

DECONSTRUCTING AND REDEFINING ACTIVISM: *YOUTH LEAD GENERATION EQUALITY LOCALIZATION*



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FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL

The Generation Equality Localization workshop, co-created and convened by adolescent girl leaders and UN Women, explored ways and actions to advance gender equality in their communities. The workshop brought together over 30 young people including adolescent girls and National Gender Youth Activists to identify what localization is and its implementation processes.

The workshop was facilitated by three adolescent girl leaders. Using storytelling, young activists shared their stories of activism in their communities as they tried to deconstruct and demystify activism. The workshop methodology

(divided into 3 segments) allowed participants to connect, network and collaborate with each other as they discussed issues and strategies in small breakout rooms. A Google Jam board was used to capture the different ideas and suggestions from the participants. The three segments aimed for participants to a) share and diversify their understanding of activism, b) understand what localization is and ways to localize and c) develop steps towards implementation of Generation Equality with a focus on the local level.

DECONSTRUCTING ACTIVISM

During the workshop, youth activists discussed the intersections of their work, which included gender equality and its connection to technology and innovation, comprehensive sexuality education, and overall youth

“Don’t pass the mic, pass the stage.” - Gauri, 16, adolescent girl advocate.

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leadership in decision-making spaces. activists shared how they began their activist journey, which included a set of common goals for a feminist and gender-equal future. It was clear that while the community-level experiences may differ due to different contexts, activism begins by taking an approach to learning about inequalities and harnessing opportunities to engage in value shifting at the local, regional, country, and global levels.

Activism itself, as indicated by youth participants, is a process of intentional direct action aimed at effecting change, that can occur at either the micro and macro levels or both. However, activities undertaken by youth can differ due to

opportunities for networking, community engagement, movement-building and overall support

for youth initiatives. Activism takes shape using various methodologies and includes the drive to achieve social change at its core. As noted by young activists, issues of inequality do not exist in a vacuum and as such, local mobilization can be a medium to bridge gaps between intersecting issues and facilitate local to global dialogues.

ADVANCING YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY

Generation Equality marked the beginning of intersectional global activism for many young people, allowing them to leverage UN Women and multi-stakeholder spaces to advance their movements. In 2022, adolescent girls and youth continued to make connections between their activism and the mission of the Generation Equality campaign.

Participants expressed the importance of implementing the principles of the Young Feminist Manifesto. The Manifesto, which stresses the importance of co-creation, co-development, and co-leadership with young people, is a tool for young people and allied organizations alike to strengthen youth voice and participation. It is also a tool for centering youth leadership.

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"In everything I do, I find myself associating it [with] the idea of Generation Equality. [When I] started off it was just within our schools and the communities around us and now [we are in] the local, interstate, and intercity [and] able to reach [more] people within remote locations. I think the idea of localization localizing GEF really makes sense because there is no other way that we could take this to the villages of our countries. There's no other way we could take this to the rural population." - Gauri, 16, adolescent girl advocate.

The outcomes of the Generation Equality Forum must be contextualized. The opportunities to localize the outcomes on different levels are critical. However, activists noted that there are barriers to advancing gender equality including ongoing conflict and human rights precarity in different countries. Low community support, limited resources, and issues of safety and security of young activists are significant obstacles to the implementation of Generation Equality.

Additionally, participants called for practical frameworks for localization to support the

capacity strengthening of youth. However, localization efforts must reject a one-size-fits-all approach. Broad and wide-ranging recommendations can aid in youth contextualizing their advocacy to their needs and that of their communities.

UNLOCKING GENERATION EQUALITY

Amplifying and uplifting young people's leadership to participate in global, intergovernmental spaces is a critical component of UN Women's work and commitment to youth engagement.

However, it is equally important to generate similar outcomes toward gender equality at the local level.

During the workshop, participants shared their insights on practices and interventions they can take on to ensure effective localization. They indicated that localization should be based on:

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- ✚ Centering marginalized experiences and building connections with rural and remote youth.
- ✚ Exploring practices of decolonization and deconstruction of harmful social norms.
- ✚ Engaging youth outside of online spaces to decrease barriers associated with the digital divide and enable safer environments for young people to share their experiences offline.
- ✚ Capturing underrepresented realities.
- ✚ Promoting adaptation of local knowledge systems and advocacy.

Additional themes included emphasizing gender and gender equality in young people's intersectional activism. Young people also called

for increased diversity of researchers to ensure that lived realities are adequately addressed at the community level. Other localization strategies included connecting with local leaders and developing capacity-strengthening tools and resources to engage, network, and build relationships to influence policy and decision-making.

LOCALIZING FOR IMPACT

Young people brainstormed on how to implement Generation Equality and what actions can be taken to strengthen localization efforts.

Co-creation, co-development, and co-leadership of all localization efforts require resourcing. Young people emphasized the importance of catalytic funding directly to youth and girl-led activism. They shared the importance of Generation Equality-specific tools to strengthen young people's voices and participation in local activism as well.

"I'm so impressed by [other young people] and how they are finding ways to overcome the challenges that they're facing. [We need] to find ways to make projects or initiatives [that support] gender equality [and] human rights." - Nazia, 25, National Gender Youth Activist.

TAKING ACTION

- Creation of a dissemination strategy which can be translated to local languages for marginalized youth.
- A mapping of local stakeholders working on gender equality issues
- Engage, network, and collaborate with local stakeholders working on similar issues.
- Connect young leaders with decision-makers to advance their movements.

- Organize regional meetups for gender equality youth activists to engage with one another.

HARNESSING DATA FOR CONTEXT

- Develop demographically diverse and sensitive research and data, engaging local youth to undertake voluntary data reviews.
- Develop and coordinate education materials on Generation Equality that can be distributed to schools and institutions, including national or local contexts.
- Coordinate and develop age-friendly, accessible, and country-specific versions of reports, policies, bills, and other briefings to inform young people on current trends related to gender equality.

STRENGTHENING MOVEMENT SUSTAINABILITY

- Develop young feminist leadership labs to build programs and new narratives on Generation Equality.
- ICT and digital training for activists and youth-led organizations on how to navigate technology to engage social media platforms.
- Build local youth capacity through upskilling and reskilling to become mentors to advocate for gender equality issues.

WHERE TO FROM NOW?

Localizing Generation Equality is essential to advance gender equality and strengthen young people's advocacy efforts and civic participation. Young people are bringing Generation Equality to communities.

Young people recommended and highlighted the need to co-develop a fluid localization framework, inclusive of tools and materials, for youth to utilize in their advocacy efforts at the grassroots level. Strengthened capacity to network, engage local leaders and build community youth leadership remain at the core of young peoples' needs to localize effectively. UN Women will build on the findings generated from the workshop and work towards addressing the priorities of adolescents and National Gender Youth Activists to sustain and further Generation Equality localization.

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