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BY SMITA GAITH

POPULATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENT APPROACHES ENHANCE YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

33%

Share of the global population between the ages of 10 and 29.

Many youth in the world's most rural areas are not receiving critical health services, education, or training.

The community-driven nature of projects with an integrated population, health, and environment approach encourages youth engagement.

Additional enhanced and interactive information accompanies this brief and is available online at:

thepaceproject.org/phe-youth-leaders

Young people are critical to achieving global development goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals, Family Planning 2020, and the 2008 Abuja Call to Action, as well as national development plans. These goals and plans all highlight the need to improve youth well-being.

Youth constitute a large share of the world's population. According to the United Nations, 33 percent of the global population is between the ages of 10 to 29.¹ Yet, many youth in the world's most rural areas—whose needs differ from urban youth—are not receiving critical health services, education, or training. A growing body of evidence suggests that integrated population, health, and environment (PHE) projects, a type of community-based development approach, can help youth in rural communities meet these needs. PHE projects seek to improve community health—including family planning/reproductive health—and manage natural resources sustainably, often integrating skills-building and sustainable livelihoods.

This policy brief describes how PHE projects contribute to youth development. Youth are defined in this brief as young people between the ages of 10 and 29. The brief illustrates how youth leadership and inclusion within integrated approaches contribute to sectoral outcomes. Finally, it provides recommendations for policymakers, advocates, and organizations interested in youth and PHE to improve project design, foster youth development, and invest in monitoring and evaluating the benefits of PHE integration for youth.

Population, Health, and Environment Approaches Can Improve Youth Development

PHE projects are typically implemented in rural communities, particularly in Africa and Asia (see Figure, page 2). Africa is projected to contribute to a large share of the world's population growth, and in many African countries, the youth population is large and growing.² Engaging these youth can drive national

growth and development. To help youth reach their potential and drive national development, project implementers must address four broad categories of positive youth development (PYD): knowledge and information, contributions to the community, agency, and an enabling environment (see Box).

PHE projects may appeal to youth more than single-sector projects because they often use PYD approaches to engage young people, contributing to their leadership and development.³ This engagement occurs across sectors and helps youth gain skills and knowledge related to health, livelihoods, and contributions to their communities. Integrated projects work with communities to create an environment that enables young people to innovate, lead, and make rational and healthy decisions.

BOX

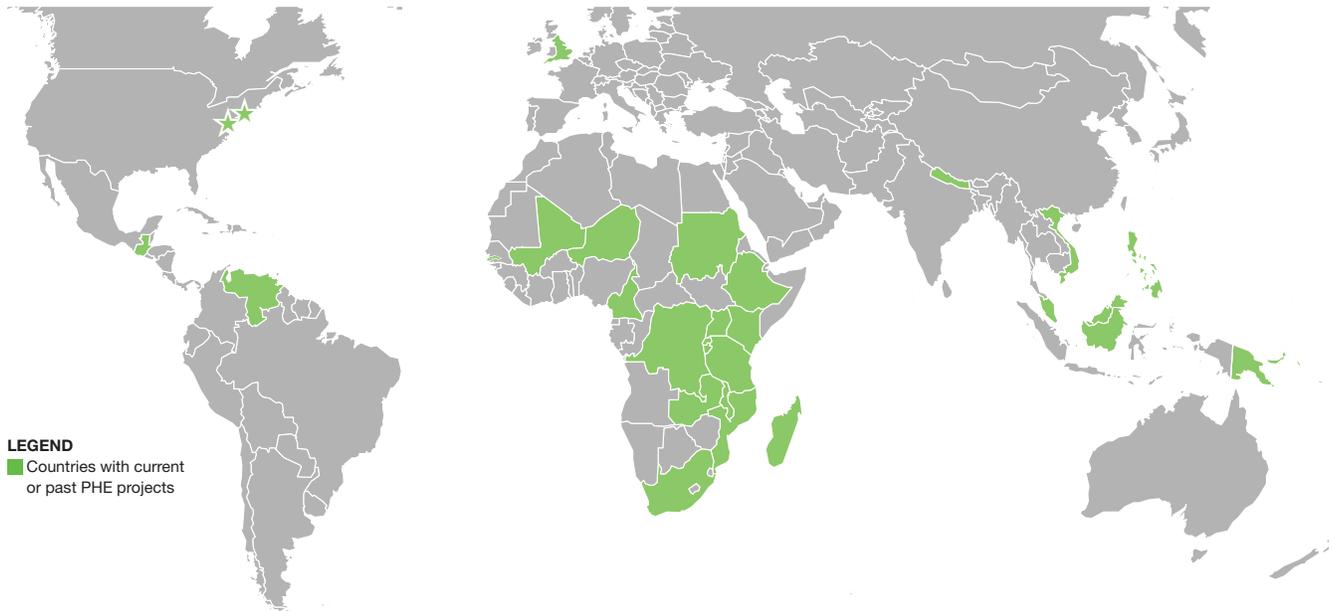
Defining Youth Development

Positive youth development (PYD) is an approach to working with young people. It emphasizes skills, knowledge, competencies, healthy relationships, and positive and supportive social environments, so that young people are healthy, productive, and invested in themselves and their communities.

The United States Agency for International Development's YouthPower Learning groups PYD across four broad categories: assets, agency, contributions, and enabling environment. The International Youth Foundation's Global Youth Well-Being Index includes seven categories of youth well-being: gender equality, economic opportunity, education, health, safety and security, citizen participation, and information and communication technology. Both the PYD approach and Youth Well-Being Index provide frameworks for engaging effectively with young people.

FIGURE

PHE Projects Are Often Located in Rural Communities



Note: This map notes the locations of 133 PHE projects currently or previously implemented around the world.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, "Population, Health, and Environment Activity Map" (2016), accessed at www.prb.org/population-health-environment-activity-map/.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ACTIVITIES DEMONSTRATE WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUTH

The community-driven nature of PHE encourages youth engagement in projects—such as peer education, livelihoods training, radio or dramas, and leveraging existing governance structures—and helps young people be seen as leaders and productive community members.

Many PHE projects use **peer education** to reach young people. In Kenya and Uganda, the Health of People and Environment-Lake Victoria Basin (HoPE-LVB) Project established Young Mothers' Clubs to reach young women who had begun childbearing and dropped out of school. HoPE-LVB trained them in income-generating activities and as peer educators who conduct school and community outreach. In Uganda, some of the young mothers formed a collective that runs a successful tree nursery.⁴ The project has improved their status within the community, increased their skills, and enabled them to generate income. In Tanzania and the Philippines, the Building Actors and Leaders for Advancing Community Excellence in Development (BALANCED) Project trained peer educators who informed and counseled community members and referred them for health services and information, positioning young people as leaders in their communities.⁵ In Tanzania, community support for youth access to family planning information and services increased in the project area.⁶

Projects often also include **livelihoods training**. The Sustaining Partnerships to enhance Rural Enterprise and

Agribusiness Development (SPREAD) Project in Rwanda and the Integrated Bonga Forest Project in Ethiopia were implemented in coffee-growing communities. SPREAD established youth clubs to increase knowledge about health and environmental challenges, which included fostering conversations on health, the use of coffee revenue, and other topics.⁷ The Integrated Bonga Forest Project addressed sexual and reproductive health and rights, environmental protection, and business and leadership. In Ethiopia, youth club members participate in beekeeping and other environmentally sustainable economic activities.⁸

Some PHE projects incorporate **radio or dramas**. In Malawi, the PaMawa ndi a Chinyamata project (PaMawa) hosts an interactive weekly radio show that integrates messages about health, the environment, and youth issues, and topics such as healthy decisionmaking and self-esteem. In the Philippines, youth peer educators from the Youth EMPOWER project advocated for a PHE approach to development using art and community theater.⁹

Many projects also **leverage existing governance structures** and encourage youth participation. In Nepal, phase I of the Hariyo Ban Program worked with both community forest user groups and community-based antipoaching units to engage women, youth, and socially excluded communities in their antipoaching and conservation efforts.¹⁰ The Tuungane project (Tanzania) leverages Beach Management Units (BMUs) to foster a community-driven approach to fisheries management.

Although youth are not specifically targeted to join BMUs, they represent a significant number of BMU members.¹¹

These projects demonstrate some of the many ways to engage young people in PHE activities and contribute to PYD. Listening to youth, ensuring their buy-in, and enlisting community support all help PHE projects positively influence perceptions of young people and bolster activities' sustainability.

Engaging Youth Benefits PHE Projects' Sectoral Outcomes

Research demonstrates that engaging young people in community interventions can have multisectoral benefits.¹² Involving all community members increases the likelihood that projects will address multiple priorities and encourages sustainability beyond the life of a project. In addition to the benefits to youth well-being and development, PHE projects that engage youth may also contribute to sectoral outcomes such as those described below.

Health

Health information and/or services, including voluntary family planning/reproductive health, are central to all PHE projects. Engaging youth enables PHE projects to establish long-term behavior changes that become normalized over time. Voluntary family planning improves health outcomes and enables youth to delay and space pregnancies, reducing the number of births and improving household health.

Agriculture

Many PHE projects introduce sustainable livelihoods in agriculture and help youth develop confidence, leadership skills, and team work skills. By leveraging associations, such as farmer's groups, PHE projects can help youth enter farming and contribute to environmentally sustainable pathways to improved food security.¹³

Employment

PHE projects develop a range of technical and leadership skills, improving young people's entrepreneurial capacity. Sectors such as agribusiness present an opportunity to generate jobs for youth, provided they have the skills and traits to succeed.¹⁴ Projects sometimes train young people as assistants and create opportunities for them to develop sector-specific skills. These opportunities can help prepare youth for the workforce.

Participation in Governance

Including youth in PHE projects can also improve their civic engagement. Membership in BMUs, community savings groups, or farmer's associations invites young people to participate in decisionmaking and sometimes leads to mentorship opportunities. Youth become active in their communities as educators, learn how to advocate to decisionmakers, and earn respect from their community members.

Measuring and Evaluating Youth Benefits

PHE project implementers do not typically include measurements of PYD or sectoral benefits from youth engagement. To truly measure and understand the benefits of youth engagement across sectors, PHE projects must be more intentional about including youth and monitoring and evaluating youth-focused outcomes, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Resources like the Positive Youth Development Measurement Toolkit explain how to integrate, measure, and evaluate PYD. By applying stronger monitoring and evaluation, PHE project implementers can better communicate the value of integrated projects for youth to government stakeholders and civil society partners.

Recommendations to Strengthen Youth Development

Multisectoral approaches like PHE can contribute to youth development in rural areas. Many PHE projects have demonstrated their capacity to foster youth leadership and knowledge, as well as other areas of PYD. Policymakers, advocates, and PHE project staff can prioritize issues that concern young people in the following ways:

- **Invest in and scale up multisectoral approaches to strengthen youth development.** National and subnational programs or institutions dedicated to the growth and well-being of young people can institutionalize PHE approaches. This investment can create an enabling environment for youth and help address young people's multifaceted needs, including their reproductive health and employability. In some countries, policies call for multisectoral collaboration, but those recommendations are often not implemented. Governments should begin making cross-sector investments that will benefit young people and improve multisectoral outcomes.
- **Intentionally address PYD in PHE project design** and consider how the project will contribute to youth development. National and subnational decisionmakers and implementers should include youth-facing interventions and activities. These activities benefit the next generation of leaders with personal attributes and technical skills that can lead to better outcomes for multiple sectors.
- **Strengthen monitoring and evaluation, and share the results and impacts of PHE projects on youth.** PHE projects should improve monitoring and evaluation tools and indicators to capture the benefits and impact of their projects for youth. Such indicators include those specific to youth development and well-being.¹⁵ Implementers should identify how involving young people affects long-term project success and ensure that these results reach policymakers and other decisionmakers. Policymakers need evidence and sustained advocacy to recognize and act on the value of multisectoral approaches for youth.

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1875 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 520
Washington, DC 20009 USA

202 483 1100 PHONE
202 328 3937 FAX
popref@prb.org E-MAIL