



#WeBelongAfrica



READY Academy: Strengthening the Capacity of Young Activists to Navigate and Thrive in an Ever-Challenging Anti-Rights Landscape

Meeting Report

19-25 May 2024

Eswatini

#WeBelongAfrica brings together multiple initiatives that enable inclusive, just, affirming, safe, productive and fulfilling lives for all people in Africa, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, and irrespective of HIV status or risk.

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READY Academy: Empowering Youth Leadership in SRHR and HIV Response

In 2024, Y+ Global, Frontline AIDS and UNDP collaborated to conduct the second instalment of the READY Academy in Eswatini. The academy, which was aptly titled, “Strengthening the Capacity of Young Activists to Navigate and Thrive in an Ever-Challenging Anti-Rights Landscape”, was supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Maputo through the READY+ programme. The academy aims to foster youth leadership and equipping young people to address HIV and SRHR challenges. This platform has become a space for learning, engagement, and action across multiple regions, promoting impactful community-driven solutions.

The participants were equipped with knowledge of approaches and concepts in human rights, gender, SRHR and HIV programming. Additionally, the young people were linked to industry practitioners for sustained mentorship. The participants developed concept notes which were reviewed and scored, and the selected participants were awarded seed funding opportunities.

Driving Change Through the READY Academy

Through expert-led sessions and peer exchanges, the READY Academy provided young leaders with the skills and knowledge to champion SRHR and HIV initiatives. Graduates reported increased confidence in leading local projects, advocating for inclusive policies, and addressing stigma in their communities. In order to further improve the capacity of the youth leaders to run initiatives, youth leaders were asked to share concepts which were reviewed and scored. The participants who had successful concepts were awarded with seed grant of US\$2,000 and assigned a mentor to support with the implementation. These efforts are already influencing participation of youth leaders in regional and global policy review and formulation processes and platforms. The success of the academy has been reflected as empowering youth leaders and one participant mentioned that:

A participant from Mozambique shared:

“The READY Academy has given me the confidence to advocate for my peers.”

Another participant stated how the academy helped them in navigating stigma and misinformation as follows:

“I learned how to navigate stigma and misinformation about HIV. Now, I’m helping others see the importance of safe practices and testing.”

Why It Matters

Youth are both vulnerable to and capable of addressing the challenges posed by the HIV epidemic. By filling knowledge gaps, reducing stigma, and fostering sustainable leadership, the READY Academy ensures that young voices are central to creating lasting change.

Collaboration for Collective Impact

The READY Academy exemplifies the power of collaboration across the EKN SRHR regional strategy. Frontline AIDS and UNDP have collaborated to support Y+ Global to create the academy curriculum through shared expertise and resources making it a truly inclusive and impactful initiative. This joint effort amplifies its reach, ensuring that a new generation of leaders is developed in Africa and beyond.

Looking Ahead

As the READY Academy aims to expand its reach to new regions, Frontline AIDS, Y+ Global and UNDP are putting plans for the next instalments of the academy. In addition, plans to acquire additional funding to expand the academy beyond the current East and Southern Africa regions. These steps will strengthen its role as a catalyst for youth-led transformation in SRHR and HIV advocacy.

Join us in celebrating the READY Academy's achievements in developing a new generation of leaders to lead on ending AIDS by 2030.



