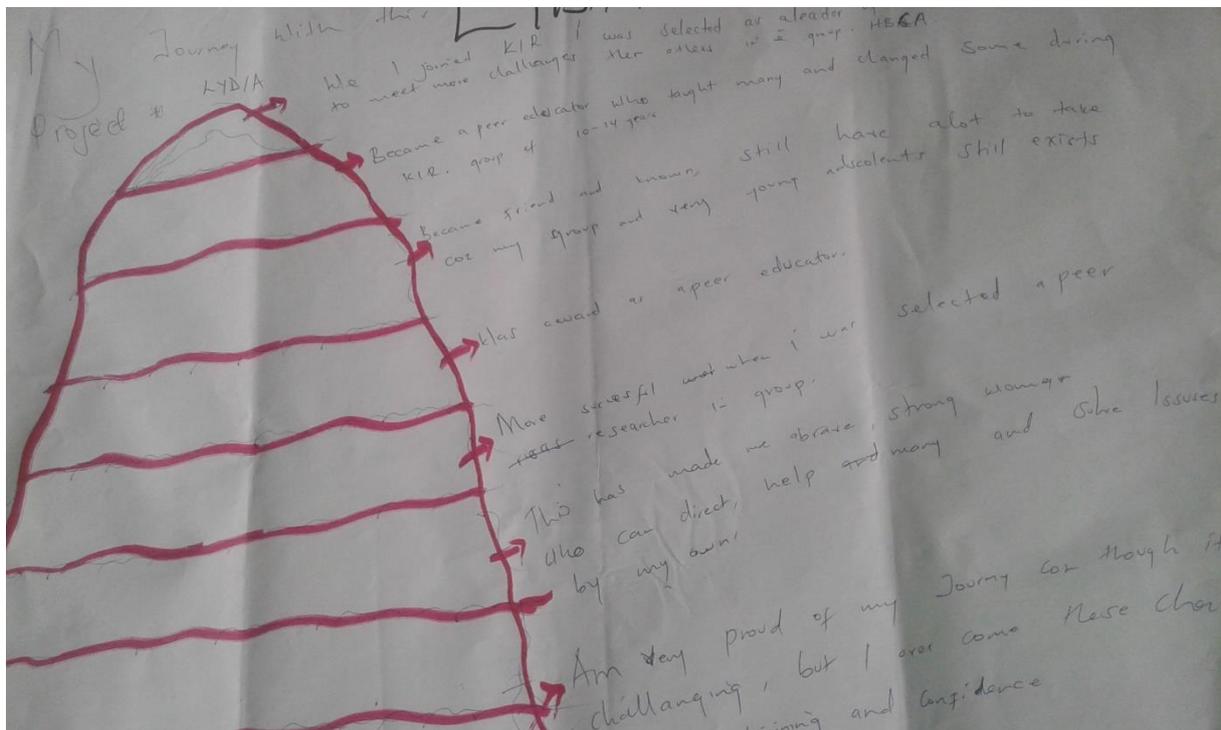


## Workshop: Young People as SRHR Researchers: Navigating Resistances



*Research journey for one of the youth peer researchers equated to a mountain.*

Report submitted to Share-Net International

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## **Objective of the workshop**

The workshop was meant to better equip participants to not only acknowledge their own and others' cultural and political resistances to youth participatory research but also to learn from various experiences how to navigate them before and during research and advocacy implementation. Such knowledge is indispensable for effective advancement of CSE and YFHS objectives.

## **Introduction**

This was an interactive workshop which engaged participants in a discussion of how to overcome various resistances to youth participatory research. The discussions drew from experiences accrued from the project 'Keep It Real: Comprehensive Sexuality Education for Young People in Uganda and Ethiopia' implemented in collaboration with the International Institute of Social Studies of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, Save the Children International, and Nascent Research and Development Organization. Facilitators shared their experiences of recruiting youth peer researchers, training, mentoring and data collection, analysis and dissemination by the young people. Emphasis was placed on programmatic gaps that tend to employ a monolithic interpretation of youth which is non-heterogeneous. Critical barriers (illustrated by one of the youth who described her research process as a mountain) were shared and how they were overcome.

The facilitators introduced the session by asking participants to participate in a brief online survey in order to draw out participants' presumptions about young people's competency as researchers. Questions included:

- *At what should we talk to children about sexuality?*
- *At what age should boys/girls engage in sexual activity?*
- *At what age should boys/girls get married?*
- *At what age can young people act as study participants?*
- *At what age are young people capable of doing research?*

We then facilitated discussion of the anonymous answers of the survey to show how varied/similar participants' answers were, and to question the criteria on which we base our presumptions.

The facilitators also asked participants to use sticky notes to share their descriptions of young people. They were guided by the following statements:

- *Youth is \_\_\_\_\_*
- *What word comes to mind when you think about youth and sexuality?*

From the online survey and descriptions of the young people, it was noted that actors working with young people either consciously or unconsciously have 'adult' assumptions which have guided and dominated many interventions on youth sexuality. These adult assumptions do not always conform to the needs and interests of young people, however. Policy actors

and programmatic actors tend to have a tendency of framing young people and their sexuality influenced by adult/expert/donor gazes and this is reflected in programming and implementation which is not comprehensive and is even exclusionary in some instances.

In conclusion, emphasis was placed on the fact that there may not be ready answers to many puzzling questions about working with young people as researchers in an environment that is very critical of their abilities, less trusting, non-supportive and sometimes suspicious. This calls for a constant reflection on how we engage with young people daily, and the need to continuously be reflexive in policy processes and programming.

For detailed presentation on experiences working with youth, challenges and how we navigated them, see presentation at [bit.ly/pylpr](http://bit.ly/pylpr) and the attached PowerPoint presentations.