



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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ABOUT US

Youth LEAD is the regional network of young key populations (YKPs) that works with young people at high risk of HIV exposure and young people living with HIV in the Asia-Pacific region. YKPs include transgender individuals, men who have sex with men, people who engage in sex work, and people who inject drugs. Youth LEAD works with over 50 focal points in 19 countries who empower YKPs to advocate for their needs.

Through this network, Youth LEAD connects with YKPs who are typically considered "hard to reach." Youth LEAD provides a platform for individuals to come together, engage in HIV-related issues, and discuss their needs at the community, national and regional levels. Youth LEAD also collaborates with many stakeholders and is a member of the Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Young Key Populations Asia and the Pacific.

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FOREWORD

2020 has been an unprecedented year for all Youth LEADers to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing HIV epidemic. During this challenging time, young key population-led organizations in the Asia-Pacific have shown resilience to support communities. They have been at the forefront of the HIV response to implement innovative solutions that ensure the continuity of HIV services. Following a rapid survey on the needs of YKPs in the context of COVID-19 by the IATT, Youth LEAD gained approval from the Robert Carr Fund, one of Youth LEAD's prominent donors, to reallocate the programme cost to launch **the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund Phase I**. In addition, with allocation from the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Youth LEAD launched **the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund Phase II**. The funds allowed nine countries to provide food, cash relief, and vital medicine packages to YKPs immediately after the outbreak of COVID-19.

A new website on COVID-19 resources was launched together with the IATT on YKPs to document youth leadership in response to COVID-19, including survey findings, initiatives, and stories of lived experience. On top of the collective efforts to confront COVID-19, Youth LEAD continued to strengthen LGBTI-led organizations and leadership under the program "Organizational Development and Change Manual (ODC)" granted by the UNDP Being LGBTI in Asia Small Grants Programme. The 4Youth Consortium, including Y+, Youth RISE, and Y-PEER Asia Pacific Center persisted in collaboration at the global level to work against COVID-19 and capacitate YKPs. The first-ever UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy Consultations with YKPs in Asia and the Pacific were carried out virtually by Youth LEAD as well as the Regional Consultations on the Global Fund Strategy to build up youth engagement in policy and legal environment.

Finally, I would like to salute all the Focal Points for your meaningful participation in the first-time virtual Youth LEAD International Board Election. This process consolidated the organizational governance and foundation of Youth LEAD. The immense gratitude also goes to the Secretariat, YKP-led organizations, partners, and donors for the trust, mentorship, and inspiration. We will endeavor to bolster YKP communities and create more safe spaces for engagement and partnership. Our commitments to empower YKP members and make our voices heard will continue to guide the journey.

Sincerely Yours,
Fletcher Chiu – Youth LEAD Chairperson

YOUTH LEAD BOARD MEMBER 2020-2022



"I want to give back and do more for the youth LEAD network and foster a better understanding of the needs and issues of YKPs. Young people need to work together, so our voices are heard."

Youth LEAD Chairperson: Fletcher Chiu (Taiwan)

He works for PRAA, an organization that advocates for the rights of PLHIV in Taiwan. He has been a Focal Point for Youth LEAD since 2018.

"I work towards inclusiveness with the hopes of creating a better future for all young people."



Youth LEAD Vice-chairperson: Fame Taqueban (Philippines)

She has been part of the Youth LEAD network as a Focal Point for more than three years. She is also part of the Candon Youth Movement, a local NGO that empowers youth leaders.



"I want to share with Youth LEAD my experience working with PLHIV and to strengthen the work Youth LEAD does with adolescents."

Youth LEAD Board Member: Chinmay Modi (India)

He currently works for Y+ Global, the global network of young people living with HIV, and has been a Focal Point for Youth LEAD since 2016.

"Young people need to be offered a genuine opportunity to change the narrative that they are apathetic or incapable, but this requires both meaningful inclusion and time."



Youth LEAD Board Member: Pooja Kunwar (Nepal)

She is a Youth Consultant for UNAIDS Nepal, a university student, and works with YKP LEAD Nepal. Pooja has been a Youth LEAD Focal Point for more than seven years.



"I want to use this experience to push for more opportunities for young people in decision making and policy advocacy on SRHR and HIV."

Youth LEAD Board Member: Jeremy Tan (Malaysia)

He is a volunteer at a community-based organization, PT Foundation, and is the Youth representative of the Country Coordinating Mechanism in Malaysia. He has been a Focal Point for Youth LEAD since 2018.

"Let's join hands to bring change in the society with our positive attitude and small efforts from every individual who is aiming to bring about change"



Youth LEAD Alumni Board Member: Mirza Ammad Baig (Aadi) (Pakistan)

He is a 27 years old activist working for sexual minorities in Pakistan. He has been involved with Youth LEAD since 2015. He speaks for the SRHR issues among KPs. Aadi runs a community-based organization in Multan as an SSR of The Global Fund to prevent HIV/AIDS among YKPs. He is also a board member and focal point of many national and international organizations.

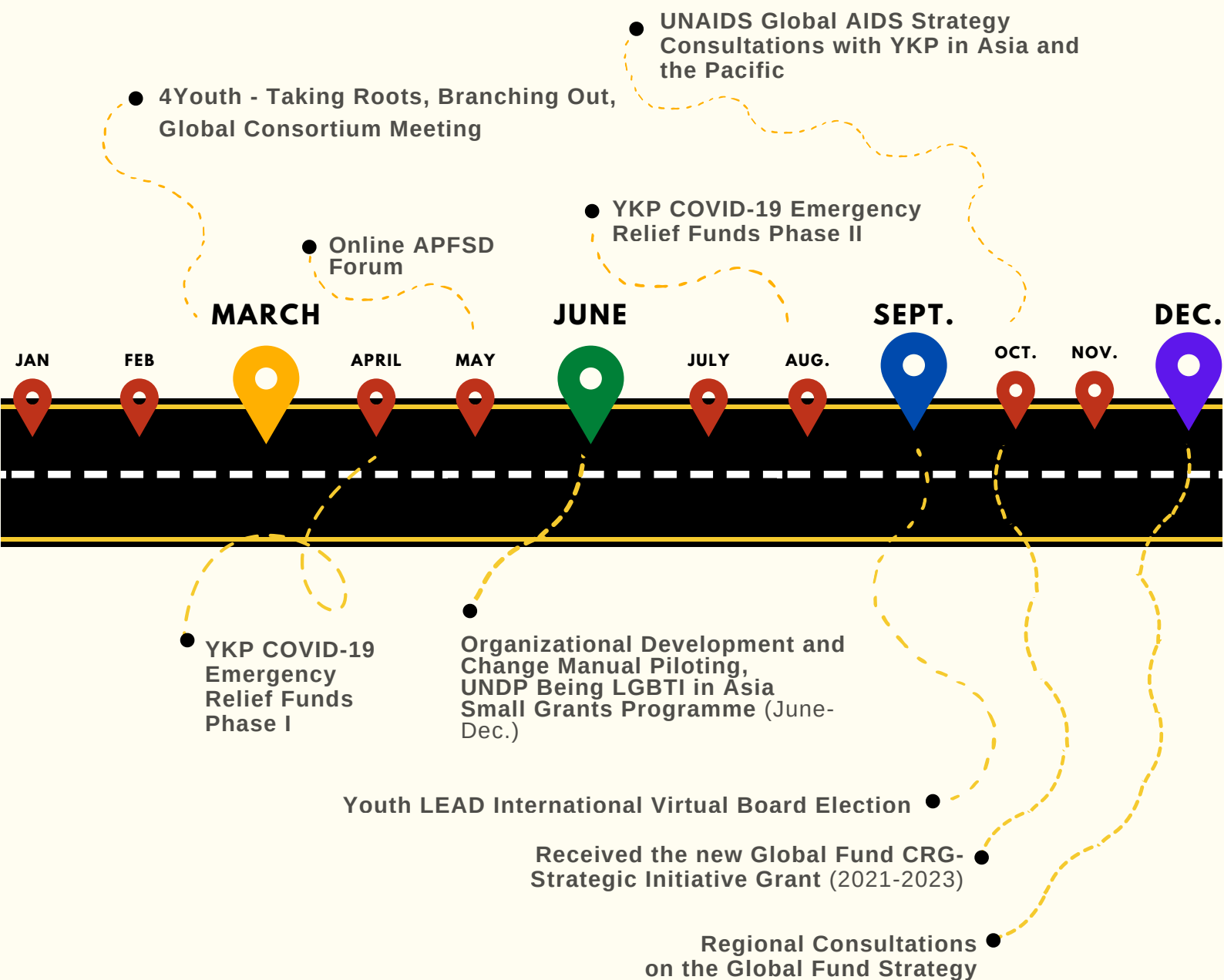


"Youth LEAD has always been a place of learning for young key populations in the Asia Pacific!"

Youth LEAD Alumni Board Member: Missael Hotman Napitupulu (Ael) (Indonesia)

He is a young gay theologian and SRHR social worker. Ael is now working as a Board Chairperson of Inti Muda Indonesia (Indonesia Young Key Population Network). He is passionate about improving current information on issues related to adolescents and YKPs in the Asia Pacific.

2020 KEY HIGHLIGHTS



YOUTH LEAD STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Strategic Priority #1.

Build capacity and implement tools that enable adolescent and young key-populations at higher risk of HIV exposure to contribute to the HIV response at a national, regional, and international level.



Strategic Priority #2.

Strengthen and expand formal and informal networks, new YKP organizations and the organizational capacity that brings together young people from key populations at higher risk of HIV exposure to a common platform at a regional and national level.



Strategic Priority #3.

Advocate for an enabling policy and legal environment for adolescents and young people from key populations at higher risk of HIV exposure and hold governments accountable to enabling policies and laws to ensure universal access to comprehensive HIV and SRHR information and services for adolescents and young people from key populations.



Strategic Priority #4.

Strengthen both external and internal communication strategies within the Youth LEAD network. This includes plans to enhance training, fieldwork, and access to information while also strengthening information sharing within the Youth LEAD network and within the secretariat.



Strategic Priority #5.

Ensure there is a knowledge transfer system whereby information can be shared from those transitioning out of the Youth LEAD network to those currently in the network or just entering.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

BASED ON THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic Priority #1: Adolescents Leading the way in Asia and the Pacific

Organizational Development and Change Manual Piloting, UNDP Being LGBTI in Asia Small Grants Programme (June-Dec 2020)



In May 2020, Youth LEAD was granted UNDP's **"Being LGBTI in the Asia-Pacific Small Grants Programme 2020"**. Among the three main themes, Youth LEAD proposed to focus on **"Enhancing LGBTI Youth Leadership in the Asia Pacific"** by implementing Youth LEAD's **"Organizational Development and Change Manual (ODC)"** specific to YKPs and youth-led organization needs to three YKP LGBTQ focused organizations in the Asia Pacific. The programme aimed to strengthen LGBTI-led organizations and the leaderships from those organizations for sustained advocacy.

The three organizations chosen were Myanmar Youth Stars, Ya_All (India), and Youth LEAD Mongolia. Each organization assessed itself against the manual and created an action plan focusing on organizational components they could improve on to strengthen YKP leadership and advocacy in the region.

Each organization achieved a more robust and resilient youth LGBTI-led organization to influence national decision-makers on health, human rights, etc., and effectively mobilize their constituents and foster strategic partnerships. In addition, several youth LGBTI youth leaders from these organizations were placed in different decision-making platforms in health, human rights, and socio-economic issues. Lastly, all organizations came together at the end of the programme to cross share about achievements and lessons learned in terms of Organizational Development and Change and different promising practices amongst youth LGBTI-led and other YKP led organizations.

Strategic Priority #2: Capacitating Youth to take the LEAD

4Youth - Taking Roots, Branching Out, Global Consortium Meeting (February 2020)

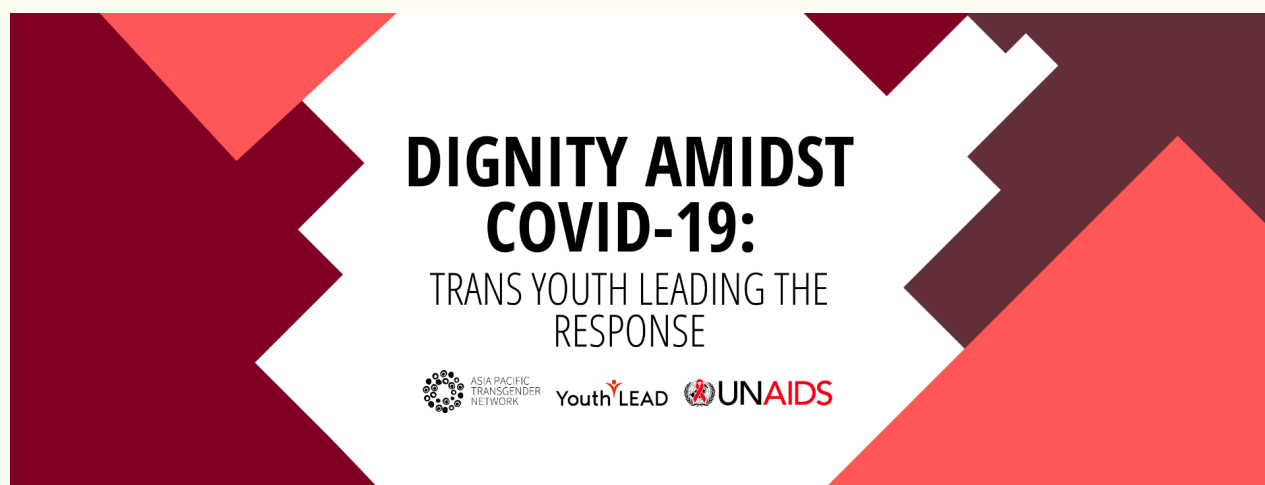
On the 26th-28th February 2020, Youth LEAD, Y-PEER APC, Youth RISE, and Y+ Global, also known as 4Youth (the adopted consortium name under the RCF Grant for 2019 - 2021), came together for an Annual Meeting and Count Me In Reflection Meeting held in Pattaya, Thailand. Ten nationalities were present at the meeting, including participants from Burundi, Colombia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Russia, Nepal, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Zimbabwe.

The Annual Meeting reflected on the achievements, challenges, and areas for improvements of each network. In addition, this meeting helped establish where progress was being made among 4Youth members, recognizing that other networks can provide additional support as we move into planning for 2020.



Dignity Amongst COVID-19 - Trans Youth Leading the Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc not only across the region but around the world. It has caused HIV programmatic delay and strife across the young key population communities.



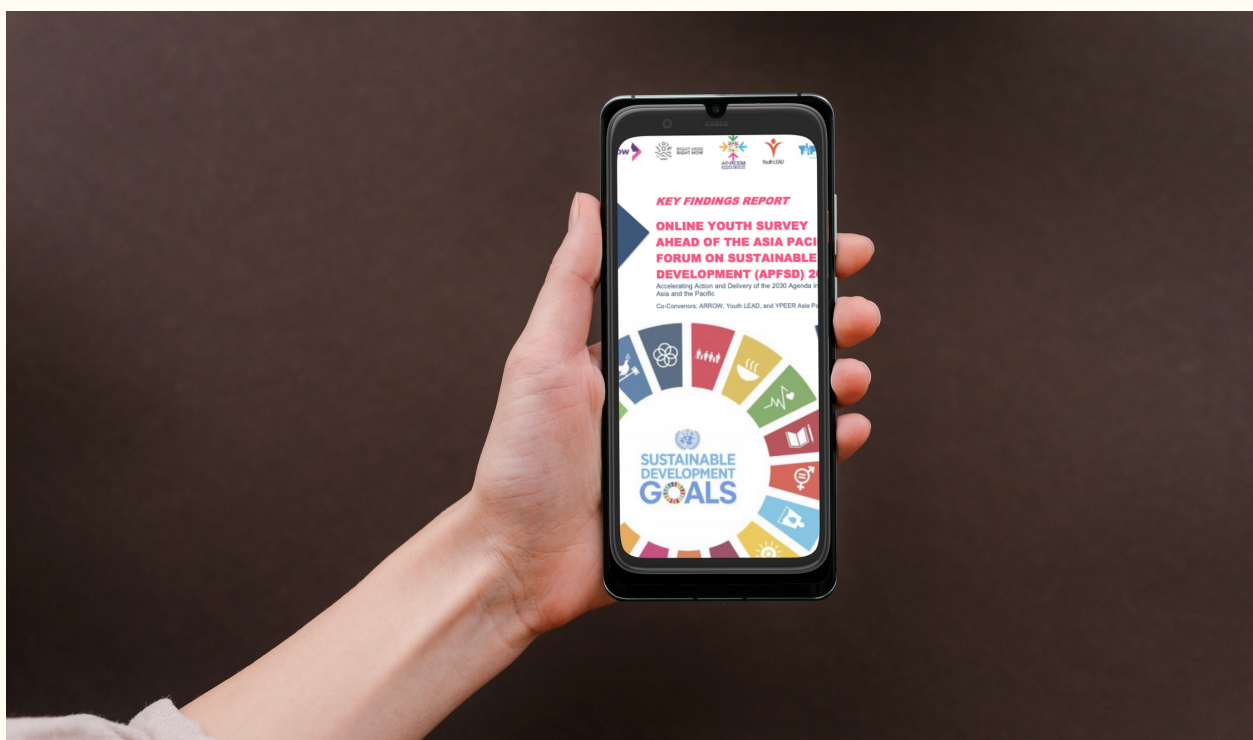
From August to October 2020, the UNAIDS Community response in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTNet) and Youth LEAD, worked together to increase the visibility and voices of Trans and gender diverse youth leaders throughout the Asia Pacific through a series of blogs. The objective of this project was to amplify Trans youth voices and showcase a spectrum of young Trans voices impacted by COVID-19. The blog was a six-part series featuring Transgender and gender diverse communities achievements, exploring how young people have supported their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, which covered all of Asia and the Pacific. The stories raised awareness about the impact of COVID-19 among Transgender people. In addition, they identified their needs to explore possible solutions that mitigate this impact through cross-learning and sharing of testimonies. These stories explored themes of identity, community mobilization, strength and unity, leadership, and activism.

Strategic Priority #3: Youth Engagement in Policy and the Legal Environment

Youth Survey Ahead of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) 2020

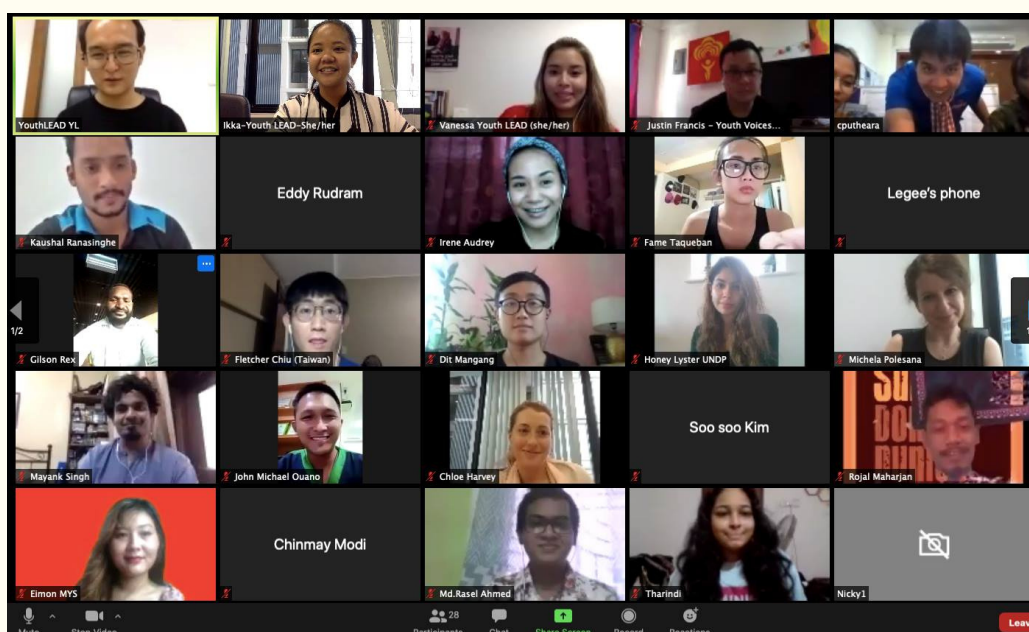
The 7th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) took place on the 20th of May, 2020. The forum focused on the theme of "Accelerating action for and delivery of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia and Pacific" amongst intergovernmental bodies, UN agencies, and CSO's.

This was the first time the forum took place as an online interactive conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The annual APFSD Youth Forum usually precedes the APFSD forum. Thus the co-conveners, including The Asia Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), YPEER Asia Pacific Centre, and Youth LEAD, decided to organize a youth survey ahead of the APFSD 2020. Despite the time and COVID-19 crisis constraints, more than 70 young people in the region responded to the survey. They called for meaningful youth initiatives; youth participation and engagement as an essential principle of the 2030 Agenda in the Asia Pacific; strengthening youth agency by supporting the capacity of young people, youth organizations, networks, and movements; enhancing mutual responsibility trust and collaboration in the implementation of the SDGs; and promoting gender equality and empowerment among girls and women as a priority in the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Asia Pacific Agenda.



UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy Consultations with YKP in Asia and the Pacific (October 2020)

With less than ten years to reach the goal of ending AIDS by 2030, UNAIDS has been tasked by the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) to develop the next global AIDS strategy. The strategy will build on the significant gains already made and will accelerate the pace of action. The new global AIDS strategy will serve as a road map for the world to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, guiding key stakeholders to overcome the challenges and ensure an effective country-led AIDS response. With recent global targets for 2025 and resource needs estimates, the new strategy will shape the next United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS and its political declaration.



The subsequent strategy development is data-driven and consultative, involving UNAIDS's staff, the Co-sponsors, civil society, people living with and affected by HIV, young people, faith institutions, ministers of health, finance, and gender parliamentarians, scientists, donors, and the private sector.

In Asia and the Pacific, Youth LEAD, Y-PEER, and Youth Voices Count, with support from UNAIDS, UNICEF, and UNDP, organized a regional consultation with more than 30 young people from the region representing diverse key populations and people living with HIV. The virtual focus group discussion explored central themes around the contextual environment of concentrated HIV epidemics among YKPs in the region, the accessibility, availability, and quality of YKP HIV services, and the implications of COVID-19 on HIV response for YKPs and new strategies to meet the HIV targets.

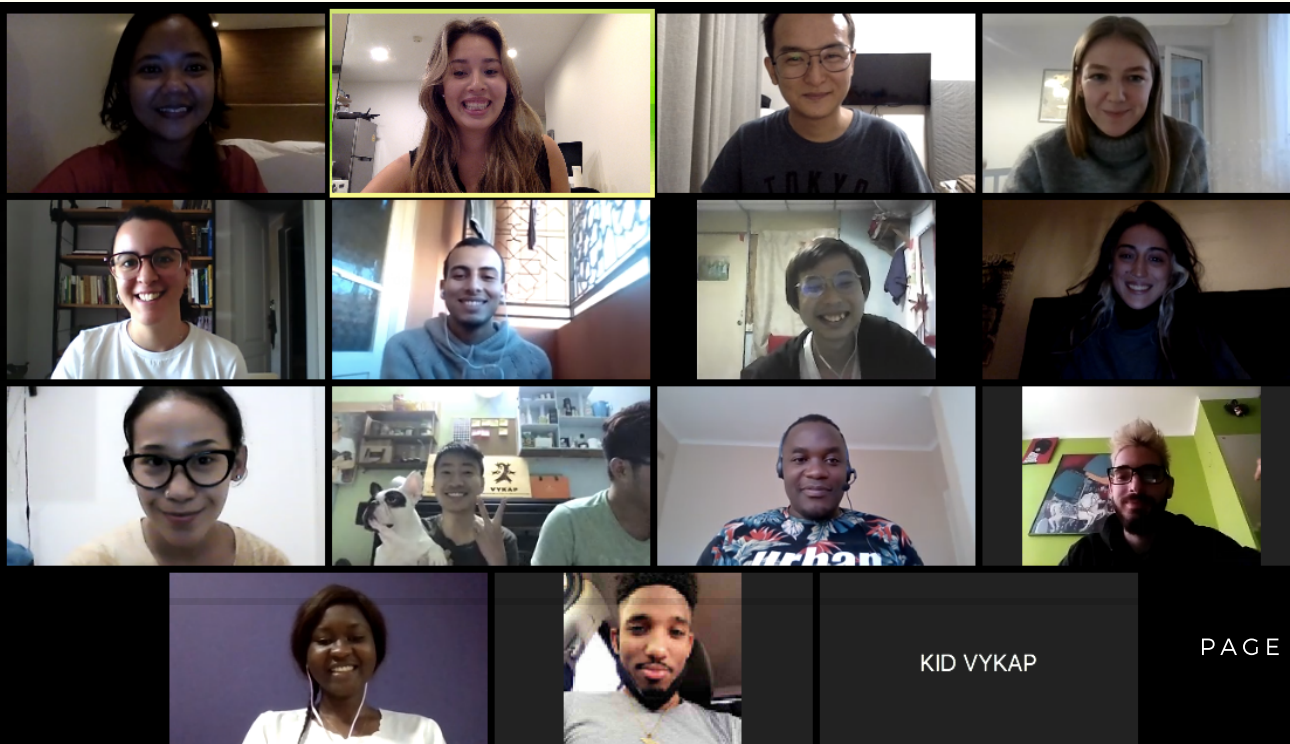
The Global Fund New Strategy and Young People

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (TGF) set out the post-2022 strategy development process in May 2020 through open consultations. In addition to online surveys, TGF supported country and regional consultations to gather strategy development inputs. However, young people's voices, particularly YKPs, were sparsely captured by the ongoing consultations. The Count Me In (CMI) consortium, comprising Youth LEAD, Youth RISE, and Y+ Global with the financial support from the TGF-CRG Department, responded by spearheading exclusive global and regional YKP consultations. Youth LEAD provided overall and technical leadership to the process.

Nine consultations were organized, including eight regional and one global consultation from the 10th of December 2020 until the 24th of February 2021. The consultations covered a total of 214 young people. They included YKPs, TGF Youth Council members, young people, and AGYW (adolescent girls and young women) representatives. The CMI consortium facilitated the consultations in English (Asia Pacific, EECA, Anglophone Africa and the Caribbean), French (Francophone Africa), Russian (EECA), Arabic (MENA), and Spanish (Latin America).

The consultations explored five key thematic issues:

1. The Global Fund's Role in Global Health Security
2. The Global Fund's future role in RSSH to achieve UHC
3. Improve the GF program effectiveness for young people
4. Equity, human rights, and gender
5. Community, youth engagement, partnership, and leadership in the response.



Strategic Priority #5: Strengthening Youth Networks and Organisations

Youth LEAD International Virtual Board Election

Every two years, Youth LEAD's International Board Election takes place. In 2020, due to the global pandemic, Youth LEAD hosted the first virtual election among Youth LEAD's Focal Points.

The online election process was conducted in line with the changes in the governance manual, which talked a little more about why this method was more sustainable and more inclusive. In the past, not all Focal Points would have had the opportunity to participate in the voting process because the budget wouldn't allow us to invite all of our Focal Points to Bangkok.

Focal points who wanted to apply filled out a google form submission that was then turned into a candidate booklet. A link was provided in the booklet to a Google Form, where then FPs were asked to cast three votes. As rightly pointed out earlier, following the governance manual, we allowed candidates to vote for whoever they wanted, not based on region or their key population. Everyone was entitled to those three votes, which was a total of six points to give.

A total of 15 focal points from across the region applied. Everyone was allowed three votes to ensure that FPs cast enough votes equally and fairly among other candidates. There was a scale from who had the highest number of votes to those who didn't receive many. It was important in the election process for us to see that scale because we needed to know if this election process worked effectively or not, and it did.

The Youth LEAD Secretariat, who holds no voting power, tallied up the votes and announced in an online meeting the results. The new Youth LEAD International Board for 2020-2022 are:



Chairperson of the Board: Fletcher Chiu
Vice-Chair of the Board: Fame Taqueban
Board Member: Chinmay Modi
Board Member: Pooja Chetri
Board Member: Jeremy Tan
Alumni Board Member: Aadi Baig
Alumni Board Member: Missael Hotman

Youth LEAD YKP Grants Programme

Since 2013, the YKP Small Grants Programme remains as one of Youth LEAD's core activities. The Small Grants Programme provides financial support to YKP organizations and networks. It strengthens YKP programmes and youth involvement in the HIV movement to allow YKP-led organizations to excel. The programme aims to ensure the human rights of YKPs are respected. The impact of HIV and AIDS is mitigated through the meaningful involvement of YKPs in gaining equal and equitable access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support. The Small Grants Programme is the cornerstone of Youth LEAD's dedication to supporting country-level activities.



In 2020, Youth LEAD provided **119,050 USD** in small grants to **nine countries and eleven organizations**. The small grants came from various funding sources, such as the Robert Carr Fund, Global Fund CRG-Strategic Initiatives, GF-CRG TA grant, Global Fund multi-country grant, UNFPA AP, and UNAIDS RST. The YKP Small Grants Programme in 2020 supported capacity building and development, legal advocacy, network building, national-level studies, and HIV service delivery programs for YKPs.


Youth LEAD in COVID-19 Response

In March 2020, Youth LEAD supported the IATT on YKPs in Asia and the Pacific to develop and release a rapid survey. The survey aimed to collect data on information needs, medication on hand, access to HIV services, and to identify where support for YKPs and young people living with HIV was needed. The survey was incredibly insightful and highlighted existing challenges and current concerns. It reaffirmed trends where YKPs and YPLHIV are disproportionately experiencing more significant difficulties with access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care. Youth LEAD Focal Points and members have reported cases of limited antiretroviral (ARV) supplies in several countries. They have also expressed concerns with sustaining supplies of essential medicines over a long period.

Simultaneously, Youth LEAD conducted an internal situational analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic among its members and network partners to identify areas for additional support. The IATT YKP COVID-19 Survey findings supported many of the claims made on the challenges experienced by young people and across the region. Subsequently, Youth LEAD communicated these needs to existing donors such as the Global Fund and the Robert Carr Fund to explore the possibility of fund-reallocation for YKP COVID-19 related programmes and initiatives. The Robert Carr Fund agreed to this proposal and allowed Youth LEAD to establish the fund for network partners, community members, and those affected alike.

An allocation of a small emergency seed fund for network partners to support ongoing COVID-19 initiatives would provide more significant support and security for organizations and networks struggling with the pandemic. The Robert Carr Fund (RCF), one of Youth LEAD's prominent donors, agreed to the proposal and approved the reallocation of programme costs to support the COVID-19 response programme. Youth LEAD launched the first phase of the YKP COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund on the 20th of April, 2020. **Phase I** had a total budget of **USD 29,000** allocated to support COVID-19 relief efforts.



 **YOUNG
PEOPLE
LEADING
THE
COVID-19
RESPONSE**

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In August 2020, Youth LEAD conducted a similar context analysis of COVID-19 with Focal Points and network partners to determine if there was a need to continue the YKP COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. Likewise, Focal Points and network partners provided Youth LEAD with a brief background on the COVID-19 situation in their respective countries. Nearly all responses indicated concerns about the rise of COVID-19 cases. Due to poorly coordinated responses from governments, civil society organizations, and in particular, youth-led organizations have been unable to access resources and financial assistance. After a series of discussions with donors and UN partners, Youth LEAD extended the YKP COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund in late August, launching Phase 2. The second phase would continue to support youth-led initiatives and projects in the context of HIV and COVID-19 up until the end of 2020.

Phase II of the YKP COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund was supported by the RCF and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), with **USD 23,000** allocated to support ongoing COVID-19 relief efforts. In total, combining **Phase I and Phase II**, Youth LEAD has mobilized **USD 52,000** towards the YKP COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund in 2020.

Through this emergency relief fund, we managed to support country partners to do various initiatives for Youth ISPs across the region, some of these includes:

1. YKP LEAD and Recovering Nepal - supported 126 YPWID with critical harm reduction services and support;
2. Human Touch Foundation (Goa, India) - supported the ARV home-delivery scheme and mental support programs for adolescents living with HIV; in total 162 packages distributed to adolescent living with HIV during phase;
3. Inti Muda (Jakarta, Indonesia) - supported programs and activities of local YKP organizations in seven provinces across Indonesia. Activities include essential care packages, online counseling services with a psychologist, and seed funding for emergencies;
4. Ya_All (Manipur, India) - supported mental health services, food, and essential medicine packages and provided small financial grants to local Transgender businesses; Around 200 individuals were reached out for psychosocial support through tele-counselling;
5. YKP LEAD and NAP+N (Kathmandu, Nepal) – supported around 312 individuals received essential relief packages, including ARV to the children living with HIV under 12 years old across Nepal; and
6. Y-PEER Pilipinas (Philippines) - supported adolescents and YKPs by hosting a series of web talks on HIV and SRHR. Y-PEER also distributed free condoms through a delivery scheme.



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