



Making the Global Fund work for young people

The Link Up project has put 10-24 year olds most affected by HIV in Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Uganda at the centre of integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programming and policy debates at a local, national and international level, which has been critical to changing the structural factors that compound young people's vulnerability to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Background

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund) is the principal financing institution for the support of low and middle-income countries in the HIV response.¹ The Global Fund's strategy (2012–2016) does not sufficiently emphasise the growing HIV epidemic among young people and adolescents, especially young women, in many parts of the world, nor does it prioritise sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Link Up global policy partners (the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, ATHENA Network (ATHENA) and Stop AIDS Now!) have a long history of engaging with the Global Fund. Link Up partners have mobilised to increase Global Fund support for:

- Young people, including young key populations,² their sexual and reproductive rights
- Integration of HIV and SRHR information, services and policies
- Greater and more meaningful attention to and engagement of young people

LINKUP

Link Up improved the sexual and reproductive health and rights of over 800,000 young people affected by HIV across five countries in Africa and Asia. The project was implemented by a consortium of partners led by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance.

For more information, visit www.link-up.org



Government of the Netherlands

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the government of the Netherlands.



Resty Nalwanga (second left), a Link Up youth advocate from Uganda, sits on a panel discussing Global Fund replenishment alongside UK Secretary of State for International Development Justine Greening and Executive Director for the Global Fund Mark Dybul. © 2016 International HIV/AIDS Alliance

¹For information about the Global Fund, its strategy and funding process (including the Country Coordinating Mechanism, country dialogue, national strategic plan and concept note), please visit www.theglobalfund.org

²Link Up's focus is on advancing the SRHR of young key populations, including young people living with HIV, young men who have sex with men, young people who sell sex, young transgender people and young people who use drugs.

- Gender equality and heightened engagement of women, including young women and women from key populations, in Global Fund policy, strategy and funding
- National input to Global Fund processes and structures.

The development of a new Global Fund strategy (2017-2021) has provided a key opportunity for engagement. This Link Up case study explores advocacy at national, regional and global levels and focuses on three national initiatives in Burundi, Myanmar and Uganda.

Empowering young advocates

Through capacity building, technical assistance and mentoring, Link Up partners have supported young people to advocate for Global Fund policy and strategy to be youth-friendly and inclusive. Link Up youth advocates have also lobbied for young key populations to be involved in Global Fund decision-making. Targeted advocacy activities included:

- Participation by young women from Burundi, Ethiopia and Uganda in Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) workshops (December 2013, Cape Town, and December 2014, Marrakesh) aimed at engaging women in Global Fund processes and structures. One young woman living with HIV, who participated as a Link Up youth advocate, is now sitting on the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) in Burundi.
- Engagement with Global Fund senior management by youth advocates at various policy forums, such as the W4GF workshops, the International Conference on AIDS and STIs (Africa in December 2013 and 2015), the All In! meeting (December 2015, Harare) and the UK Conservative Party conference (October 2015, Manchester).
- Engagement with UNAIDS, the Global Fund and the PACT in the development of the youth participation tool, 'Making the money work for young people.'
- Participation by youth advocates and policy partners in global consultations on the next Global Fund strategy, including on gender (March 2015) and adolescents (October 2015, Geneva).
- Advocacy by youth advocates from Uganda at regional level consultations on the Global Fund strategy, such as the All In! meeting (December 2015, Harare) and the Anglophone Africa regional platform (January 2016, Dar es Salaam).
- National engagement by Link Up partners and youth advocates in Global Fund processes and consultations (see below).



Link Up youth advocates Musah Lumumba (left) and Nicholas Niwagaba from Uganda speak at the first East Africa regional platform meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania for coordinating engagement with the Global Fund. © 2016 International HIV/AIDS Alliance

Representing young key populations in Burundi

Two youth advocates, a young transgender woman from Humure, a LGBTI group; and a young woman living with HIV from Réseau National des Jeunes vivants avec le VIH (RNJ+), are currently sitting on the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) in Burundi. Humure is currently the leading Link Up youth advocate in Burundi.

The young woman from RNJ+'s interest in Global Fund advocacy has grown following the Women4GlobalFund workshop in 2014.

Besides representing their communities, youth advocates see the need to sensitise other CCM members to the needs and rights of the LGBTI community in Burundi. They have raised awareness among the CCM of young key populations' rights and begun to address homophobia and transphobia.

Influencing the national strategic plan in Myanmar

In Myanmar, youth advocates have been active in national strategic plan (NSP) technical working groups and other national stakeholder meetings. They successfully pushed for specific language on young key populations rather than 'all young people', arguing that programmes for youth were not inclusive enough. The draft NSP reflects these recommendations, namely:

- Access to SRHR and HIV services and a minimum package of services
- Meaningful engagement of young key populations at each stage
- Youth-friendly services and zero tolerance for violations of confidentiality or involuntary disclosure.

Link Up is delighted that this language will contribute directly to the inclusion of youth-related issues in the Global Fund concept note.

Including young people's priorities in Uganda

The Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV/AIDS (UNYPA), with support from Community Health Alliance Uganda and ATHENA, organised a consultation for young key populations in October 2014, bringing together 34 young people. A young key populations charter was drawn up and presented at a civil society meeting convened by the Uganda Network of AIDS Service Organisations (July 2014, Kampala). The charter was used as a reference document, mentioned as evidence during the meeting, and cited in the Uganda civil society priorities charter.

Language from the civil society priorities charter was subsequently included in the Uganda Global Fund concept note, specifically: HIV prevention for men who have sex with men and transgender people; and a focus on key populations.

Results

Greater attention to young people's needs and rights within the Global Fund reflects heightened global awareness of this issue. Currently, the Global Fund secretariat supports more inclusiveness and representation of young people, especially young women and adolescent girls, and young key populations. The new strategy, which is being finalised, has elevated gender equality to the level of a strategic objective, and services for key populations to a strategic vision. There is a focus on young women and adolescent girls under the gender objective, and the strategic vision is "to reduce gender and age disparities in health": an unanticipated outcome.



San (right) and Yadanar from Myanmar address the UK All-Parliamentary Party Group on HIV on the need for strong Global Fund replenishment.
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This shift cannot be attributed to a single process or event. Nevertheless, Link Up's advocacy at national, regional and global levels has played a key role in increasing the visibility of young key populations, and some of the challenges they face, including in accessing sexual and reproductive health services. Link Up has motivated and strengthened the advocacy capacity of a cadre of young people to engage with the Global Fund, as illustrated by the advocacy successes in Burundi, Myanmar and Uganda, among others.

Lessons Learnt

Despite the many achievements documented through the Link Up project, young people, especially young key populations, still face considerable barriers to engaging with the Global Fund. Stigma and discrimination within the CCM can be a significant challenge. Community voices on the CCM can represent a substantial minority in votes on key populations and young people. Furthermore, the lack of data on LGBTI issues in Burundi means that even with a trans woman on the CCM, transgender issues tend to be overlooked. Civil society organisations on the CCM can also become ineligible to receive Global Fund grants.

Global Fund advocacy is perceived as a 'specialist' area. Processes are complex and time-consuming so broader civil society input is often lacking. Initiatives such as Women4GlobalFund have addressed this through workshops, however, challenges remain in reaching the grassroots.

Language barriers can exclude youth and civil society from involvement in CCMs or concept note development. In Myanmar, youth advocates' ability to engage through NSP working groups is limited without language support. Finally, issues relating to young key populations often fall between two groups: youth and key populations. These overlapping identities create complex layers of stigma, discrimination and marginalisation. Intersectionality is a challenge that Link Up has addressed through its programmatic and advocacy work.

About the International HIV/AIDS Alliance

We are an innovative alliance of nationally based, independent, civil society organisations united by our vision of a world without AIDS.

Acknowledgements

Contributed to by Luisa Orza (ATHENA Network), Nicholas Niwagaba (UNYPA), Mona Montana (Humure), Claudia Nizigiyimana (RNJ+), David Ruiz (SAA), Leila Zadeh (International HIV/AIDS Alliance) and Julie Mellin (GYCA).

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