reach more beneficiaries, Mlumba proposed to his friend to create an organization to access participatory funding more easily. That's how Necessary Aid Alliance was born in 2018.

The cultural orientation of the organization is part of its charm with members who are very culturally sensitive believing that it is this approach that will ensure sustainability. All of Necessary Aid Alliance's work revolves around four themes including 1) education, 2) women's empowerment, 3) entrepreneurial skills, and 3) support for vulnerable groups. The organization has served communities in the Greater Accra Region, Kumasi, Northern Region, and Ote Region.

With YCF, Necessary Aid Alliance was able to support 5 communities in the Upper West Region with a library space with two desktop computers, books and learning materials. On average, 35 patrons use the space daily and there are books appropriate for all age groups, including from six to 18 years of age. In addition, the organization has facilitated capacity building for a group of 30 young women who now meet three times a week to discuss issues of concern to them. It was also with Plan International through the YCF that Mlumba and his team facilitated the training of trainers in women's empowerment, gender equality and reproductive health that welcomed 45 participants. They were also able to set up the



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peer learning center. In addition, 500 women were trained in liquid soap production techniques for an alternative source of income in 35 communities. Without the support of Plan International have been able to make these great achievements.

At first, 90% came from in Canada. get external Mailbox Club organizations. has five employees and other according to the needs of the project. executive director, says he represents his pen as a writer and his website. He wants Necessary Aid Alliance to reach out more to political actors, international organizations and foreign embassies for more exposure of its fight for minorities. The organization would like to have fully equipped offices in Ghana but also expand to other regions with other exciting and bigger projects.

«I was a popular activist in college, so people knew me. I had several students following me and I selected five of them to start the organization. When you have a project, there are already people who are willing to join you in the adventure. Young people always want to have enriching experiences on their resume, so they are always ready to get involved and bid on projects. So mobilizing other youth was not difficult.»

MLUMBA NGMENLABAGNA SONGSORE

of the funding the co-founder Now, they funding from and local The organization members who vary Mlumba, the founder and the voiceless rural people with the voiceless rural people with Necessary Aid Alliance to reach out more to political actors, international organizations and foreign embassies for more exposure of its fight for minorities. The organization would like to have fully equipped offices in Ghana but also expand to other regions with other exciting and bigger projects.



3. GENDER AND PROTECTION

Youth activists are the future, bringing gender and protection to the forefront. All of the youth activists are aware of gender, understand gender, and incorporate principles of gender equity and gender transformation into their projects. By creating a girl and women and youth-led agenda and process, youth activists can realize the vision of a gender equitable future, different than what it might look like if led by Plan International.

- Examples of successful integration of gender and protection in grantees' projects include:
- Musodev in Mali, developed a web platform and application available on Play Store, to fight against Gender Based Violence;
- Club des Jeunes Filles Modèles de Guinée conducted a three-day workshop with 25 young girls and adolescents around the-

mes such as female leadership, female entrepreneurship and youth and adolescent health/sexual health;

- Mirror Africa in Sierra Leone produced four episodes of three-minute podcast featuring gender sensitive information and recommendations on working together to end violence against women;
- ELLES in Guinea organized a digital campaign and discussions with street vendor girls to advocate for girls' protection;
- Barika organized communication and community advocacy actions on child marriage reaching 112 people;
- Gray Network trained 900 students on the rights of girls among other girls focus topics.

Gender transformation, protection and safeguarding were often seamlessly integrated by the groups.



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(MUSODEV) / MALI

Everything started from a personal experience. Indeed, it was while watching the series “24”, a movie where all things digital are promoted as a means for change, that Porcho Marguerite, a technology enthusiast, became interested in ICTs and chose to become an engineer. After her degree, she created the blog MuSoDev, which aimed to trace the journey of women who have distinguished themselves in the IT world. In 2018, a year after the launch of the blog, Porcho organized an introductory computer science training for 30 women. This is how Porcho and a friend, with whom she shares a taste for the digital, launched MuSoDev with the goal of helping women develop digital skills in Mali. Co-founder Porcho even quit her job to dedicate herself to MuSoDev.

The executive board of MuSoDev is made up entirely of young girls: this is the strength of the organization. With its own funds, MuSoDev has trained more than 100 women in various fields, notably in e-commerce, office automation and digital marketing. The impact of the organization has been recognized and awarded by 1) the Africa Women Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forum (AWIEF) for the empowerment of women in South Africa and 2) the Hera Foundation in relation to their mobile application in Mali.

On the other hand, it was only with the YCF in 2020 that the organization was able to show what it was really capable of. Indeed, with the support of Plan International, they were able to develop version 1.1 of the OVBG application with sections such as GBV awareness and assistance provisions and COVID. They were also able to carry out a field campaign in the district of Bamako along with a digital campaign for the 16 days of activism against GBV. Thanks to Plan International’s funding, MuSoDev has gained credibility and notoriety. The association is also better positioned to obtain other funding and improve its collaboration and professional relationships with different partners such as the Pananetugri fund, UNESCO, AfrIdea and the Government of the United States of America. Finally, MuSoDev acknowledges that it is really with Plan that they learned about administrative management and reporting.

Porcho, the president and founder, says she prefers to make her actions

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speaking for themselves. For her, it is all in the way of doing things, especially not being forced to do what everyone else is doing but focusing on things that fit with her principles and that are sufficiently fair.

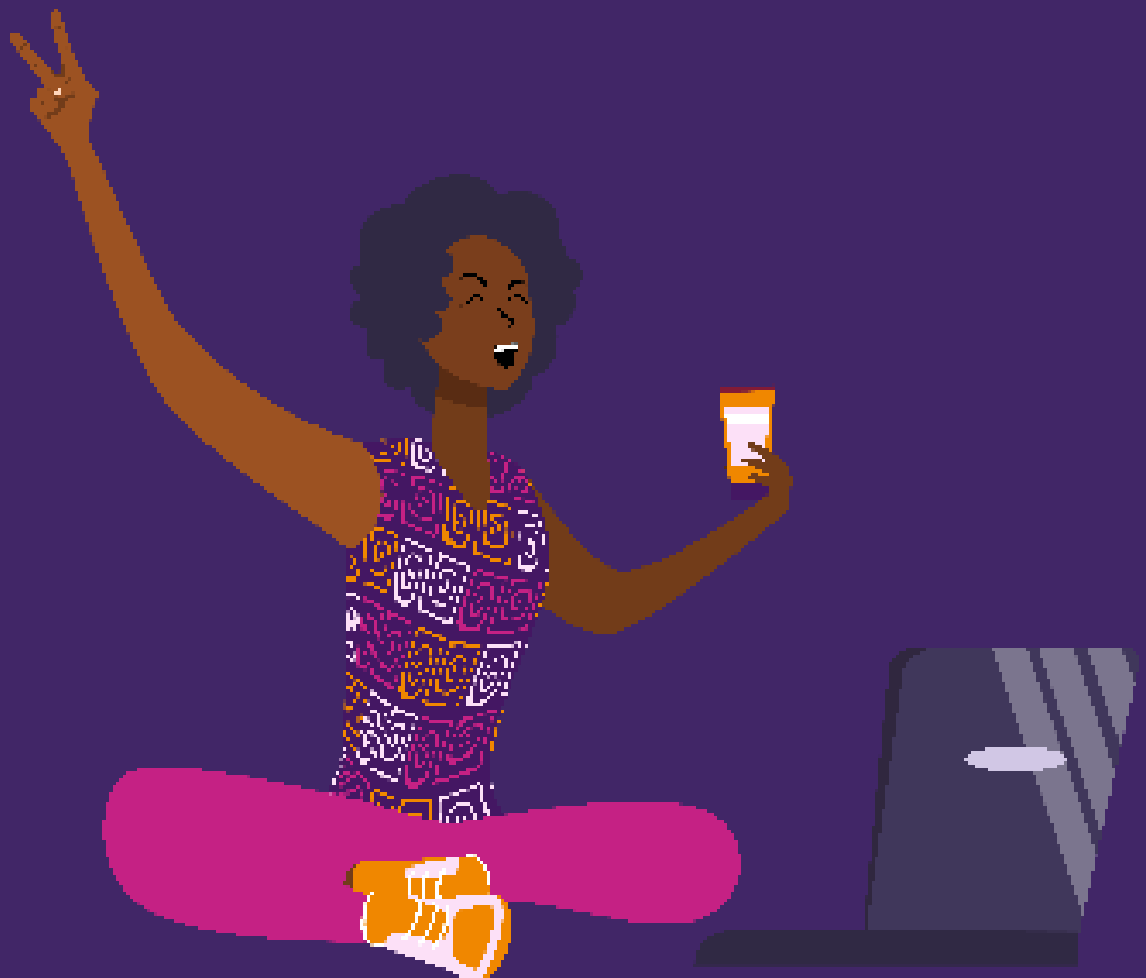
At the beginning did not have a today the has one for all Before, the of just four has about 20 is a fourfold yet, MuSoDev reference when

women and technology in Mali. The be more of a reference when it comes in the digital world where women and competent to get jobs and even be entrepreneurs.

«The selection email from YCF (we had never received funding before), the launch ceremony of the OVBG application and the release of the first cohort of MuSoDev Code Academy were really moments of emotion, joy, pride and accomplishment. We know that what we do has an impact and we had to continue... «

PORCHO MARGUERITTE

MuSoDev headquarters; organization its activities. team consisted people; now it people, which increase. Better is already a it comes to organization wants to to women's empowerment girls are highly qualified and



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4. HOW TO INFLUENCE

One of the most important accomplishments of the YCF is that it creates the opportunity for a network of youth activists across West Africa. One of the most valuable actions that Plan International can take as the YCF scales and takes hold is to formalize and structure this network of youth activists. Such a network would allow for influence within countries and across the region. A functional, facilitated network with continued opportunities for exchange, learning, and influence, is very important. Youth activists can define common goals and agendas, share information, and organize their support in order to influence for change – with governments, with development actors, and with regional bodies like ECOWAS.

One of the ideas to emerge from the discussions both with youth activists and Plan International staff is the importance of not only a network but peer-to-peer support. We would recommend creating a YCF “laureate” – alumnae of the YCF who have reached a level of technical and organizational capacity after benefitting from the YCF, who can then provide mentoring and support to new grantees while also continuing to network.

Youth activists were excited and interested in working together and exchanging ideas around the prototyping process. Almost all youth activists who responded to the questionnaire noted their interest in maintaining a relationship not only with Plan International, but with the other grantees. This network also serves as an important resource in the countries where Plan International works and can serve as a foundation

for influence and change in multiple countries. Grantees noted the importance of creating a different framework for meeting as their only current space is the WhatsApp group. They highly recommended physical meetings organized by Laureates at country levels as well as exchange visits sponsored by Plan International for sharing best practices across the region. However, these types of physical meetings can be costly and unsustainable without outside support. We would recommend creating an online platform – which could also include the YCF library and learning resources and opportunities – with facilitated exchanges, webinars and virtual brown bags. For example, a virtual brown bag or online coaching session would be a good opportunity to foster technical collaboration among groups with similar focus or objectives.

5. HOW TO ENGAGE AND SUPPORT

One of the greatest challenges faced by Plan International is how to engage and support youth activists as partners and as equals. The nature of a funding relationship can automatically create inequalities. Therefore, Plan International must be especially aware of the needs of youth activists and create regular opportunities to provide feedback and voice regarding YCF. In particular, youth activists spoke of the need for ‘flexibility’ in the way YCF is structured. What flexibility translates to is ‘flexible funding’ meaning that not every stamp and folder needs to be budgeted for, recognizing the changing and dynamic environments that youth work in. Flexible also referred to ‘flexible communication’ where youth activists

vists felt that they were under pressure to respond immediately, and that the needs of Plan International superseded their own autonomy.

For the next round of YCF, testing, reviewing and updating the model for technical (non-financial) support is important. In the pilot phase, this support was largely unstructured. While a more structured approach is proposed in this report based on the 'prototype' from youth activists, Plan International should leave room for discussion of how this support is structured going forward, and if it meets the needs of youth activists.

6. HOW TO CATALYZE YOUTH LED CHANGE

One of Plan International's key objectives at the start of this learning process was to answer the question, "how do we catalyze youth-led change." Based on this learning process, there are some recommendations:

- Put youth activists in the dri-

ver's seat, to define and lead the process. Give them opportunities not just for feedback, but meaningful input and decision making, like the selection of the next round of grantees.

- Create open and transparent forums for regular inquiry and feedback, and take action based on that feedback
- Create a network of YCF Laureates, who continue to inform the YCF process and have ongoing opportunities for exchange, learning and influence.
- Create a space for current YCF grantees to support each other, and for YCF Laureates to mentor and coach new grantees, valorizing their expertise and experience.
- Recognize that youth activists' needs will change over time. Part of 'flexibility' is the ability to continue to meet their needs and support their initiatives at multiple stages over the life of their organization. Youth-led change requires youth the ability to grow, adapt, and scale.

VI. TRANSFORMING IMPACT



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The prototyping sessions involved 12 groups of youth activists as well as some members of Plan International team. Grantees were divided in 3 groups as follows:

- One English group composed of all 5 English speaking organizations. This groups prototyped on the selection process and co-creation
- Two French groups composed of 4 and 3 members. The groups prototyped on 1) performance, effectiveness, and efficiency / financial support / non-financial support 2) sustainability / gender equality and inclusion / protection and safeguarding of women and girls

From the 'prototyping' sessions, and further informed by the discussions with youth activists and Plan International staff, the following recommendations for a scaled Youth Challenge Fund are structured around the learning areas defined earlier in the report.

1. FUNCTIONALITY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND EFFICIENCY

Creating a more functional, effective and efficient YCF model will not only increase the impact of youth activists in their communities but also significantly contribute to the sustainability of the program. This section is on the overall functioning of the YCF process.

In order to improve functionality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the YCF, youth activists made the following key recommendations:

GIVE MORE TIME

Youth activists reported that the pilot phase of the YCF was only three months (although the entire process took 6-8 months), which most youth activists felt was too short to achieve expected results. This very short period did not allow for meaningful technical support from Plan International, as there was not adequate time for a needs assessment or structured support. Therefore, grantees recommend allowing for more time for project implementation, as well as sufficient time for preparation and closure. Most grantees felt that they were not given enough time to manage each phase of the grant from the time they got selected to the submission of final deliverables. For example, they were expected to respond to emails in very short time as mentioned by a group in Guinea in their narrative report as a key challenge. Other grantees, like AGL in Burkina Faso, felt that delays with funding impacted implementation, and they had to return the remaining funding. Other groups who returned their remaining funding include Barika from Benin and MusoDev from Mali. Groups also reported that they were expected to submit all deliverables such as narrative and financial reports while some activities were still ongoing. A preparatory phase could be used to carry out an assessment of technical support needs (see section 3, below) as well as hold a kick-off meeting to facilitate networking among new grantees and ensure that all grantees have adequate information on expectations, reporting, etc.

Therefore, a 12-month period is proposed by grantees (not inclusive of Plan International's own internal processes or the application period):

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- 2 months for preparation, including submission of all documents needed before fund disbursement, kick-off meeting, networking and any initial training on reporting, etc
- 8 months for the implementation period
- 2 months after project's end for submission of final reports and closing of activities

CREATE FLEXIBILITY

There is still room for making the fund more flexible and adapted to youth's realities. Almost all grantees noted that the fund was not as flexible as expected and cited similar funds like the "Fund for Global Human Rights" as providing some models of flexibility. Specifically, youth activists and focal points recommended that the YCF:

- Give reasonable time to youth to respond to emails and requests for information, more than 24 hours.
- Reduce the number of proforma invoices that must be submitted to Plan International for validation. In fact, once the grant is made, grantees would prefer being able to use the resources responsively, without needing to request approval from Plan International each time. The Equality Accelerator has removed the invoice approval requirement completely. Groups work from their budgets and keep receipts that are later verified by Plan International.
- Allow grantees to send documents through email, WhatsApp or other means of communication, instead of requiring them to

physically submit documents at a Plan International office.

- Align reporting standards to youth literacy levels by focusing more on key results. Youth activists felt they were expected to be senior professionals and that this was unrealistic. AEI recommends adapting the Equality Accelerator reporting model to the YCF.
- Encourage groups to take high quality photographs by training them in how to take pictures and support diffusion of photographs and videos through the Plan International network for greater visibility.
- Youth activists felt it is important to continue to support organizations who are not registered or do not have a bank account by allowing them to get funded through a mentor organization. Plan International is also encouraged to help groups with registration.
- Youth activists also requested that Plan International provide some institutional support such as office rental, logistics (for room rental and means of travel) and equipment (computers, printer, chairs; etc.) to help them work in a better and more effective environment. AEI recommends some flexibility, if the request is critical to project implementation (i.e. transport, a camera, room rental for training).

IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

- Youth activists felt that they were asked for the same information multiple times. One example of this is the MEAL tools

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and process. Similar questionnaires were sent at multiple times during and after the pilot period, and groups were asked to participate in different discussions and exchanges, often repeating the same or similar topics. As with other requests for information, youth activists asked for more time to respond to questionnaires, as it often takes a significant amount of time and they are not working full time for their organizations. AEI recommends considering a 2 week response period for questionnaires.

- AEI's specific recommendations for improving the MEAL system for YCF is described below:

- Reduce the number of surveys sent to youth during the program to a maximum of two instead of five tools. One tool can be on accountability and the other on evaluation and learning and the latter should be sent out at the end of the project.

- Clearly communicate to youth activists the type of information needed before they start their projects to make sure that all information needed for assessing projects' impact are being collected by all groups. A simplified tool should be provided.

- Disaggregate information by sex, age, indirect/direct, and by type of programming.

- Avoid collecting anonymous data on impact, because it is important to capture impact per country,

region or know on which topics youth cared most about.

- Incorporate focus group discussions or one-on-one interviews to triangulate and better understand youths' experiences and level of satisfaction.

2. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Improving how funds are provided to youth activists and the amount they receive is a important way to make the model more youth friendly while fully supporting youth activists' commitments. This section is on the financial support provided to grantees of the YCF process.

In order to improve the financial support of the YCF, youth activists made the following key recommendations:

HOW MUCH SHOULD BE GRANTED TO YOUTH ACTIVISTS ?

During focus group discussions with both grantees and focal points , they mentioned that the amount of the funding was small, adding that it was not sufficient to achieve significant impacts. Furthermore, they noted that a single funding cycle is not enough to ensure sustainability of their organizations and/or activities. Plan International strategic team also agreed to increase funding and include different level of funding as well as the support period during focus group discussions

Youth activists proposed a grant amount between €7,000 and €10,000 to allow for greater impact, as well as access to more than one round of funding to build their capa-

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city and allow for on-going peer-to-peer mentoring and mentoring by Plan International. The concept of a 'Laureate' that can provide technical support to other grantees should be contingent on having grown and scaled through multiple rounds of support. One possibility (building on recommendations in the sustainability section below) is to create a three-tiered funding process to support the same youth groups over time, starting with €5,000 for the first grant, €7,000 for the second grant, and €10,000 for the third grant. This allows for flexibility, for growth and scaling, with any additional funding dependent on successful reporting of previous grants. The youth activists did recommend that for each funding round, for amounts to remain the same across groups, to avoid creating competition or jealousy among groups.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE FUNDS' DISBURSEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION PROCESS ?

Both youth activists and focal points recommend maintaining funding disbursements at country level. Youth activists felt it is important that each country office have a disbursement calendar that is respected, so that youth grantees receive their funding at the same time. Grantees recommend a single disbursement of all funds to avoid delays in project implementation, but if there is a longer implementation period, two to three disbursements is reasonable. AEI's recommendation is to set a maximum number of disbursements and then provide transparent information to grantees about the number of disbursements for their group and the calendar for those disbursements. Grantees also recommend clearly stating the financial requirements in the appli-

cation. If a bank account is required or if grantees can either receive funding through their bank account or a mentor organization's account, this information should be communicated in the application.

As recommended under Section 1, providing for a kick-off call to review the disbursement calendar, reporting requirements and other information is important to youth activists. Likewise, providing a training on reporting is also important to youth activists as it ensures everyone has the same information.

3. NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Non-financial support is key to sustainably improving the youth activists' organizations as well as their skills and competencies. This section is on the non-financial support provided to grantees of the YCF process.

Focal points and grantees mentioned that during the pilot phase, non-financial support for grantees was based on specific requests from them and/or country office recommendations and was often very uneven. Some groups (in Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Benin) confirmed during focus group discussions that they received non-financial support from Plan International local office and were very satisfied with the support they received. However other groups (Cameroon, Benin, Senegal) mentioned that they did not receive any support from Plan International local office as expected.

Also, most support offered to grantees was focused on Plan International report writing standards

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and financial management including expense justification requirements. Plan International did hold an orientation session where some support needs were identified, but the majority of youth activists reported that they did not receive the support requested. AEI's perception from discussion with Plan International country staff is that the non-financial support given often depended on the country, and was often given informally, depending on the relationship between the staff member and the group.

During the prototyping process, youth activists identified the following areas of need:

- Leadership
- Organizational Management
- Project Management
- Project monitoring and evaluation
- Coaching and mentoring
- Gender equality and inclusion
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Institutional audit
- Strategic plan development
- Financial management systems
- Governance (board selection, training, manuals)
- Proposal writing

AEI recommends that non-financial (technical/organizational) support become more structured for a future YCF. This could include a participatory needs assessment or other tool that encourages youth activists

to self-assess and identify priority areas. Depending on the needs of the organization, Plan International may not be able to address all needs during the project period which is why prioritization is important, as well as a multiple funding rounds which would allow for groups to seek new or additional support as they scale and grow. Plan International should help each grantee set milestones for the project period, and then ask the youth grantee to self-assess progress, perhaps at month 4 and month 8. Plan International should also develop support materials that each country office would use, allowing for support to be standard across countries and groups. During the pilot phase, grantees perceived that support was better in one country over another, and this perception can be addressed through standardized approaches and structured support. For example, a calendar of key support moments, from kick-off, to disbursements, to self-assessments of progress, to planned support.

Youth activists also felt it is important to involve previous groups in coaching and mentoring of new ones, what we are calling "YCF Laureates." In addition to mentoring and coaching, YCF Laureates could be engaged – depending on their skill set – to provide some of the capacity building support, for which Plan International could identify potential motivations (for example, exchange trips). New grantees can be assigned coach/mentor organization from the same country ideally to ensure proximity and effective communication, but it can also be considered to assign coach/mentor from different countries depending on each group's thematic focus. An advantage of involving previous grantees in coaching and mentoring

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new grantees is the practical experience sharing opportunity among groups in the form of peer-to-peer learning. Also, previous grantees can act as a source of inspiration to new ones, guiding them through the process, answering questions and helping create a transparent process. Youth grantees who have successfully completed their project and demonstrated understanding of the principles of YCF will be selected as Laureates.

4. GENDER EQUALITY, MARGINALIZATION AND VULNERABILITY / PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND GIRLS

The inclusion of gender equality and inclusion in projects developed by grantees is important to align with Plan International's priority focus. This section is on the inclusion of gender equality, inclusion, protection and safe-guarding of children and youth in the YCF process.

Youth activists made the following key recommendations:

Youth activists recommended that to improve the inclusion of gender equality, marginalized and vulnerable groups, as well as protection and safeguarding of children and girls, specific capacity building support and accompaniment is needed:

- Child protection and safeguarding procedures,
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the fight against Gender Based Violence,
- Legal and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights,
- Social and institutional inclusion of girls, women and especially GBV survivors,
- Technical capacity on the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents and young girls and boys.

Grantees also recommend to clearly state in the application that project topics are not obliged to cover only girl related topics but also youth related topics. AEI also recommends being transparent about the criteria for evaluation in the application form.



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(OSH)/GUINÉE

Oumou Hawa Diallo (26 years old) is a young woman who has a motor disability due to polio and uses a wheelchair. For her, her disability is not a reason to be marginalized. In Guinea, people with disabilities represent more than 1.5% of the population and they are most often hit by poverty and have difficult access to basic social services like education. Thus, in 2017, Oumou took the initiative to create OSHG to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of these people whose suffering she understands and with whom she identifies to achieve a more just and egalitarian society where the rights of the disabled are respected, and they can live up to their potential. The beginning was difficult: no team, no headquarters, no external funding and it was not until 2018 that OSHG became truly operational.

Usually, organizations that work for people with disabilities are made up of «able-bodied» people with good will. OSHG is the exception because it is composed of more than 80% of members with disabilities. Nevertheless, it wants to be inclusive and relies on everyone's energy. The NGO uses a multiplier effect, its first beneficiaries were mainly its members, which attracted other people with disabilities. This is the organization's strength. OSHG has built itself up through its advocacy and the impact of its work. The organization has strong partnerships with other organizations and the government through the National Directorate of the Ministry of Social Action, which has even put a focal point at their disposal to support them and bring issues to the authorities. It is not often that the government gets involved in this way.

Plan International's support of the YCF has brought new blood to the organization. Prior to this support, the NGO was limited to building the capacity of its members. It was only with the YCF that it was able to scale up by building the capacity of several other members from different organizations. In practice, they carried out three activities as part of their project:

- organizational capacity building of two youth organizations of people with disabilities,
- organization of three educational talks and three broadcasts to popularize the rights of young girls/boys with disabilities, and
- organization of an advocacy workshop and a digital campaign on the

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rights and accessibility of young girls/boys with disabilities to essential social services.

In summary, 15 young people with disabilities (six boys and nine girls) between the ages of 19 and 30 benefited from capacity building in leadership and organizational development, advocacy and communication, gender, and the rights of people with disabilities. 15 people intervened through TV and radio programs to advocate for people with disabilities. 45 people were sensitized on the law on the protection of disabilities. A people were the digital social media experience International door to other funding.

« I n my large family, a couple broke up because the spouses have a disabled child. The in-laws didn't want to accept the child. I tried to convince them. These are difficult questions in Guinea. We need to find solutions to them. So the NGO is in a pole position to contribute to changing this view through prime time broadcasts and media campaigns that we do.»

OUMOU HAWA DIALLO

The NGO has grown; it now has a headquarters, a team whose members vary according to the needs of the project, a more or less solid institutional base, and has established itself as an important player at the national level. Its President, Oumou, sees that society's view of people with disabilities has changed because of the impact of her struggle and her positive influence. She would like to see Plan International give her more support in building the capacity of people with disabilities to meet the high demand in Guinea.



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ASSOCIATION HOPE ALIVE /CAMEROUN

An only child from a modest family, Sylvie Laison, 29, went to high school in her village where a girls' association worked defending the cause of young girls who were not fortunate enough to go to school and were often forced into early marriage. It was this experience that inspired Sylvie who, herself, was stigmatized for not being able to afford sanitary towels. So she knows how important her role is in helping vulnerable young girls. This is how she created the Hope Alive association with, at the beginning, 15 to 20 members structured around a mission with three themes:

1. Sexuality and reproduction awareness
2. The fight against violence against women and girls
3. Economy and livelihoods

Hope Alive works at the community level, its members live the realities and know the issues facing women and girls. They see the people and talk to them, which makes them different from other organizations. It is this qualitative data that helps them to understand their context in order to provide appropriate solutions. Their only problem is that they only have a small office for their daily work. Despite the constraints, the association is unfailingly committed. Communities call them to report cases of GBV and invite them to go and support the victims. The organization has a comprehensive guide on peer education, which has allowed them to increase the visibility of their work. They document information on KoBo collect and they have had capacity building on project management. They even won an award in 2016, which made them very proud.

With the support of YCF, they extended their reach to three more communities. In total, about 500 participants (boys and girls) attended two workshops on sex education and menstrual hygiene management; more than 500 young girls and boys were trained on the dangers and consequences of GBV; the different forms or types of GBV and how and where to report these acts in the community. A bank of emergency sanitary pads containing more than 600 reusable units was installed and 400 reusable sanitary pads were given to girls from six communities. In addition, through this project, they were able to develop their skills in using technologies such as Zoom and WhatsApp during meetings. And finally, they gained prestige from this experience knowing that Plan International is well known and positioned globally.

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In 2016, Hope Alive was only reaching one community, while today it is reaching six communities. The organization started with a small fundraiser and the technical skills to for projects. their first grant the Pollination association young girls, better express defend their work towards dreams. Moreover, Sylvie, the founder and to meet the former first lady of the United States, Mrs. Michelle Obama, the CEO of Plan International and the executive director of UN Women.

« The wives and daughters come to me all the time, so I get overwhelmed sometimes. It's really hard to find a work-life balance. People don't even know when I have to rest and when I'm working; they come up at any time to talk about GBV. For my family members, the beginning was very difficult because of the diversity of people coming from here and there. Now they understand that what I do is important and useful for the girls. Now I am more stable than before.»

DOUMOU HAWA DIALLO



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5. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a valuable aspect for ensuring the continuity of actions developed by youth activists during the YCF. This section is on the sustainability of the YCF process.

To improve the sustainability of the YCF, youth activists made the following key recommendations:

CREATING MULTIPLE LEVELS OF FUNDING

As recommended in the financial support section, Plan International should support grantees over multiple cycles, with increasing amounts of funding to accompany groups as they grow. Three grant cycles should be available, increasing from €5,000, to €7,000 to €10,000. This funding does not need to be taken in sequential years. Criteria for a grantee to become eligible for additional funding cycles includes:

- Realized impacts versus expected impacts
- Financial management and reporting
- Documentation of impact
- Communication over social media/level of outreach

HOW CAN WE BE MORE INCLUSIVE ?

Youth activists asked that Plan International country offices promote the YCF through their various social media channels, and with their different local partners who can play a critical role in expanding out-reach.

Youth activists also recommended to simplify the application form for

young people in communities that do not have smart phone or internet so that they can still apply if they are eligible. These youth activists who might also be illiterate should be allowed to engage a mentor to represent them for a more inclusive process. In addition to allowing mentors, AEI recommends that Plan International encourage these groups to integrate some people with a minimum literacy level in their organizations to broaden their organization's capacity to respond to opportunities, keep records, etc.

Another recommendation from activists is to broaden the age limit in the selection criteria, referring to the African Youth Charter for considering youth and children from 12 to 35 years old.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE SELECTION PROCESS ?

Youth activists recommended that at each country level, there is a five-person selection committee, including two staff from the Plan International country office and three youth activists, ideally YCF Laureates. They will carry out a pre-selection of eligible groups, that the committee will submit to Plan International's regional office for final selection. AEI recommends that YCF Laureates be part of a regional selection committee as well.

Another recommendation from grantees is to clearly indicate the amount of money to be granted to each group, the duration of the project implementation phase and the timeframe for the selection process in the application.

AEI recommends reviewing the application form, integrating the above recommended information.

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HOW CAN WE IMPROVE CO-CREATION OF THE YCF WITH YOUTH ACTIVISTS ?

Youth activists felt that the ‘prototyping’ exercise was a good start to co-creation, but want to see Plan International implement their recommendations. Then it will be true ‘co-creation.’ As recommended above, it is also important to continue to create opportunities for youth activists to review the YCF, give feedback and for Plan International to adapt and adjust as needed. Therefore ‘co-creation’ is very much dependent on the level of integration of youth activist recommendations, and openness of Plan International to future changes and feedback.

Grantees also recommend that YCF Laureates, in addition to providing mentoring and coaching to new grantees, should be networked and given access to regular opportunities for exchange, discussion

and continued educational/training opportunities. AEI believes that this kind of forum will facilitate on-going exchange among Laureates, and with Plan International. This is critical for continued co-creation and learning.

LINKING YCF GRANTEES TO OTHER GRANT PROGRAMS

Grantees also recommended support for finding and applying to other grant programs to ensure continuity of their engagement and greater impacts. AEI recommends including this as non-financial support through training and coaching in researching opportunities and submitting applications. But it is also important that Plan International supports grantees to develop financial sustainability plans as part of non-financial support on governance so that the activities of the activists are sustained.



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(CSDAC)/NIGER

A diverse group of students from across West Africa came together at the Abdou Moumouni University in Niamey, Niger, united by a common goal of using their varied skills to address climate change. Inspired by the priority of addressing climate change as a key sustainable development goal, Geraldo Favi (27), Thierry Odou (28) and Armel Otekpo (31) created their organization in 2018. Climate and Sustainability Development Action Club (CSDAC) used its YCF grant to implement a project to help raise awareness among the masses in Niger, one of the countries most at risk to the effects of climate change.

What makes CSDAC different is their diverse background (in engineering, economics, and political science) and nationalities from the West African region. Outside of class, aware of the high stakes and to make the most of their time, they are all active in two major regional centers, namely the West African Center on Sustainable Rural Transformation (WAC-SRT), which focuses on climate, and the West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL), which focuses on sustainable development, within the University of Niamey. It is within the framework of its activities outside the courses that the founders Geraldo, Thierry and Armel discussed for the first time climate change and rural development. This is where the idea of creating CSDAC in 2018 was born with the ambition to respond to the adaptations that will necessarily be required because of climate change, with the focus on sustainable rural development.

To face the daily challenges, Geraldo, Thierry and their fellow students structure themselves around four pillars including 1) awareness raising, 2) advocacy, 3) capacity building and 3) research. Geraldo who had completed a term in the organization from 2018-2020, succeeded with his group to mobilize 45 students and active members through the opportunities offered by the two aforementioned regional centers.

With the support of YCF during the period of COVID-19, one of the most important aspects was the provision of materials (32 sets of kit & protective gown, 55 Tshirts, 50 badges, masks, computer equipment) which greatly facilitated the operationalization of the young people on the ground. YCF also allowed the group to become autonomous and gave it the opportunity to gain visibility and capacity. In addition, it is with YCF that the group was able to incubate the three best projects (MeleAgriculture, Complexe

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Agropastoral Bounkassar Noma, and Production de Tomates sous serres à alimentation solaire) selected at the end of the capacity building period. Through the YCF funding, CSDAC has had the commitment and support of government authorities, particularly the National Solar Energy Agency (ANERSOL) under the Ministry of Energy, and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs’

Laboratory initiative. It is elected officials initiatives, but confidence succeeded esteem of officials.

« We started with a small center; now we have a well-organized NGO: we are reaching a certain level of maturity. We are learning day by day. After the YCF, we now have funding and support from the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs with the CoLAB initiative. The authorities of the country's top management now come to our activities, which is a sign of maturity and reassures us that we are on the right track.”

GERALDO FAVI

Starting with and self- in 2018, the student

growing into a well-organized NGO the credibility it has gained among government authorities, CSDAC intends to spread its wings further in the 12 countries where the organization has begun to take tentative steps. The members of the group believe that the solutions to the challenges must be led by young people in Africa and they are ready to play this role with the support of organizations like Plan International. CSDAC’s vision is to contribute to the creation of a sustainable world; by focusing on the community. The organization wants to deploy solutions to improve the lives of people.

co-construction (CoLAB) very rare that listen to youth CSDAC inspires and has in gaining the government

a small center funded activities youth organization is with external funding. With the people and university and CSDAC intends to spread its wings further in the 12 countries where the organization has begun to take tentative steps. The members of the group believe that the solutions to the challenges must be led by young people in Africa and they are ready to play this role with the support of organizations like Plan International. CSDAC’s vision is to contribute to the creation of a sustainable world; by focusing on the community. The organization wants to deploy solutions to improve the lives of people.



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availability and constructive inputs provided.

We would also like acknowledge with much appreciation the crucial contribution of grantees who participated in the online workshop over five days and brought energy to the discussions and exchanges.

ANNEXES

1. **Annex 1:** Responses to questionnaires

2. **Annex 2:** Notes of focus group discussions (FGDs)

3. **Annex 3:** Case studies



About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We strive for a just world for children and young people, working with them and our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of discrimination against girls, exclusion and vulnerability. We support children's rights from when they are born to when they reach adulthood. Using our reach, experience and knowledge, we drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels and enable children and young people to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years, and are active in more than 75 countries.

We are independent of governments, religions and political parties.



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