USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE PROJECT
Inspired Leadership. Sound Management. Transparent Governance.

Photo: Projet Jeune Leader

Designing and Implementing a Highly Effective Youth Leadership Program

The USAID-funded Leadership, Management, and Governance (LMG) Project cultivates the next generation of global health leaders in developing countries by hosting YouthLeadGlobal.org, developing youth leadership and governance eCourses, a youth peer coaching program, and developing the capacity of the International Youth Alliance on Family Planning.

f **facebook.com/LMGforHealth**

  @LMGforHealth

  @LMGforHealth

Why focus on youth?

The importance of including youth, from 10-29 years of age, in the development agenda has gained global support during the last 20 years. Young people make up approximately 30% of the population in developing countries, and this demographic is expanding. The USAID Youth in Development Policy recognizes the importance of youth participation in all sectors, and advocates for holistic and positive youth development. The Policy notes that partnering with youth harnesses "their energy, enthusiasm, skills, and innovative ideas to increase economic growth, foster social stability, improve civic participation, and ensure healthier, more educated and productive societies."[1]

What is youth leadership? How is it different from youth development?

Youth leadership is a theory of youth development, in which young people gain the skills and knowledge necessary to lead civic engagement, civic reform, and community organizing activities. It is one way to promote positive youth development. Youth leadership is the meaningful participation of youth plus (at minimum) skills development and opportunities to unleash their potential and

power to influence or bring about change. Youth leadership programs go beyond the process of meaningful participation of youth, and provide distinct opportunities for youth to learn new skills and apply these for individual, organizational, and community-level change. This occurs across the various sectors in which youth leadership programs operate, including advocacy, civic engagement, community development, education, and health.

How do we know what works for effective youth leadership programs?

The LMG Project conducted a rapid scan for promising youth leadership programmatic models, and learned that these are few and far between. Following a targeted scan of peer-reviewed and grey literature for definitions and examples of youth leadership, the LMG Project designed and conducted a global survey to identify promising programmatic models that are capturing and documenting results. The LMG Project developed scoring and ranking criteria to identify the top leadership models out of all the survey submissions (n=58), and then conducted in-depth interviews with staff from the top organizations (n=11) to learn more about
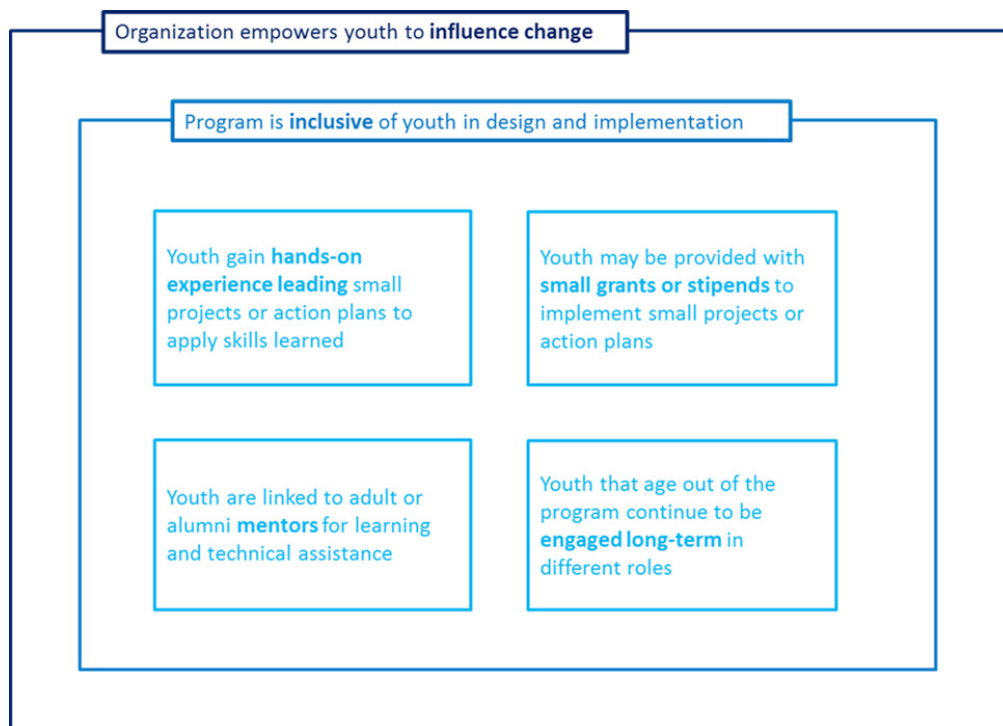
1. United States Agency for International Development, *Youth in Development Policy*, (Washington: US Agency for International Development, October 2012), http://www.usaid.gov/policy/youth.

Organization empowers youth to **influence change**

Program is **inclusive** of youth in design and implementation

Youth gain **hands-on experience leading** small projects or action plans to apply skills learned

Youth may be provided with **small grants or stipends** to implement small projects or action plans

Youth are linked to adult or alumni **mentors** for learning and technical assistance

Youth that age out of the program continue to be **engaged long-term** in different roles

their approach. The attributes of the most effective programs, when taken together, form an ecological model, encompassing an organizational approach, programmatic approach, and key program components.

Recommendations for implementing an effective youth leadership program

1. **Recognize young people's agency and ability to effect change.** Youth can be spokespersons for their own needs, and have a key role to play as advocates for important causes within their family, school, and community. Commit to building the capacity of youth to act as change makers in their communities.

2. **Involve youth in program development.** Include young people in all phases of the program, from design to implementation to evaluation, or structure the program so that youth have the freedom to independently make it their own.

3. **Include hands-on experience.** Give young people the opportunity to apply the leadership skills they learn by designing and implementing a small project or action plan, on a topic of their choosing, in their school or community.

4. **Provide funding.** Provide youth with small grants or stipends to implement projects. Another option is to sponsor youth to attend conferences or events that are strategic opportunities for advocacy, learning, and networking.

5. **Provide support.** Link young people to adult or alumni mentors for ongoing learning and technical assistance as they implement projects and apply leadership skills in new contexts.

6. **Engage long-term.** Offer opportunities for youth that age out of the program to continue to be involved in different roles, such as paid staff, peer educators, or mentors.