



■ Technical Brief

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR YOUTH-LED ORGANIZATIONS

Key Insights from Youth-led Organizations for Donors and Adult-led Organizations

INTRODUCTION

In June 2023, MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership convened eight youth-led organizations (YLOs)¹ from five African countries for a workshop in Kenya. The event was part of a co-creation process facilitated by MOMENTUM and the YLOs to consolidate learning and co-create guidance on the unique organizational, technical, and network capacity-strengthening needs of YLOs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this brief is to share externally the insights generated by youth in the workshop and to elevate the voices of participating YLOs that are often not heard in discussions around YLO capacity strengthening. The brief provides a high-level summary of capacity-strengthening insights discussed at the workshop intended for adult-led organizations and donors. A companion brief with insights for YLOs is [available here](#). These key insights reinforce the growing body of guidance and recommendations on YLO capacity strengthening and partnerships with adult-led organizations recently developed by [YIELD Hub](#) and others, thus adding further validity and raising the importance of these topics in the field and grey literature.

KEY INSIGHTS FOR DONORS AND ADULT-LED ORGANIZATIONS FROM YLOs

- 1. Factor capacity strengthening into projects with YLOs.** YLOs value capacity-strengthening support especially when tailored to their unique organizational challenges. They seek partnerships that focus on technical project delivery and that invest in strengthening their organizations, as MOMENTUM has done. Further, YLOs are keen to continue these efforts independently outside of project cycles and find helpful guidelines and tools that cover the entire capacity-strengthening cycle around orientation, assessment, change action planning, implementation, and monitoring.

¹ A YLO is an organization that is led, managed, and coordinated by young people. Staff and members are generally below a certain age and work on a variety of issues from a youth perspective. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/USAID-Youth-in-Development-Policy-2022-Update-508.pdf>



- 2. Invest in organizational sustainability for YLOs.** Donors and adult-led organizations can play a critical role in a YLO’s sustainability journey, supporting its organizational structures (governance, systems, and policies), financial stewardship (resource mobilization, diversification), and program effectiveness (program delivery, partnerships, and networking). This includes supporting YLOs to decide on and institutionalize policies and procedures to either remain YLOs or become youth-serving organizations² and support the development and execution of organizational sustainability plans and activities.
- 3. Facilitate peer-to-peer learning among YLOs.** Donors and adult-led organizations can play a critical role in fostering YLO peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities. A unique and practical option YLOs recommend is for a youth network to receive funding and technical assistance from an adult-led organization for peer-led capacity strengthening of YLOs in the network. Drawing on the different organizational and technical strengths in the network, YLOs can strengthen each other’s skills on capacity topics they’ve identified, enhancing the network’s capabilities as a whole.
- 4. Support leadership transitions.** YLOs believe technical assistance can be useful to support leadership transitions, improve partnership relations, and build trust between YLO and donors and adult-led organizations. Specific examples of support that YLOs find useful include awareness and training on effective YLO leadership successions; developing and institutionalizing leadership succession plans and procedures; mentorship strategies; guidance to identify, select, and onboard youth leaders from within or outside the YLO; and developing communication plans for internal and external audiences.
- 5. Leverage networks for YLO board governance.** Donors and adult-led organizations can support YLOs to strengthen board governance. This includes leveraging adult-led and donor-led networks to find qualified individuals to serve on YLO boards, providing coaching around the appropriate board mechanism to employ, and conducting orientations for board members. YLOs also desire capacity-strengthening support to review their governing documents, establish and or refine governance structures, and develop appropriate board charters.
- 6. Bolster knowledge-sharing platforms for YLOs.** YLOs were excited about a knowledge-sharing platform for capacity strengthening that would consolidate sample organizational policies, guidelines, and templates for different organizational and technical areas. Some immediate resources that would be helpful to access are samples of strategic plans developed by other YLOs that they can reference when creating their own.
- 7. Technical assistance for human resource management.** YLOs seek capacity-strengthening support for both staff and volunteer management since they rely heavily on youth volunteers to fulfill organizational initiatives. Specific examples include expertise to develop job grades, salary scales, and guidelines to address fairness and equity within their organizations. Further, YLOs also seek support to develop volunteer management systems that would cover guidance on activity tracking, supportive supervision and communications within their volunteer network.

² Youth-serving organizations are not exclusively led or managed by youth but provide youth with recreational, educational, cultural, social, charitable, political, or other activities or services. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/USAID-Youth-in-Development-Policy-2022-Update-508.pdf>

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