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# CHANGE STORY KENYA

A PARTNER CHANGE STORY BY Y+ KENYA, Y+ GLOBAL AND GNP+

## INTRODUCTION

In 2018, 30% of the people receiving services through Bridging the Gaps (BtG) were under the age of 24. This data highlighted the urgent need for BtG to identify, document and share good practices to engage and develop sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and HIV programming for young key populations. Many networks of young people are in their infancy and while they are the experts in their own experience they lack meaningful linkages to other youth-led networks. Thereby they are missing out on shared learning's about new innovative ideas and programs that directly suit the current needs of young people. GNP+ and Y+ Global worked together to conceptualize Young, Wild and Free whose purpose was to connect to different youth networks together to facilitate learning and sharing best practices. This change story highlights: what the situation was before and what we have been trying to achieve during the implementation of the BtG programme.

## PROBLEM

According to the Kenya AIDS Strategic Framework II (KASF II) there are about 1.5 million Kenyans living with HIV. Of these 330,000 are adolescents and young people living with HIV between the ages of 15-25 years. In (2019), this age group accounted for 17,667 of the total new infections among AYP, and 2,830 HIV-related deaths in Kenya.

Kenya has made a huge investments in the fight against HIV by reducing HIV prevalence by 50% over a decade, however adolescents and young people still bear the impact of HIV epidemic due to limited access to information, services, stigma and discrimination. It is therefore critical to hear their voices on how they can be enabled to fast track HIV prevention, while at the same time building a holistic approach to solving issues affecting adolescents and young people living with HIV in Kenya.

“When we meet as KPs, queer or LGBTQ+ we do not face human rights violation but acceptance, we are proud of our sexuality, and we love each other.”

- Cleo, Malawi

Bridging the Gaps is an international HIV programme with a focus on the health and rights for LGBT people, sex workers and people who use drugs, currently operating in fifteen countries. For more information on the programme, visit [www.hivgaps.org](http://www.hivgaps.org).

**BRIDGING THE GAPS**  
Health and rights  for key populations



## CHANGE

Through the Young Wild & Free...? program, Y+ Kenya worked collaboratively with national actors in the HIV response to build stronger connections and networks between adolescents and young people living with HIV. Learning from others in the Young Wild and Free...? program they implemented a number of activities, each building on each other to connect and link adolescents and young people living with HIV, especially those linked to key populations, to the broader national HIV response.

Their first project was working with adolescents and young people living with HIV to design a camp. They called it the Young Wild and Free Adolescents and Young People Living with HIV Camp. The objective was to equip adolescents and young people with long-term skills and information that will enable them to become better placed to self-address challenges affecting them at individual level. The camp provided a platform for participants to voice their challenges and needs when it comes to their health including sexual and reproductive health, financial literacy and also provided a safe space for them to discuss how they too, can contribute to the HIV response at community and national level. In total, 31 participants from different regions and organizations in Kenya attended the camp. Following the momentum from the camp, the youth advocates advocated to host a larger LOVE Alliance meeting with young key populations in Kenya. From the 8th to the 11th of September, 2021, the movement building event took place in Ukunda, Kenya. The event was hosted by Y+ Kenya. In total there were 25 youth key population leaders from 6 different countries in the Africa region that came together and shared their stories to learn from each other.

The youth consultations took place to make sure the work that has been done for young key populations during the Young Wild and Free...? project would continue in other projects such as the Love Alliance and Ready+.

## YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHANGE

GNP+ and Y+ Global supported this change by facilitating online learning sessions with youth networks to share and adjust their best practices based on feedback and brainstorming with other young key population networks as part of Young, Wild and... Free?. The COVID-19 period enabled networks of young people, including the networks in Kenya to explore new and innovative ways to amplify their connection virtually as in-person gatherings were not possible. With the support of networks of other young key populations in Vietnam, Ukraine, Russian, Indonesia, Kenya, and South Africa, young key populations networks were able to jointly create a unique shared space via ZOOM and WhatsApp to consult each other and ask for advice, support and council. This resulted in creating the best practices manual the Young, Wild & Free Implementation Guide that supported the networks of young key populations in Kenya and more broadly to help youth within the country with SRHR and HIV related interventions.

GNP+ and Y+ Global in collaboration with Y+ Kenya organized the Young, Wild & Free movement building event in Kenya. During this meeting the youth leaders followed a diversity training, an introduction to the Love Alliance, a training on the ready to care scorecard and a youth consultation where plans were discussed on how to sustain the movement building work for young key population that has been done under YWF. For the other regions it was not possible to organize an in person meeting for the youth leaders. Therefore we held the global online youth consultations to focus on the same topics. Youth leaders from more than 16 counties have joined the online consultation.

## LOOKING AHEAD:

### LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The success and continuation of Young, Wild and Free...? and the networks that have been formed and nurtured during the program have shown a desire to not only maintain their linkages but to build on their work and cultivate a stronger, more inclusive movement of young key populations. For the work to be done, you need time, resources, and above and beyond ongoing opportunities to connect. In many cases, it starts as it did with many of the camp participants by young people and adolescents getting together to collaborative plan a program, inspired by their needs and desire to bridge these gaps in their community. The camp was an excellent example of this progress coming together with the outcome of so many new empowered young leaders. While there is still lots of growing to happen, the team at Y+ Kenya aligned with the LOVE Alliance and READY+ to ensure that they are connected to ongoing opportunities for connection, collaboration and development for the young key populations in their communities.