

YOUTH IN ACTION

ADVOCACY TRAINING CASE STUDIES

**“Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful, committed
citizens can change the world;
indeed, it is the only thing that
ever has.”**

Margaret Mead, American Anthropologist, and Writer



Message from our leaders

It is with great pleasure that Y-ACT launches this report showcasing examples of Y-ACT's success stories of the Youth in Action Advocacy Training Curriculum. Through the four case studies highlighted here, each submitted by youth advocates from different perspectives, we can begin to see both the opportunities and challenges of engaging young people in meaningful ways in society through inculcating foremost advocacy skills and tools.

The summaries of these case studies further reveal a set of elements that are crosscutting for grassroots youth advocates including the importance of meaningful youth engagement, the role of advocacy as a primary gateway to achieve desired change on pertinent issues, and the pivotal role of coalition building and developing strong partnerships with decision makers in the entire advocacy process.

We are grateful to these individuals who gave generously to share their inner journeys, experiences and insights. It is my hope that this report will be a benchmark of inspiration to other youth advocates across the world to continue with their quest for meaningful youth engagement through advocating to duty bearers and decision makers. We hope it will showcase the positive contributions young people can make in their communities and in development processes through capacity strengthening of their advocacy skill-sets and knowledge.



"Do the best you
can until you know
better, then when
you know better, do
the better"

Maya Angelou

GLORIA NYANJA- AMBAKA
CONTENT AND REMOTE TRAINING LEAD,
Y-ACT, YOUTH IN ACTION

THE BIG PICTURE



Y-ACT is committed to amplifying youth voices by unleashing a new generation of youth advocates empowered with the necessary skill sets and toolkits to become transformational leaders in their communities of impact.

Following a series of consultations with youth advocates across East Africa, we identified existing gaps and needs towards strengthening youth advocacy capacities including, the need for advocacy skills that are accessible to the most vulnerable communities of young people, and the access to youth-friendly tools and training which are compelling, fun and interactive!

In 2018, Y-ACT launched the Youth in Action Advocacy Curriculum as part of its skills-building agenda in line with its overall mission to mentor, support, and increase the capacity of youth advocates. This came in the wake of a time when there was no existing comprehensive advocacy curriculum devoted to meeting the aspirations of youth advocates across East Africa.

Three years on, the Curriculum has impacted more than 150 youth advocates at over 65 youth-led organizations in 7 focus counties across Kenya staggered over two phases. The delivery model of both phases one and two were through a blended learning approach where participants were engaged through in-person sessions and online learning within the periods of the training. After successfully undertaking the two phases, Y-ACT, in line with its core pillar of meaningful youth engagement and inclusivity, sought to upscale the curriculum to new audiences of young people. In August 2020, the Open Source Youth in Action Advocacy Curriculum was officially launched through a webinar session after which the different curriculum modules were launched onto the platform. Since its launch, the Youth in Action Advocacy Training Curriculum has reached over 1,000 youth advocates in 25 countries.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY LENSES



Advocacy training interventions can empower youth to address policy changes in their communities that ultimately decrease health disparities (Israel et al., 2010) and influence decision makers to bring about the desired change.

Youth advocacy as espoused by Y-ACT's Youth in Action Advocacy Curriculum aims to address the root causes of problems in communities, leading to long-term sustainable benefits for young people and their communities. This can be achieved by influencing changes in policies by generating buy-in and commitment from leaders and decision makers, mainstreaming sexual and reproductive health rights to all aspects of development and securing financial, human and technical resources for program implementation and service delivery to transform communities.

Y-ACT through its curriculum has empowered youth advocates in Kenya with the necessary skills to be transformative advocacy champions in their counties. This report captures the inner journeys of five youth advocates identified from past cohorts and how they have been able to realize transformative change through strengthening of their advocacy capacity provided by undertaking the curriculum.



Case Study 1:

01. Overall Experience with the Curriculum

The curriculum enabled me to gain critical insights on the need for developing an Advocacy Strategy as the guiding document in conducting advocacy work of my organization. The development process of the advocacy strategy further opened my eyes into skill sets on how to carry out targeted research, how to form partnerships on the advocacy issue, how to develop strategic messaging to amplify voices, memo writing. I realized the importance of having a Theory of Change as a parameter in drawing out the advocacy outputs.



Winnie Lozi

Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
and Youth Advocate,
Dream Achievers Youth
Organization.
Kilifi County

‘Enlightening training as I had never interacted with advocacy work before...didn’t think it was an area that I would ever be interested in. I am now one of the youth advocates who’s now very active...’



02. Transformative Impact in Advocacy

Work

After undertaking the curriculum, I learnt how to approach decision makers strategically and the conversation morphed from us reaching out to the County, to the County reaching out to us consultatively on pertinent advocacy areas that we champion. Most recently, the County called upon us to assist in the planning of the Menstrual Hygiene Day 2021. Additionally, in recognition of our work, the County invited our organization to be a member of the County Technical Working Groups on Health. This has led to formation of coalitions on MHM and SRH where the coalition upscales the achievement of the advocacy goal where our organization lacks capacity.

We are currently involved in the validation of the National MHM Policy as we work with the County government to domesticate our own County MHM policy. We have further observed a surge in the increment of budget allocations for SRH priorities.

Looking inward, I endeavoured to steer my organization to enhance our advocacy capacity. Firstly, we developed our organizational advocacy strategy, a first of its kind, embedded with an implementation framework and outcome harvesting tool kits. Moreover, we identified the need for enshrining advocacy in our organizational culture and we are currently recruiting an Advocacy Officer to fully mainstream advocacy in our organization's work.

03. Support Received/Partnerships

Forged in Advocacy Work

Our work has been visible in Kilifi county and beyond media campaigns that we conducted such as Radio Talk Shows, contributing to newspapers articles, Podcasts, Twitter Storms have increased our visibility in the County through being hosted on Radio Shows and other social media coverages. This has led to an inflow of support, both financial and technical, in advancing our work. The Department of Gender under the County Government has included our organization in the WASH and Gender technical working groups, augmenting our contribution in shaping these agenda with the County. The Kilifi County Coalition on MHM and SRH has further amplified our voice during the Campaign and Advocacy Process.

We have received financial support from; Y-ACT in the domestication of the MHM Policy in Kilifi County; DSW in the establishment of youth-friendly services; and Right Her, Right Now Coalition is in the process of finalizing support in advocating for the implementation of the CSE Policy.



Lessons Learnt (Insights, Challenges, and Best Practices)

1. Through multi-year advocacy in my County, I have realized that continuous coordination and engagement with the County officials is imperative to accelerate any advocacy campaign that we embark on.

2. Navigating the advocacy space with County officials has proved difficult especially in Outcome Harvesting of commitments by these decision makers. This is further enunciated by constant changes of County officials in the directorates that we have engaged with prompting the need to continually review the primary and secondary decision makers and their interests.

3. On budget making processes, there is a need to enhance the capacity of youth advocates to further engage with the right policy documents as applicable in the county contexts and the nexus with advocacy moments that youth can leverage on.

4. Impact does not happen in isolation. Coalition building is a critical component of the advocacy process as different partners have different strengths that can be leveraged on. For example, grassroots organizations that have ICT youth centers can enable youth with no access to laptops or smartphones to access the advocacy curriculum thereby increasing its uptake and resultant strengthening of a critical mass of youth advocates at grassroots levels



Case Study 2:



01. Overall Experience with the Curriculum

My overall goal was to contribute towards strengthening of participatory processes to ensure meaningful engagement of the local communities with decision makers which I had no skills and competency on how to actualize. The curriculum gave me skills on advocacy and how to implement advocacy work effectively, efficiently and competently and in that process, it became a great resource in shaping the vision of our organization. I understood how to identify key advocacy issues and gained confidence through the technical skills acquired from the advocacy training, participated actively during the public forums on budget making and policy formulation processes, and my visibility in these processes enabled me to be called upon by the decision makers to represent youths in decision making forums.



Erisen Lengéded

Operations Manager,
Empower Pastoralists
Organization of Kenya (EPOK)
Samburu County

'I had a burning desire to advocate for the rights...of illiterate people forming 74.5% of the total population...in Samburu County...who do not understand their role, and influence to the decision-making processes...the Y-ACT Advocacy Program... (was) an entry point to realization of my goal to ensure participatory systems take into account the needs and priorities of citizens.'



02. Transformative Impact in Advocacy Work

It was at first tough to start a purely advocacy organization without the basic skills on advocacy so the curriculum became a great milestone in enhancing our vision and shaping the organizational capacity. We understood the policy environment, how to develop advocacy messages and how to implement advocacy work. I understood that participation is a continuous process and it was very prudent to increase the methodological capacities of my target audiences to understand how they can make their priorities inform government planning.

For the first time ever, I mobilized my local youth to participate in the budget making process for the 2019/2020 financial year. This made me focused and determined to realize the overarching advocacy goal in my community.

03. Support Received/Partnerships Forged in Advocacy Work

My organization partnered with the County government of Samburu and the PLO Lumumba Foundation to carry out capacity building forums on social accountability and public participation. We also collaborated with the County department of health who, through their professional psychologists, trained youth to be psychosocial support trainers.

Lessons Learnt (Insights, Challenges, and Best Practices)

1. Both the communities and the decision-makers lack capacity how to meaningfully engage youth. There is a need to develop a curriculum for the decision-makers who will be able to work with the youths who have been capacitated by the existing Y-ACT advocacy curriculum.
2. It was cumbersome to navigate through the platform offering the curriculum owing to network connectivity issues in my County. It will be best if the curriculum could be available offline.



Case Study 3:

01. Overall Experience with the Curriculum

The training was quite impactful. I acquired skills like negotiation skill, active listening skill, leadership skill amongst others that are helping me as an individual and at organisational level, enabling us to have a 'seat at the decision-making table'. Most significantly, we successfully petitioned the County Assembly of Kisumu to increase the budgetary allocation for RAMNCAH from 4% to 10%.

I am now aware of the processes and right channels to follow when I am advocating for an issue both at the grassroot level and at the county level and this was best demonstrated through an initiative I championed of ensuring that every girl in Kisumu county was 'padded up'.



Emelda Miyere
Youth Advocate,
Kisumu Progressive Youth
Kisumu County

'Just by the very mention of being a graduate of the curriculum gets me into spaces.'



02. Transformative Impact in Advocacy

Work

Through my organization, I have increased the reach of advocacy skills and toolkits by introducing other young people to the Y-ACT Advocacy curriculum since it was made open-source and accessible to anyone, anywhere. We have equally been using the knowledge gained to choose our partners and any other person we'd love to engage at organizational level.

In addition, I have managed to start and grow an initiative of giving out period napkins to vulnerable girls. I have been able to package the right messages on social media by utilizing the communication skills gained from the course to help me to mobilize for the period napkins as I currently fully depend on donations from individuals or organizations.

The curriculum unlocked character attributes of patience and teamwork as I learnt that advocacy is a whole process that takes time and requires a lot of teamwork.

03. Support Received/Partnerships

Forged in Advocacy Work

Through my period napkins initiative, I have received donations from the County government through the office of the Women Representative and other organizations by providing napkins and toiletries for the girls. The County government has also been instrumental in approving me to use facilities like schools and churches for distribution of the donations due to the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I have worked with organizations like Feminists in Kenya and Go Girl Initiative where I have been invited to training sessions by virtue of mentioning that I am a graduate of the Y-ACT Advocacy training program.

Lessons Learnt (Insights, Challenges, and Best Practices)

1. We have been denied access to some spaces due to lack of access to the right information and unwillingness to learn by older generations. There exists an engrained notion in my County that sexual education among young people is a taboo.

2. Break down the curriculum and make it more fun and interactive through youthfully social media trends like live sessions on Facebook and YouTube.

Case Study 4:



01. Overall Experience with the Curriculum

The overall training was awesome! From how easy it was to navigate the online platform to the supportive team from AMREF who were just a text/phone call away and would explain the concepts in depth during the in-person sessions. I was able to differentiate between sensitization and advocacy, undertake a power mapping exercise in bid to know which decision maker to approach at which time and for what purpose to ensure successful advocacy efforts.

Before undertaking the curriculum, my engagement with public engagement was extremely low. Currently, I strongly understand why it is important to meaningfully participate in relevant county decision making processes as they heavily impact my ability to access quality and comprehensive sexual reproductive health services as a youth. Initially, I would sit on the sidelines of issues in my community and wonder why “someone” has not taken the initiative of fixing that which is broken within the governance and service delivery systems for youth. The curriculum empowered me to realize that I am that “someone.”



Yusuf Nyanje
Team Lead,
Tushirikiane Post Test Club
(TPTC)
Kakamega County

“In one word... excellent! I really liked the support the team offered, they were so available ... to clarify on things I wasn't able to understand...the platform...was easy to work through and the content was precise and concise.”



02. Transformative Impact in Advocacy

Work

I managed to be selected as one of the steering committee members representing my organization owing to my newly acquired advocacy skills. I am among the CSOs team engaging with the CHMT in bid to reduce the high teenage pregnancy burden in Kakamega County through the Y-ACT project and Sauti Sasa (End teenage pregnancy campaign) in Kakamega county. I also sit in the County HIV and STIs TWG as a youth representative in the county where we are currently developing a county HIV policy which is at the executive level for review. In addition, I participated in the creation of the Kakamega County Youth Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) coalition in bid to advocate effectively for the sexual reproductive health needs and rights of the Kakamega youth. I'm glad that the knowledge that I gained from the Youth in Action Advocacy training has really helped me to give reasoned inputs in the TWGs that I sit in.

03. Support Received/Partnerships

Forged in Advocacy Work

We've worked closely with KAPDA, a CBO in Kakamega County that provides support to youth advocates to attend public participation forums and youth-led activities. We also partnered with Kenya Water for Health to facilitate our menstrual health activities.

The Y-ACT project has offering continuous mentorships on advocacy and financial resources to facilitate our engagements with the county duty bearers. The county government on the other hand has provided an open platform and technical support for young people to engage with them

Lessons Learnt (Insights, Challenges, and Best Practices)

1. It is easier working with the advisors to the decision makers as they are better placed to give tips on how to attract the attention of the decision makers.
2. Decision makers expect to get monetary tips from us as they assume we are well funded to carry out advocacy activities.
3. Enable access of the advocacy curriculum on feature phones (kabambe) as not many rural based youth can afford data consistently to go through the whole curriculum

Conclusion

Overall, these factors are buttressed by two key support factors being that: the featured youth advocates undertook and completed the Youth in Action Advocacy Training delivered through a blended learning approach; this was the first time for the youth advocates to interact with advocacy training tools and skill-sets. Being their first time interacting with a holistic advocacy training program, the youth advocates showcased tremendous progress, transformation and potential in their advocacy work, prompting the need to scale the training to as many youth advocates as possible.



Advocacy Capacitation

Equipping youth with the right advocacy skills and knowledge opens new pathways to convince policymakers, politicians, and other decision-makers that advancing youth health priorities is a smart investment to improve public support and community health outcomes.



Meaningful Youth Engagement

There exists continuous need for community-lead youth advocacy programming which entails youth-led, high-impact solutions for adolescent health and well-being in order to benefit, not only today's adolescents, but also future generations – and accelerate progress in achieving health for all.



Coalition Building and Partnerships

Leveraging influential coalition voices to help make your case is a key prerogative in accelerating advocacy goals. This can be by engaging the people or groups that your policy makers respect and listen to, such as their advisors, experts and other groups. Additionally, engaging key decision-makers and advocates beyond the health sector is critical as health decisions involve and affect groups that may not visibly work on health including, inter alia, leaders in the finance docket pertaining budget making processes.



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