



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

TECHNICAL HIGHLIGHT

Youth-Adult Partnership on International Planned Parenthood Member Association Boards



Authors

Mahesh Shukla and Lakachew Walie

To improve the access to and quality of sexual and reproductive health services for young people, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) promotes youth participation on its Member Association governing boards. This means training young board members as leaders and ensuring their effective collaboration with adult counterparts. It also means orienting adult board members on how to work in a productive partnership with young board members.

Background

The goal of IPPF Member Associations (MAs) in sub-Saharan Africa is to increase access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for the region's most vulnerable youth, men, and women. IPPF MAs take special pride in serving young people. Through the support of their volunteers and staff, they provide SRH information, education, and services. These services include family planning, safe abortion, maternal and child health, and sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV prevention, treatment, and care. IPPF MAs in the sub-Saharan Africa region are leading non-government SRH service delivery organizations and act as the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) advocacy voice in Africa.

IPPF MAs are volunteer-founded and volunteer-led organizations. Volunteer members are elected to the governing bodies at national and subnational levels, which ensures a close link to communities served. MAs have distinct and well-

designed governance structures, not only at the national level, but also at the subnational level. For example, the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria has 24 state associations; the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia has eight area offices with corresponding general assemblies and executive committees; and Reproductive Health Uganda has 17 district boards.

The IPPF has a long tradition of providing services to young people, and it defines young people as all those aged 10 to 24. IPPF is one of the few organizations of its kind that mandates 20% youth representation on the boards of its MAs with an expectation that this will create diversity in the governing body, help keep the IPPF services relevant to young people, and spur innovation. As a result, IPPF boards have multigenerational representation where members of all ages are expected to work together to advance their organization's mission. Young board members in good standing can expect to serve two consecutive three-year terms on the board.

Problem Statement

The multigenerational composition of the board provides a challenge. Working together productively can be difficult because both young and adult members are likely to come to the board with past experiences and long-held ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.

The USAID-funded Leadership, Management, and Governance (LMG) Project improves the quality and sustainability of health services by building the capacity of local, regional, and national health leaders to adopt and institutionalize leadership, management, and governance practices.

 facebook.com/LMGforHealth

 @LMGforHealth

 @LMGforHealth

Strategic Approach

It is true that having young board members creates diversity on the governing board and makes the IPPF services youth-friendly. However this does not happen automatically. For a multigenerational board to be successful in achieving such a result, both adult and young members must work as partners. They must know what behaviors promote or hinder the establishment of youth-adult partnership, and adopt behaviors that facilitate the establishment of such a partnership. Orienting both the adult and young members on how to establish a productive youth-adult partnership on the board catalyzes the desired behavior change. Older and younger members both need orientation on effective collaboration; young members also need development of their leadership skills.

LMG Project Intervention

The USAID-funded Leadership, Management, and Governance (LMG) Project, led by Management Sciences for Health (MSH), works with health systems and health service delivery organizations in low- and middle-income countries, to help provide health services responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations by improving their leadership, management, and governance. The LMG Project also works with young leaders to leverage their voices to create change in policies and practices that prove to be barriers to access to sexual and reproductive health care for young people. It supports young people's leadership potential, capacities, and abilities with a view to create a cadre of young health leaders who are able to address health issues that directly and uniquely affect young people and have careers of impact in the health sector.

Participants at ToT intervention. Photo: Joseph Ayonga, IPPF.




IPPF is one of the members of the consortium implementing the LMG Project. The IPPF's Africa Regional Office (IPPFARO) is based in Nairobi and provides technical support to MAs in 42 African countries. The IPPFARO has a comprehensive governance program in which all MAs must demonstrate continuing commitment to good governance. The IPPFARO has designated nine MAs as Learning Center MAs, which means they collectively host capacity-building activities for all 42 MAs in the region.

Previously, MA boards in the IPPF Africa region had a general orientation program, but no guidance or orientation program for establishing a productive youth-adult partnership on the board. To address the problem described above, the LMG project, working with the Learning Center MAs, used published literature, survey findings, and interviews with young board members to create an orientation guide and orientation program. The orientation program supports structured and participatory delivery of the contents of the guide. Both the guide and program were tested in a training of trainers (ToT) workshop, where a select group of end-users pilot tested these products and provided feedback. The IPPF Africa region now has a pool of trainers and training materials in this field. The guide, "Forging Youth-Adult Partnership on the Board - IPPFAR induction guide for board members," is available on the LMG website at <http://www.lmgforhealth.org/sites/default/files/Forging%20Youth-Adult%20Partnership%20on%20the%20Board.pdf>.

This report describes how the survey and interviews of young board members were organized and the findings, recommendations, and limitations of the survey and interviews. It also describes the implementation of the intervention, results, and next steps.

Understanding the Young Board Member Perspective

The LMG project conducted a survey of and key informant interviews with young board members serving on the national board of the MAs in the Africa region to understand the challenges they faced and how they were coping with these challenges. The survey and interview results informed the design and implementation of an LMG Project intervention that both helps young members meet these challenges and helps the MA boards establish effective youth-adult partnerships.



The interview respondents were asked a number of questions about the challenges they faced while fulfilling their responsibilities as board members, factors that made it difficult for them to achieve their goals, how they addressed those challenges, and what they believed could help. They specifically identified factors that facilitated or inhibited the establishment of successful youth-adult partnerships. LMG also gained insights into the respondents' motivations for serving on the board, their challenges while serving, their definition of success as board members, and what they believed could help them become more successful.

The information gained from the respondents informed the design and implementation of the aforementioned guide and orientation program to help young members meet their challenges and also help IPPF MA boards establish an effective youth-adult partnership.

Out of 100 total young board members in the IPPF Africa Region, the LMG project surveyed 29 whose names and precise contact details were provided by the IPPFARO. The project received 23 responses for a survey response rate of 79.31%. Eleven survey responses were in English (48%), ten in French (43%), and two in Portuguese (9%). The 23 survey respondents (15 women, 8 men) came from 21 different MA countries: Benin, Botswana (two participants), Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique (two participants), Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia.

All 23 survey respondents were invited to participate in a phone interview to gain a deeper insight into their perspectives and experience with governance. Fifteen respondents—seven women and eight men—agreed to be interviewed. The average age of the key informants was 25.4 years. Eight spoke English, five spoke French, and two spoke Portuguese. These 15 interviewees were from 12 MA countries: Burkina Faso, Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique (two participants), Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Swaziland, Togo (two participants), Uganda (two participants), and Zambia.

The interviewees had varied educational backgrounds—five had education in medicine, nursing, or health management; four in management or finance; two in public administration; two in other social sciences; and two in literature. About half of the respondents were students and the rest worked full time. Professions included a nurse, a psychosocial counselor,

a teacher, a medical doctor now studying public health at the graduate level, and an employee at an Internet company in the health communications field.

Survey Limitations

The survey and interviews contained several limitations. First, the selection of survey respondents was not random; it was based on convenience. That is, only those with accurate contact information could be surveyed. Second, about a third of survey respondents did not agree to a key informant interview, introducing an element of self-selection bias. Third, the report is based on subjective perceptions of the young board members and not on tests of objective reality. Fourth, adult board member perspectives are not reflected in the report as time and resource constraints did not allow us to interview them. Fifth, the LMG Project intervention was not the only intervention during the duration of the study. It is important to note that there was no attempt to attribute improvements in MA service performance to the LMG project intervention.

Survey Findings

Young board member challenges

The interview respondents were asked a number of questions about the challenges they faced while fulfilling their responsibilities as board members, factors that made it difficult for them to achieve their goals, how they addressed those challenges, and what they believed could help.

Prominent among the challenges faced included:

- Lack of comprehensive orientation on induction and learning resources
- Reluctance of adult members to change
- Limited time adult members have for development of young members
- Challenge in understanding the board's direction
- Staff perception that young people may take their job or role and are a threat
- Work-life balance
- Shortage of human, financial, and material resources in the organization
- Limited opportunities to grow
- Lack of experience in resource mobilization
- Lack of understanding of volunteerism

Lack of comprehensive orientation on induction and learning resources

Three out of every four respondents said all new board members routinely receive orientation after their election, while one in five said orientation depended on the availability of resources. About 40 percent of respondents said the board members receive ongoing governance education at least once a year. About half of the respondents said the new member orientation program had some youth-specific content; the rest said there was no youth-specific content. Youth-specific content included the role of young members on the board, youth advocacy, youth-friendly services, sexual and reproductive health rights, youth policies, concept and structure of the Youth Action Movement (youth arm of the MAs that catalyze youth participation), and youth leadership.

One challenge shared by several respondents was the lack of learning resources. Respondents said they wanted to be oriented on their role and responsibilities and also expectations as members of the board. They also felt everyone in the organization should be broadly aware of their role as young board members.

For example, a respondent said:

“New members are not sure of their role and are never really trained for it. This is frustrating because I have little guidance and leaders of the organization ask for a lot. This, however, has been somewhat good because it forced me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to grow.”

As respondents verified, post-orientation follow-up is also guaranteed, but there were no resources available for learning, and no central place to find learning resources. Another respondent suggested an orientation on learning resources and how to use them. Most respondents agreed there were insufficient reference materials or resources to help new young board members understand their role. Instead, they learned by observing other members. Often, there was no formal mentoring system in place, though young members could go to adult members and request their mentorship. However, respondents felt the mentoring system was too informal and not well organized.

Lack of comprehensive orientation on induction and learning resources

Time, inclination, and attitude of adult members arose as a second critical challenge, as reflected in the following

statements made by respondents:

“Adult members have the power; they do not give a lot of time to young members.”

“Only 2 out of 11 are young members. When a young member moves a motion on the board, at times the adult members do not take it seriously.”

“There are issues when young members bring up new programs or ideas, and even if they are accepted by adult members, the adults do not have the same drive, which slows things down. Two years ago I proposed a project to address youth issues. I presented my idea during a board meeting. Everyone liked my idea and promised to give me feedback on how to implement it. However, six months later nothing had been done and enthusiasm had died down.”

Skills needed to be successful as a board member

When asked to describe the skills needed to be successful as a board member, respondents agreed that listening skills were the most important. Other skills mentioned included openness to new learning, receiving and giving constructive feedback, communication, effective presentation of ideas, public speaking, and stakeholder engagement. Overall, respondents emphasized the need for soft skills: both being able to be an active listener and effectively express their organization's interests. A member reflected in the survey:

“You are working with people from the government, private sector, etc., people from different backgrounds, and from all walks of life; so you need skills to easily communicate, i.e. be attentive, well-informed, and situational.”

What defines success?

Respondents were asked how they define success as board members or how they would know if they are successful, what skills they needed to be successful as young board members, and what resources would be useful.

Some of the definitions of success articulated by the respondents included: being able to perform their role well; achieving the targets set at a personal and organizational level; improving the state of SRH in the community and channeling the voices of people they represent to the board; earning the board's trust; and representing the board and their own organizations before other organizations. Generally, the responses equated success with the ability to effectively serve the organization.

Recommendations of young board members

Young board members want to set goals for themselves in order to be prepared and fully equipped to serve their organization and its mission. Training, courses, exposure visits, mentors, and written materials would be helpful in achieving success at the personal and organizational level, respondents said. They positively cited their experiences with past trainings in governance, policymaking, monitoring and evaluation, and audits as being helpful to fulfilling their current roles. A few respondents who had mentors said their mentors helped them better understand their roles.

As much as 70 percent of the prevailing orientation was delivered through lectures and presentations and lacked interactive components, respondents said.

The respondents who experienced the orientation found it very useful for their board service. To respondents, defining the practices of good governance, how board members can engage in resource mobilization, and how to advocate for youth were highly relevant to their service as young board members. Getting to know fellow board members before they began working together also proved to be very useful, they said.

Respondents generally felt the youth-specific content during the orientation was minimal and could be improved. Respondents also wanted more learning resources, specifically practical tools and resources tailored to them.

The respondents wanted a more formal orientation; several felt their orientation training was too rushed to fit the content. The overall recommendation suggested new member orientation should last five days (three days focused on governance and two days focused on youth-specific topics). The youth-specific portion should be open to all members who are willing to attend, but young members should be required to attend, the respondents said. They added that mentors would be extremely helpful in filling the gaps in orientation.

Other ways to improve orientation included using real-life examples, case studies, more youth-relevant topics, and country-specific contexts. Content should relate to the concerns specific to the members' organization. Longer trainings and courses, online courses, and the ability to assess competencies that the board lacks were also perceived as useful to new members. For example, when young members are elected, most of them are still studying, so they could be supported to take specific courses to improve competencies lacking on the board. The respondents also suggested creating

a platform where youth can connect with each other, such as an email group or a community of practice.

The respondents had specific ideas about what should be done to make the new member orientation program most useful to them in fulfilling their board responsibilities, including clarifying the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of young board members; conducting the orientations immediately after elections; providing annual continuing governance education; and ensuring that orientation is both practical and participatory.

They also wanted a guide explaining how to establish youth-adult partnership on the board, how youth can be effective advocates for youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, how board members should relate with the staff, and how to communicate effectively.

Overall, the main recommendations were to ensure every board member is trained and to create a board where members belonging to several generations collaborate to improve the status of SRH in the community.

Implementing the intervention

A ToT workshop was held in March 2016 in Nairobi for 26 adult and 9 young board members and board officials from the 9 MAs hosting learning center initiatives, comprising Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Swaziland, Togo, and Uganda. The week-long workshop had two parts: the first two days were devoted to establishing youth-adult partnership on the board (Part I), and the remaining three days were focused on how to deliver governance orientation to freshly-elected board members, both young and adult (Part II). The newly developed guide on youth-adult partnership was the key learning resource used in Part I, whereas the revised IPPFAR governance manual was the primary resource for Part II. Learning objectives of this two-part workshop were:

Workshop Part I learning objectives (youth-adult partnership ToT)

1. Understanding what young members and adult members can do to forge successful youth-adult partnership on the board
2. Learning and applying governance knowledge and skills in the context of multigenerational boards
3. Building the skills of young board members in their region to be successful on MA boards
4. Delivering youth-adult partnership and youth-specific portions of the board member's orientation with confidence.

Workshop Part II learning objectives (governance ToT)

1. Understanding IPPF governance principles
2. Learning and applying governance knowledge and skills
3. Explaining and illustrating IPPF governance principles and tools
4. Delivering the new board member orientation with confidence.

A team of four workshop participants was selected from each of the nine MAs: one young board member; one adult male board member; one adult female board member; and one senior staff member, executive director, or governance focal point or youth focal point. Out of 36 participants invited for the workshop, 35 (14 women and 21 men) attended.

Selected individuals were willing and motivated to conduct orientations for new board members on a long-term basis after they returned from the workshop and were willing to take time out of their schedules to conduct board member orientations on a regular basis.

All of the nominated participants were requested to provide their input into the design of the workshop. In addition, the survey and key informant interviews of young board members described in detail above provided valuable inputs into the workshop design.

The workshop methodology and approach were based on adult learning principles and experiential learning techniques. The activities drew on the experience of the participants, and facilitators guided them on how to deliver effective and efficient orientations. The workshop was highly participatory in design and execution. In addition, a deliberate attempt was made to make it enjoyable and fun.

Three of the five days of the ToT workshop were devoted to practicums. All participants practiced the sessions following the participatory methodology described in the guide and the manual. They either delivered the sessions or observed others delivering the sessions and provided feedback.

Results

Results of a pre- and post-test show a 17 percentage point increase in the governance knowledge score of the participants after the workshop. In their workshop evaluation, the participants rated Parts I and II at 4.4 and 4.0 respectively, out of a possible 5. The qualitative feedback was very positive.

Refinements were made in the guide on youth-adult partnerships on the board and orientation program based on the experience gained during this workshop and suggestions made by the participants. The final version of the guide was translated into

French for MAs in Francophone Africa.

The training materials and guide will help MAs deliver a well-structured governance orientation to every new board member and will ensure that there is a youth-adult partnership component in it. Several MAs have already used the guide during orientation of newly elected national and regional boards, without direct assistance from the LMG Project or IPPF Regional Office.

The IPPF ARO stated that these resources will be useful for the approximately 400 board members, young and old, currently serving on the 42 MA boards, and also future boards. The resources will also help to save valuable time that the boards lost while figuring out how to forge effective partnerships between young and adult members, and will help address some of the common frustrations faced by young and adult board members alike.

Nine months after the workshop, LMG conducted another survey of the nine participating MAs to understand how the guide and orientation program were being used, and more importantly, if there was documentable progress of a more effective youth-adult partnership on the board. Testimonials from all of the nine MAs are included in the Annex.

Way Forward

The IPPF Africa Region consists of English, French, and Portuguese speaking countries. At this time, the guide is available in English and French. It should be translated into Portuguese for dissemination in Lusophone countries.

Given that the survey conducted nine months after the intervention pointed to the utility of the guide and orientation program, there is a strong case for applying this approach beyond the nine MAs to the remaining 33 MAs. The initial nine MAs that tested this approach are learning center MAs, meaning they have a role in disseminating the new learning among the MAs in the region. Thus they are well placed to share it, but need support of the IPPF ARO. The ARO has made a commitment to provide such support.



Annex: Testimonials of board chairs, executive directors, and young and adult board members

“Youth participation is high at board meetings. The young persons on the board are not shy to speak their mind. They have taken bold steps to mobilize the membership of Youth Action Movement to organize activities through their own initiative. I am afraid some adult board members are still not accommodating and do not have patience for the views of young board members. There is still some adultism. This is not rampant, but one or two board members made comments that upset some of the young members of the board. This is being addressed gradually through continuous dialogue and understanding of the issues of the young board members.”

—Executive Director, MA of country I

“There is harmony between adult volunteers and young volunteers at all levels of governance, from the national Annual General Meeting to the branches, and also young volunteers feel part of the board meetings and not as spectators in the meetings. What I have observed is that adult board members respect our view at the meetings and treat us as members of the board. The training has made me more confident on the board as I know my rights as a young board member.”

—Young board member of country A

“Youth participation is more fully reflected in all MA actions, and young people are receiving more respect from adults. Young people are increasingly trusting adults and participating more readily in MA decisions.”

—Chairperson, MA of country B

“After the workshop, relations characterized by respect and cordiality were strengthened. Practical activities during the training workshop clearly articulated the importance of this partnership. Young members are now even more supported by adults. The young people by themselves, during their meetings, discuss the content of the youth-adult partnership guide. Although MA youth already had enough adult support well before the workshop, it can be seen that they are more confident after the workshop and take a lot of initiatives in the board work. Representing 30 percent of the council, young people are aware of their responsibility and fully play their role.”

—Executive Director, MA of country B

“After this workshop, adults give more time to young people and involve them in the different initiatives of the MA. It should be noted that this training allowed us to clearly identify our role on the board of the MA as a young actor. We became equipped with leadership and advocacy skills. This enabled us, on the one hand, to easily carry out advocacy actions alongside the first leaders of the association, and on the other hand to mobilize resources to support the Youth Action Movement.”

—Young board member of country B

“There is more appreciation of the young board members as equal partners on the board by the adults. Young board members express themselves while adults listen to their contributions. Adults value young board members’ recommendations and act upon them. Young members have more confidence in articulating issues. There is free interaction among adults and youth on the board.”

—Executive director, airperson, MA of country C

“Adult board members listen to the young board members and value contributions made by them. Equal opportunity is given for both young and adult members to make contributions in meetings. Young board members are involved in decision-making. There is a cordial relationship among all board members despite age difference. The adult board members have taken on a mentorship role for the young members. Young members are no longer timid to make contributions in meetings. They communicate effectively with adults, freely interact with them, and seek guidance where necessary.”

—Young board member, MA of country C

“The young board members were more active in meetings, making more contributions than they did previously. The young board members exude a level of confidence that was not there before.”

—Young board member, MA of country D

“Young people have become more confident and reassured as a result of this training. They are increasingly involved in activities with adults, when previously, feeling unrecognized, they would prefer to do their activities separately.”

—Executive Director, MA of country E

“Adults better understand youth participation in decision-making and thus encourage participation. I have more confidence when I have to speak at an assembly with adults because I believe that my point will be taken into account in the resolutions of the meeting.”

—Young board member, MA of country E

“Participants in the above-mentioned workshop pledged to strengthen the youth-adult partnership. But they have expressed some reluctance in this matter, their president not being always open to such innovations.”

—Adult member, MA of country F

“Adults have more respect and esteem for young people; they give prominence to their proposals and sayings, and involve them more and more. I perceive adults more as a support, a source of experiences, and I feel free and confident interacting with them.”

—Young board member, MA of country F

“There are changes we can see mainly on the part of adult members; for example, they agreed to increase non-restricted funds for young people to more than 300%. Young members are now very much active and proactive.”

—Executive Director, MA of country G

“Now the adult board members respect the young board members’ ideas and they take time to debate their perspectives. At the present time the adult board members trust the young members to lead some activities and to represent the board. Young board members are given opportunities to supervise all activities that the MA is implementing across the country and report to the board. Now I see the adult board members as my partners and my mentors. I feel that in board meetings I am no more merely watching, but I am actively representing the interest of my constituency without fear or shame.”

—Young board member, MA of country G

“Adult members have become more appreciative of young board members, so much so that after the training all sub-committees now include 20% youth representation. They have become more open minded such that the young people have more time to discuss about their issues during board meetings. Generally the youth issues have become an agenda item during board meetings, unlike before when it was optional to discuss about youth. I now utilize my capacity as a leader by speaking more frequently and asking more questions than before. In short, I have to ask a question in every session. I feel very close to almost if not all the adult board members, contrary to before when I was selective.

I understand my role clearly. At the moment I take full control of my leadership position such that am always interested to attend, run, or control meetings even more than before. The materials have proven to be effective in training young people on leadership skills, good governance, and board responsibility. Our organization is planning to have governance training and a dissemination forum in March 2017 for grassroots branches.”

—Young board member, MA of country H

“Adult board members encourage youth to freely express their ideas and concerns, and policy decisions are made in the best interest of the young people. Adult volunteers view youth as an equal partner. They try to forge equal partnership on equal footing. There is improvement in terms of agenda-setting and discussing matters of high importance to the young people. Young board members’ attitudes towards the adult board members are significantly improving and both parties see each other as a complementing partner for achieving common goals of the association.”

—Executive Director, MA of country I

“There is an improved level of trust and tolerance within and between adult and young board members. Adult members acknowledge different experiences of young members. I am confident in expressing feelings as a young board member. I can talk about differences in a positive way. I believe the adult members display empathy and helpful behavior during our meetings.”

—Young board member, MA of country I



MEDIC MOBILE

Yale Global Health Leadership Institute

