YW4A

الشابات من أجل التوعية ، الوكالة ، المناصرة و المساءلة



Impact Brief

2021 - 2023

HARNESSING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF YOUNG WOMEN

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Impact Snapshot

PROGRAMME IMPACT AT A GLANCE

45,341

young women

have become knowledgeable, competent and passionate leaders.

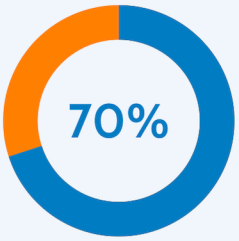


We partner with the most marginalized young women in

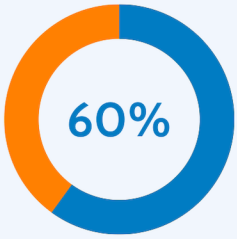
Egypt (90.9%), South Sudan (63.6%), Kenya (39.9%), and Palestine (38 %).



Young women exercise leadership at personal, peer/family, community and policy levels.



Stakeholders confirm high legitimacy and leading from the South.



women's rights organisations have increased collective capacity

Contributed to

21 POLICY PROCESSES

Protecting and promoting women's rights in laws and policies

18 RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

have transformed their religious norms and practices towards greater gender equality

320 FAITH-BASED CHANGE AGENTS

leading gender equality actions

LESSONS LEARNT

- Trust and collaboration among partners require investment due to partnership novelty.
- Institutional weaknesses, like donor reporting and compliance, need additional investments.
- RiseUp! Leadership tailored locally should include psychological aid and referral services for young women.
- Involving family, men, and parents boosts young women's programme participation.
- "Do no harm" approach insights prevent survivor re-traumatisation.
- Engaging religious institutions' staff overcomes community resistance.
- Positive Masculinities training counters gender equality misconceptions, often religiously framed.
- Clarifying terms like 'gender', 'transformative', and 'feminist' is crucial.
- Collaboration with national coalitions in conflict areas bolsters protection for women's rights organizations.

1. Introduction

This impact brief summarizes the key findings from the mid-term evaluation of the ***"Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy & Accountability"*** (YW4A) programme, conducted independently from July to September 2023.

The YW4A programme strives to protect and advance young women's human rights, focusing on dignity, bodily integrity, and equal participation in decision-making. This involves the implementation of equitable policies and laws. The overarching goal is to empower young women, bolster their participation, and enable them to shape decisions related to gender-just laws, policies, norms, and practices concerning bodily integrity and equal participation in Egypt, Palestine, South Sudan, and Kenya. This is achieved through four interconnected intermediate outcomes or Pathways, as outlined below.



This collaborative initiative brings together young women, women's rights organizations, and their faith-based allies. Collectively, they work to raise awareness, advocate for change, and ensure accountability in upholding young women's human rights. The YW4A programme is implemented by a consortium that includes the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Equality Now, YWCA Palestine, YWCA Kenya, YWCA South Sudan, Faith to Action Network, and KIT Gender.

2. Evaluation Methodology

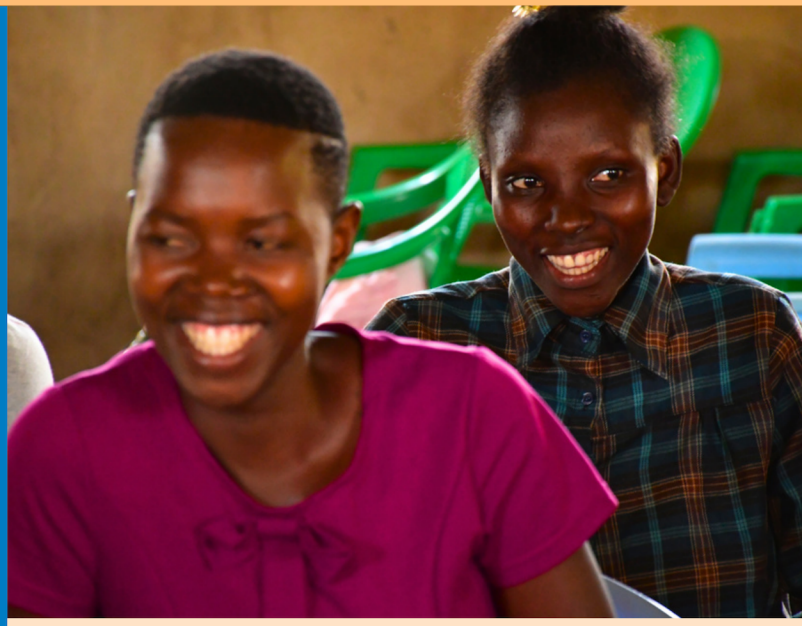
METHODOLOGY

The evaluation applied a participatory mixed methods approach, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from young women and key stakeholders and a desk review of existing YW4A resources.

Five national researchers conducted on-site story-based inquiries (through Sprockler), key informant interviews and focus group discussions in the country and administered two electronic surveys. Four workshops documented changes in institutional advocacy capacity. Participants reviewed findings in four country-level sensemaking workshops.

Following feminist evaluation principles, the mid-term review facilitated reflection and learning among diverse YW4A stakeholders, including representatives from Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), and the programme's Young Women Reference Group (YWRG).

The YWRG, a cohort of young women trained early in the initiative, played a crucial role in shaping the programme's monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) activities. Their responsibilities included contextualizing MEL outcomes and indicators, designing the MEL framework, leading aspects of the annual outcome monitoring and the mid-term review.



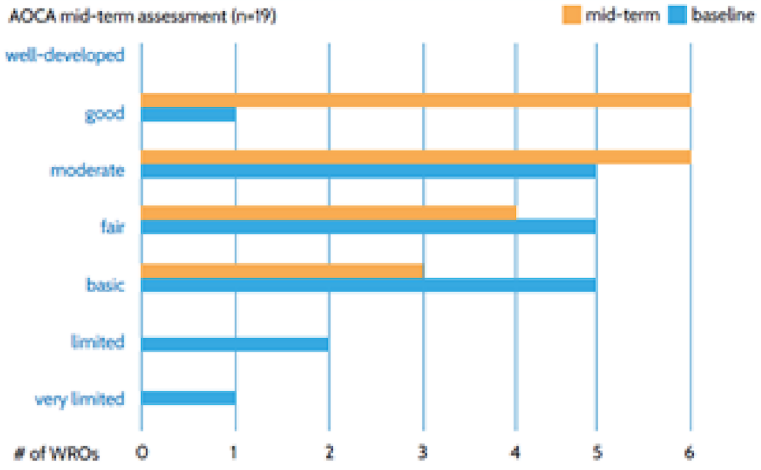
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Obtained prior verbal or written consent, including consent for audio recording
- Interview notes securely stored; audio recordings deleted after transcription
- Safe interview spaces ensured, with consultations conducted with community leaders
- Voluntary participation, with confidentiality and anonymization measures
- Anonymity maintained through tools like Sprockler and Survey Monkey
- Participants invited to share experiences with consent for inclusion in the evaluation report
- Encouraged participants to report discomfort or risks; addressed concerns with caution and confidentiality.

3. Evaluation Outcomes

A. STRENGTHENED THE ADVOCACY CAPACITY OF 16 WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

Figure 1 Mid-term vs baseline AOCA capacity levels



Women's rights organisations enhanced their strategic advocacy, particularly cultivating a robust reputation and track record, analysing policies and laws, understanding actors and power, formulating advocacy strategies, learning and adapting, and choosing advocacy tactics. Refined tactical advocacy skills have been cultivated, encompassing adept use of evidence to support policy and legal change proposals, proficient crafting of messaging and communications, adept networking and coalition building across subnational and national arenas. Active engagement in women's rights platforms at all levels underscores their dedication. Strengthening commitment to amplifying young women's voices necessitates facilitating agency and leadership, forging connections with diverse groups, and ensuring gender equity in the workplace.



Effective advocacy relies on organizational vitality, which includes garnering support and involvement from organizational leaders, maintaining a stable financial resource base, implementing robust human resources management practices, ensuring security and safeguarding measures, and committing to monitoring, evaluation, learning, reflection, innovation, and adaptation for transformative change. Additionally, it involves integrating efficient virtual collaboration mechanisms within the organization.

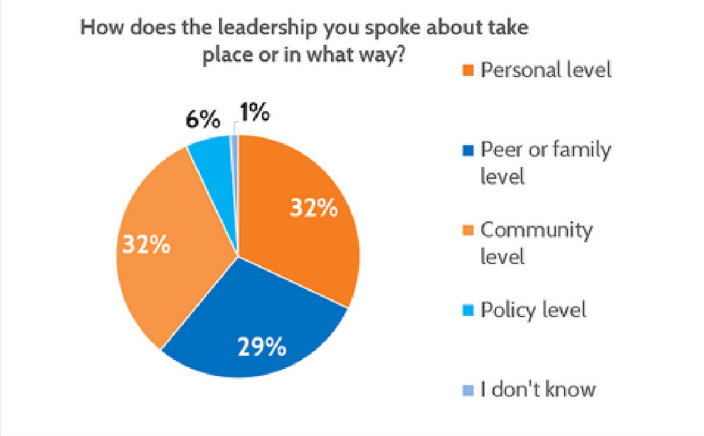
B. EMPOWERED 45,341 YOUNG WOMEN

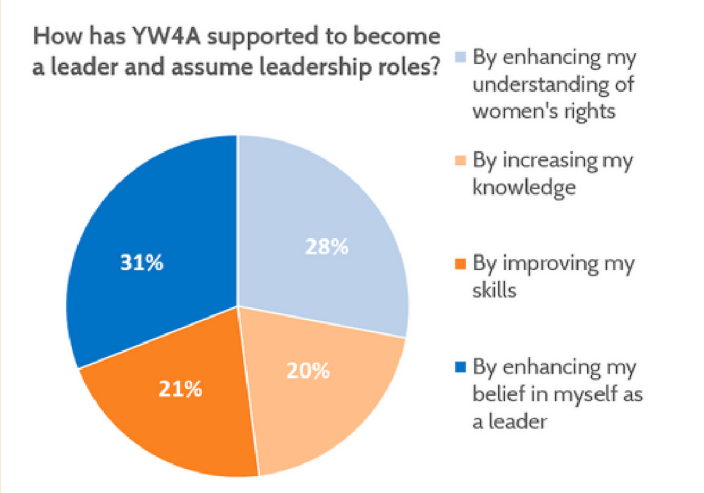
Empowering a total of 45,341 young women, the RiseUp! Leadership model has successfully nurtured skill enhancement, knowledge sharing, and network building.

This impact was amplified by **4,208 trainers of trainers**, extending knowledge to peers and impacting a total of **41,133 individuals**.

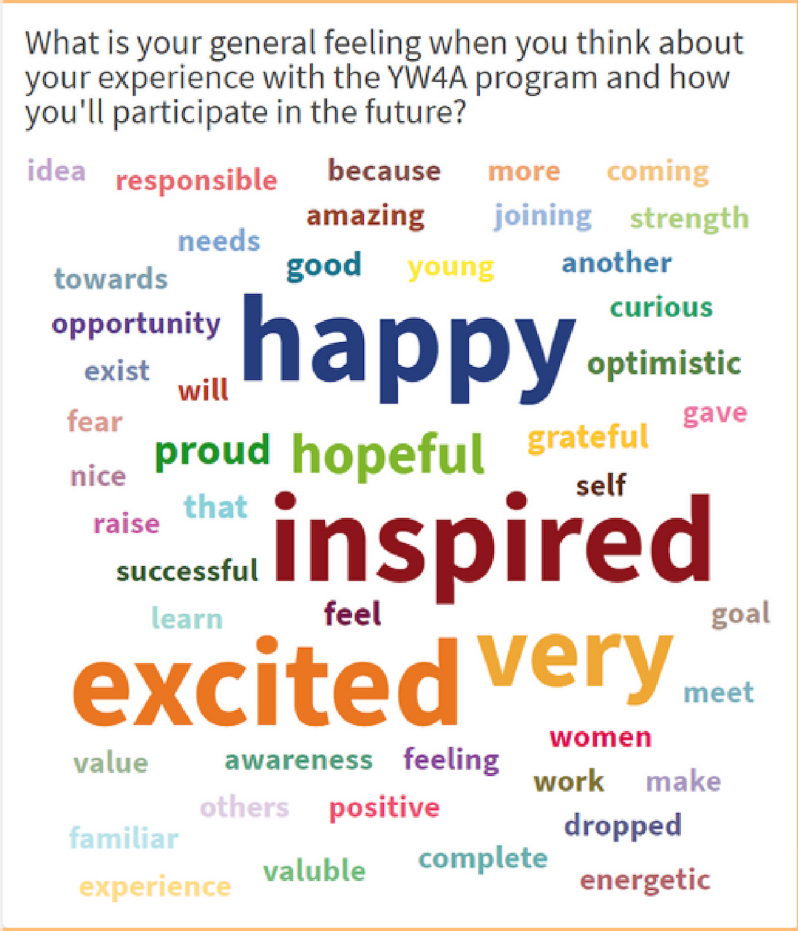
Notably, the programme targets the most marginalised young women, with significant percentages in **Egypt (90.9%), South Sudan (63.6%), Kenya (39.9%),** and **Palestine (38%)**.

Participants demonstrated increased assertiveness at the family level and advocacy for young women's rights at the community and political levels





Furthermore, the initiative facilitated the establishment of saving mechanisms, showcasing its multifaceted impact on individual and collective empowerment. Participants expressed high satisfaction, as depicted in the word cloud.



An analysis of **87 young women's 'stories of change'** revealed increased leadership at personal, peer, family, and community levels. Evaluators identified significant transformations in young women's self-perception, leadership skills, public speaking abilities, and confidence.

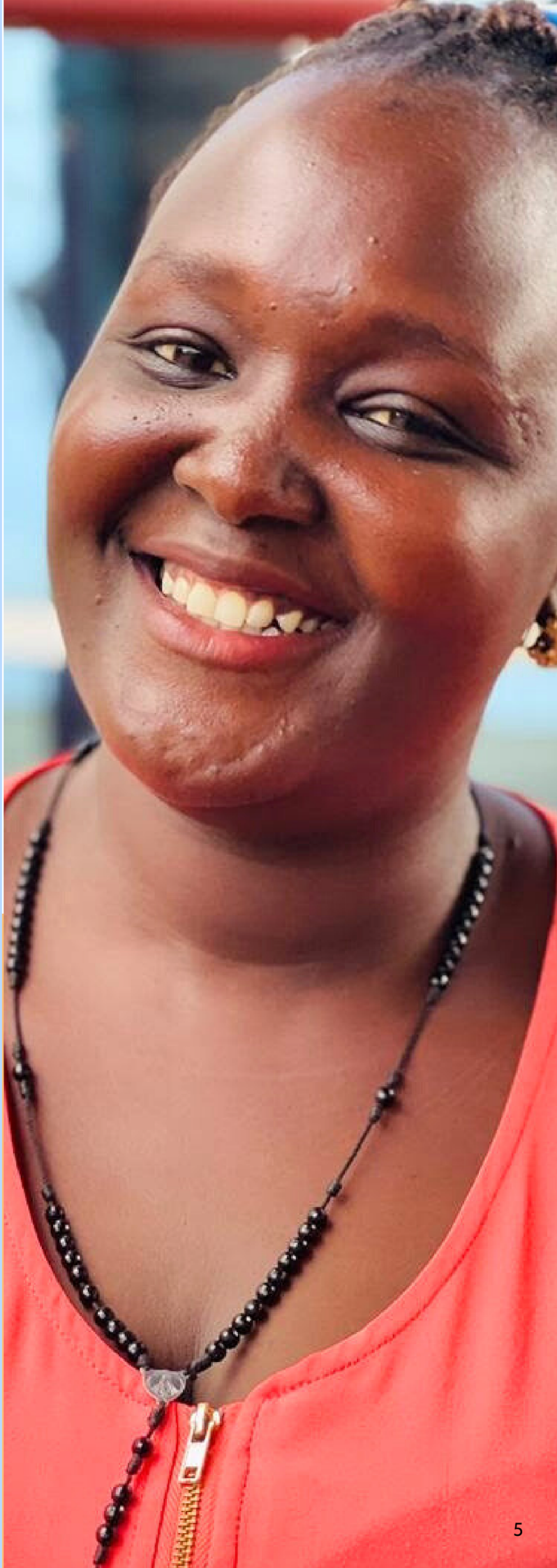
Participants reported enhanced self-efficacy in challenging social norms and advocating for women's rights. The program also raised awareness of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and laws protecting womenn's rights while fostering increased empathy and support for marginalised women.

After training in the YW4A programme, I founded and managed to register an organization. It's a CBO. We have 30 young women aged 30 and below and a WhatsApp group. It's a safe space where we share what we are undergoing in terms of GBV. And in case anyone needs help (medical or psychosocial) we link them up to service providers. In the WhatsApp group, narratives are shared and discussed from social media platforms. And in the process, other young women also share their experiences.

* Young woman from Kenya

During the trainings, I had a chance to meet young women from other parts of Palestine, in particular young women from refugee camps in southern Palestine, which is a bit more conservative than my own environment. The tools that I learned during the leadership programme helped me to be more open to other women and their struggles and showed me that it is important to be more inclusive in our demands through discussion with these women. I have learned how we can come together, support one another, and come out with a common demand that includes all women in Palestine, even if we come from different places and paths in life / Palestine..

* Young woman from Palestine



C. INCREASED GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN 18 RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The YW4A initiative has successfully engaged 18 religious institutions strategically distributed across Egypt (4), Kenya (3), Palestine (6), and South Sudan (5) in an internal advocacy process that enhances gender equality within religious frameworks.

The core of this process initiative involved securing buy-in from religious leaders and garnering their active support. These leaders and their teams underwent comprehensive training in gender equality, conducting faith-based gender audits that led to the development of 18 tailored gender plans. Now, **320 faith-based change agents** actively mobilize support from within their religious organizations to implement these gender action plans.

"The interaction between the interfaith institutions improved and the cases of gender bias in the faith institutions particularly in leadership positions in the Churches/Mosques,"

*Key informant, South Sudan.

This process is accompanied by engaging adult and young men in a transformative process called "Positive masculinities". This process advocates for gender justice through a transformative model rooted in the principles and sacred texts of world faiths, emphasizing the well-being and equality of all human beings.

The varied gender action plans include the following measures:

- Enhancing the competence of religious leaders
- Enhancing faith leaders, young women, and men's competence in women's rights from theological and legal perspectives
- Review and disseminate new liturgy, prayer and hymn books to include gender equality
- Provision of theology scholarships to develop women's leadership, jointly with theological centres of learning
- Carrying out activities to promote Positive Masculinities in communities
- Supporting various women's economic initiatives such as selling water, vegetables and handicrafts
- Networking
- Lending money to start businesses
- Monitoring gender equality progress
- Transform of Personal Status Laws in six Palestinian religious courts to become more gender equal

A total of **176 trainers of trainers** have joined the "Positive masculinities training and are cascading their learnings through community dialogues, promoting (young) women's rights, and combating SBGV.

"I consider it very important as it talks to our nature as men and how to influence our families from childhood. It is very effective and has changed the mindsets of men, including myself – I have learnt a lot and started having new views of things and ways of life."

*Key informant, South Sudan.

Evaluators see emerging norms changes.

"I am an Imam since 2012. If you compare me with my colleagues, I am the most popular and well-experienced...I have witnessed much mistreatment against women. The specific thing I like about the programme is the hope for the future... that they can later see their daughters in better positions. Positive Masculinities helps men see the negative norms. For me, I can marry a woman, but I think I will think twice about giving away my daughter to another man as I am not sure of other men because of the norms that discriminate against women..."

*Key informant, South Sudan.



D. CONTRIBUTED TO 21 POLICY PROCESSES

The YW4A initiative amplified young women's and women's rights advocates' voices in 21 policy processes at sub-national, national and international governance levels.

A first breakthrough was achieved in South Sudan with the government's ratification of the Maputo Protocol.



EGYPT

- Improve existing draft law on domestic violence and lobby to be passed
- Campaigned for mothers to have guardianship and custody rights;
- Introduced workplace anti-sexual harassment policies
- Promoted the participation of young women in hearings committees that form part of the national dialogue as voters in the 2024 presidential elections and, possibly, as candidates in elections that may be held in 2025



PALESTINE

- Draft law on domestic violence improved and lobby to pass it into law
- Prepared a draft law on sexual harassment in public spaces
- Lobbying the government to remove the exception clause or at least specify reasons for exception in the 2019 Child Marriage Law
- Increased young women's political participation through inclusion in university student council elections



KENYA

- Repeal of Section 34(5) of the Sexual Offences Act
- Block the lowering age of consent and provide for Romeo-and-Juliet clauses under the Sexual Offences Act (including Acts about Sexual Offences, Witness Protection, Victim Protection, and the Protection Against Domestic Violence)
- adopt a Kisii County Policy SGBV
- Better implementation of Meru and Migori SGBV policies
- Better implementation of the two-thirds gender rule



SOUTH SUDAN

- Enact draft Anti-GBV Bill,
- Enact Family Law Bill,
- Engage in the permanent Constitution-making process to maintain the age of marriage at 18 and improve the provision on the place of customary law and the role of customary courts
- Repeal of Section 247(3) of the Penal Code Act on marital rape
- Girl Child Education Bill in Western Equatorial State
- Official ratification of Maputo Protocol
- Official ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- 35% representation Gender Equality provision under the Transitional Constitution

4. Coalition building



Coalition building in the YW4A initiative has increased change-makers' collective capacity. The initiative has brought together women's rights advocates at international, national and sub-national levels. Internationally, it has co-hosted three conferences bringing together faith-based women's rights advocates and two year-long consultative processes on women's rights in Christianity and women's rights in Islam.

YW4A produced a publication featuring 12 theological arguments on women's rights collaboratively developed by Al Azhar University and Muhammadiyah. In addition, 15 Muslim authors from various regions including Africa, Europe, Palestine, and the USA contributed 12 practice papers offering practical insights into faith-based advocacy.

At the national level, **60%** of women's rights organisations found that YW4A has greatly strengthened their coalitions, and **36%** found that it moderately enhanced their coalition building. **52%** of religious organisations saw many improvements in building coalitions, and **32%** found moderate improvements.

"Our FBO organises a quarterly inter-faith dialogue that includes even Muslims - both Sunni and Shia, [the] Hindu community, Organisation of African Instituted Churches, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics etc. The discussion is always on SGBV and every quarter there's a [new] topic - we then give them assignments to go and research on women's participation in leadership in their own organisations."

* Key informant, Kenya.

5. Shifting Power

70%

of participants indicated that they perceive YW4A as effectively promoting and supporting local ownership by organizations in the Global South.

They highlighted four aspects.

- **Local leadership role in agenda setting and co-creating:** in actions such as the programme's advocacy agenda, identifying advocacy priorities and strategies, and social behaviour change communication planning, messaging and strategies, in collaboration with civil society organisations and faith-based and community actors.
- **Involvement in decision-making and joint sharing of resources:** including the advocacy capacity self-assessments, enabling women's rights organisations to prioritise their capacity needs, as well as faith-based gender-audits, facilitating priority setting and identifying key activities.
- **Shared responsibilities in planning.**
- **Good adaptation of methodologies to local context:** including young women identifying their advocacy priorities presented in the YW4A Advocacy Manual, the "Positive Masculinities" approach tailored to Egyptian Muslim and Egyptian Christian audiences and gender audits of religious actors included a power mapping of local influences.



6. Adaptability



Young women are highly mobile, resulting from life changes, such as marriage, relocation, job search or work. This has affected their involvement in the programme. YW4A has developed the following response strategies:

- Increased the frequency of activities in times when young women are more accessible and flexible, such as school or university breaks,

- YW4A partnered with schools and universities through existing health clubs, drama clubs, and rotary clubs. The programme adapted RiseUp! by remodelling safe spaces to include in-school sessions, requiring government authorization. For example, in South Sudan, YW4A engaged the Education Ministry for support, which authorized school administrations to allow YW4A to be run in selected schools and to enrol young women. YW4A also conducted teacher training, providing ToTs, induction on SEAH policy, and training on advocacy skills and talking points.

- Created financial saving schemes. In South Sudan and Kenya, we have implemented a monthly savings model, "*Sanduk- Sanduk*", "*chama*", or "*merry-go-round*", where each member deposits an amount of money.

- Engaged with returnees and internally displaced persons in South Sudan, particularly noting the increasing number of South Sudanese individuals returning from Khartoum due to the civil war in Sudan.

The use of digital technologies has helped overcome rising movement restrictions in Palestine. YW4A has increased the number of virtual safe spaces to enable experience sharing. However, the lack of physical interaction affects the engagement and retention of young women.

Many young women are survivors of SGBV. They needed more support and access to services, such as mental health and financial aid. YW4A partnered with service providers, NGOs and government systems. Safe houses in Kenya often lack basic equipment due to government funding issues, so we advocate for policies and budgetary allocation.

7. Lessons Learnt



PROGRAMME TIMELINE

- Implementing YW4A Pathways requires staggered rollout for effective capacity building and planning before advocacy.

CROSS-PATHWAY COLLABORATION

- Clearer communication is needed to prevent silos and enhance collaboration.

DIVERSIFYING TARGET PARTICIPANTS

- Involving gatekeepers like family members and community leaders improves young women's participation.

SERVICES FOR YOUNG WOMEN

- Incorporate psychosocial and legal support to address trauma and provide essential services. consider integration with anti-FGM efforts.

LANGUAGE/DEFINITION/CONTEXTUALIZATION

- Offer Arabic translation, simplify training content, and define key terms for better understanding.

SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE

- Align interventions with larger advocacy efforts, bridge Pathways, and engage administrative personnel in religious institutions.

ADVOCACY

- Long-term engagement with decision-makers is crucial for policy change.

EFFICIENCIES

- Integration of activities and timing engagement during school holidays enhances participation and efficiency.

8. Recommendations

We asked young women for their priority recommendations to facilitate their agency and exercise of leadership:

28% emphasized their need for networking or connections
24% wanted additional support from the women's rights organization they volunteer or work with
20% said they expected additional support to understand women's rights
17% looked for more skills
11% wished for more knowledge



EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building trust and fostering effective collaboration among partners requires investments, especially considering the novelty of working in partnerships for many participants.

- Addressing institutional capacity weaknesses among local partners is crucial, particularly in areas such as donor reporting, accountability, and compliance. Additional investments are necessary to strengthen their capabilities.

- The RiseUp! leadership curriculum was tailored to the local context, incorporating a module on psychological first aid and establishing standard operating procedures for referral services. This initiative also involved creating referral pathways and forging relationships with relevant service providers to ensure young women can access various forms of support, including legal, medical, financial, psychosocial, and spiritual assistance.

- Involving family members, men, and parents directly and indirectly can enhance young women's participation in programs and initiatives.

- Significant insights have been gained regarding the application of a "do no harm" approach in SGBV advocacy programs to prevent the retraumatization of survivors.

- Engaging with administrative staff at religious institutions can mitigate community barriers and resistance to change.

- Positive Masculinities trainings and community dialogues promise to dispel misconceptions, often framed in religious terms, regarding gender equality.

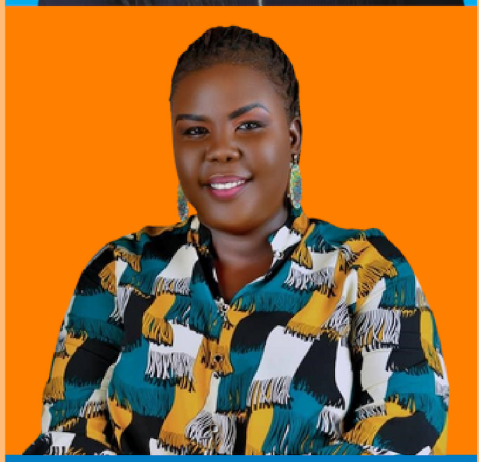
- Terms such as 'gender', 'transformative', and 'feminist' require clearer explanations to facilitate a shared understanding of their meanings.

- Collaborating with larger national coalitions for advocacy efforts in conflict-prone contexts can significantly bolster the protection strategies for women's rights organizations and female activists.













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