Youth Engagement Plan – PSI Ethiopia

Youth Engagement Goals

To meaningfully collaborate and forge partnerships with Ethiopian adolescents and young people, from the Adolescents 360 (A360) project communities, in order to bring their expertise into the design and implementation phases of the project.

Young people will be engaged in formative research, synthesis (insight development), and design processes in order to enrich our data, prototypes, and interventions.

(Adapted from CDC's Report "Principles of Community Engagement: Concepts and Definitions from the Literature and Wong, N. T., Zimmerman, M. A., & Parker, E. A. (2010). A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. American Journal of Community Psychology, 46, 100–114.)

Youth engagement will a) support young people in the development of skills in research, analysis, and design; b) enrich the outputs and outcomes of the project; and c) support mutual learning opportunities for adults and young people to work together toward project goals.

Definition of Young Designers

Adolescents and young people are experts and change agents in this program. Young designers are 18-25 years old females and males that have completed at least grade 10. They are hired through a rigorous recruitment process and have an Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) with PSI/Ethiopia that makes them distinct from adult staff within our team. Also unlike PSI Ethiopia staff, young designers are hired:

- For their deep experience and understanding of adolescence and young adulthood in Ethiopia, rather than for specific professional experience or skills;
- Because of their age, gender, and languages spoken; given that non-discrimination based on gender, age, and ethnicity -- among other characteristics – is a principle of the normal human resource policy;
- With the understanding that they may or may not be able to take part in all project activities given competing pressures of work, school, and family.

Young Designers Scope of Work

- Participate in relevant trainings and workshops that will allow them to meaningfully contribute to and influence decisions in the program;
- Advise and serve as links between the program and the end users (i.e. 15-19 year old girls);
- Conduct formative research and contribute toward insight synthesis with adult collaborators;
- Participate in prototyping workshops and activities;
- Support the communication, partnership, advocacy, and promotion efforts of the program; and
- Bring an alternative view and inspiration to the Adolescent sexual and reproductive health and contraception discourse (based on our engagement so far, young designers are known for asking unique questions typical of a young person that the programmers don't necessarily know how to answer).

Oftentimes, the experiences of program professionals are reflected in program design rather than the experiences of the audience the programs are being designed for. Bringing the young people in the room as decision maker challenges this status quo. In doing so, it ensures that solutions are serving them and their peers, instead of serving the adults' point of view.

Recruitment & Retention Plan

Recruitment:

Who are the youth we are hoping to engage?
- Grade 10 or 12 graduates
- Conversant with the local language and cultural context of the regions where A360 is being implemented
- Minimum facilitation skills with peers (evidence of previous facilitation with peers of the same age and/or slightly younger)
- Experience in community-level activities / youth clubs and preferably able to show participation certificate or letter of support
- Enthusiastic to contribute to communities and flexible enough to accommodate culturally sensitive issues (e.g. appropriate dress, slang, etc.)
- Responsible and reliable
- Adequate command of English
- Two years of experience in youth club activities is an asset

Where will we find them?
- Through organizational and personal networks, and public announcements on websites and social media (assuming that the current emergency situation in the country improves)
- Via various platforms/clubs that engage young people

How many youth will we engage?
- 10 during the inception phase
- 14 during the inspiration phase
- 5 during the ideation phase (it would be ideal to bring the same young people from the inception and inspiration phases into the ideation phase, but if retention is a problem engaging another set of young people is also feasible)
- 70 (10 per region) during the piloting and scale-up phases (including new sets of young people to be recruited as part of implementation)

What will the recruitment process look like?
- It includes a rigorous screening process to help the A360 Project Staff understand the attitudes, skill sets, and knowledge base of young people. This includes (1) a written exam to assess writing and comprehension skills, (2) group work to assess capacity to deal with and manage group dynamics, and (3) a role playing activity to assess body and mind flexibility.
    - It is worth noting that young people's attitudes, skills sets, and knowledge base vary across different phases of the program. Likewise, the recruitment processes and criteria will also vary.

Retention:

What are the opportunities for growth for the youth we engage within our project? Our organization? Partner organizations?
Through their work with A360, youth receive:

- Appropriate compensation for their work on the project
- Letters of recommendation/support for education and employment
- Professional certificate of participation and contribution
- Exposure to different organizations, policy-makers, and other stakeholders through collaboration in the program, speaking opportunities, etc.
- Recognition for their contribution in communication materials (e.g. A360 brochure)
- Development of skills in research, analysis, program design, leadership, and facilitation
- The opportunity to remain engaged through a Change Agent platform being developed in 7 regions

How long do we plan to engage them?
- We plan on engaging youth at each and every stage of the program with varying levels of detail and intensity.
  - **Inception Phase –** youth will join the team during initial program meetings to begin the process of mutual trust and relationship building between youth and adults.
  - **Inspiration Phase –** youth will be part of the inspiration bootcamp, data collection, and meaning making process. Engagement ranges from 10-25 days depending on their availability and commitment.
  - **Ideation phase –** youth will contribute to the brainstorming sessions, prototype development, and engagement with end users to test prototypes. Engagement ranges from 10-30 days.
  - **Implementation (Pilot +Scale) –** youth will influence the implementation process by bringing expertise, experience, and interaction to the program. Engagement will include at least one day per quarter in which the youth collaborate with program implementers in all 7 regions to support implementation activities. Their engagement will be supported by continuous coaching and collaboration with program implementers.

How often will they work for us?
- The frequency of engagement varies across different phases of the program. For example, it was light touch during the inception phase, intensive during the inspiration and ideation phases, and will be medium touch during the implementation phase. The program envisions the young people spending a minimum of 10 hours per month on the program.

What is the compensation for their engagement?
- The youth receive a professional fee and their expenses are covered by A360. They will receive a certificate of participation and/or recognition based on their level of contribution and performance.

How will we know when they are no longer "youth" partners and instead an integrated, essential part of our team?
- The youth are already an essential part of the team. Even if they don't have a permanent workstation at the office, they have a seat at our table. They participate during communication and story-telling, as well as synthesis and prototyping. They will be part of the pilot as well as implementation at scale. There is a need to institutionalize their engagement in the long term; hiring a young person to be part of the team is not the only solution for this even if it plays a great role.

Assumptions and Priorities

What do we believe to be true about the youth we want to work with? What assumptions have we made about them?
It was assumed that the young people would have the time to engage with us. But in reality, they are extremely busy.

What existing skills and capacities do the youth we want to work with have?
It is believed that young people are experts in their own experiences. To further develop their professional skills, there is a need to be creative and innovative. Equally important is integrating youth expertise into the routine of program design. Even if it is worth doing, this process is resource and time intensive.

What perspectives do we hope they will bring to the project?
The young people genuinely ask questions (e.g. based on what they asked during synthesis, there was a suggestion to divorce contraception from sex as part of the design brief). They know what is realistic and not realistic from the adolescent's/young person's perspective. They also bring opinions, assumptions, and experiences that provide us with insights about the end user.

What qualities and characteristics do we want them to have?
The aim is for young people to have the ability to learn fast and challenge the status quo without making themselves vulnerable, and to be culturally sensitive and flexible.

What skills and capacities do we need to build in them?
These skills include:
- Public speaking in front of different audiences;
- Writing skills so that they can share their experiences using social media; and
- Professional skills so that they can be gainfully employed.

Organizational Opportunities

What is our experience with engaging youth in the past? What will we have to do differently to engage them more now?
The activity is new for the PSI/Ethiopia platform and we are all learning together.

What resources/capacity do we have to meaningfully engage youth in this project?
There is strong support from PSI/Ethiopia leadership to engage young people. This support includes:
- Child and women's protection policy that is in place and has been communicated to staff;
- HR and operations teams that are ready to make the system youth sensitive;
- Passion and some experience with youth engagement from other organizations;
- Project staff that have received some training in youth-adult partnerships;
- Some dedicated staff (though not enough) to youth-adult partnerships; and
- A clear vision of young people's contribution (value addition) within the organization.

Where in the project would youth engagement be most meaningful?
- Conducting and analyzing research
- Prototype development and testing
- Marketing and promoting, or delivering, solutions to end users

How open are we to responding to their ideas for the project? How flexible can we be?
- Ideas for the project will be categorized as easy to address, moderate to address, difficult to address, and new perspectives to be considered (e.g. ideas that would bring a paradigm shift or communicate a specific issue/solution differently). Based on those categorization, we will make assessments on our willingness and ability to respond.

Organizational Barriers
Please list any barriers that you anticipate to meaningfully engaging young people in this project.
Potential organization barriers include:
- Lack of adequate finance and absence of dedicated staff – we realize that involving young people is very expensive and it is not something every staff member can play a role in;
- Difficulty with retention of youth on the project;
- Youth's contribution is hard to measure, which makes it difficult to position the agenda and secure financing and staffing;
- Engaging youth requires a new hiring policy and system, which takes time and resources to set up; and
- It is new area of work for the PSI/Ethiopia office – there is room for improvement on how to interact with young people as staff and to define an adolescent-friendly working environment within the office.

Youth Engagement Budget
How much money is allocated to youth engagement in this project and where is the funding coming from?
There is a budget allocated for sub grantees. Options for funding youth engagement include:
- Allocating the dedicated budget on youth engagement and outsourcing the entire activity to the sub grantees. The core team could provide a well-designed and appropriate coaching scheme.
- Using part of the budget allocated to sub grantees to hire a dedicated young person to support youth engagement that would be part of the core team.

Youth Engagement Capacity Building Budget
Where will the resources and budget come from in order to build other organizations' capacity to do meaningful youth engagement?
- Please refer to the previous section. This could also fall under part of our learning and partnership strategies.
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Youth Engagement Management
Our team has learned a valuable lesson: Retention of young designers is very difficult. There was a discussion with the HR team and they suggested the following:
1. To have a large-scale recruitment process; they are keen to support the team to make it happen. The recruitment should happen both in Addis Ababa and at regional level.
2. Put in place a capacity building package to minimize dropout and increase the retention rate. The team has agreed to provide a work plan and proceed by the second week of December 2016.

Work Plan

Please create a work plan for how youth will be involved throughout your project. Please include their involvement at specific inflection points in the project as well as their involvement between major activities. Feel free to organize this table around specific inflection points that you anticipate (not only the ones provided in the examples), and use the examples on the next page for inspiration. Please be as specific as possible.

Project phase	What will youth do?	What financial resources will support this?	What personnel resources will support this?
Inflection Point 1: (Ex: Insight Gathering)	- Shape the design and delivery of boot camps - Relate with adolescent and young research participants - Be inspiration for adult research participants - Their engagement better informed the relationship management among the consortium members (power balance and times to step in and step back were huge learnings) - Young designer hired to design project logo	- Accommodation, per diem during the boot camps - Professional fee during the trainings and field work ($20/day/young designer) - Transport, per diem, and accommodation fee during the field work and training.	- A360 in-country team; HR and operation teams, and consortium members participated to make the training right for the young people
Inflection Point 2 (Ex: insight synthesis)	- Bring unique perspective to synthesis process - Be part of the team and navigate through the very difficult dynamics and discussions. - Present findings to the larger group	- Hotel; per diem and professional fee	- A360 in-country team; finance and operations teams, and IDEO.org
Inflection Point 3 (Ex: prototype design)	- Participate in and contribute to prototype development workshops - Connect with end users in the field in order to test prototypes - Influence the discussion on what is feasible and not (bringing the young people's perspective) - Suggest channels which may not be obvious to adult audiences	- Hotel; per diem and professional fee	-
Inflection Point 4 (Ex: prototype testing)	- Be at the forefront to start conversations with the end users on the prototypes - Be part of the implementation team delivering messages, services, and products associated with prototypes - Provide feedback on prototypes		

	- Shape the discussion on how to accommodate the feedback from end users. - Bring the youth perspective to interpret the feedback on prototypes.		
In between key inflection points			
Capacity-building (part of building their capacity and/or part of building others' capacity)	- Their engagement frames and reframes the way we understand capacity building (e.g. the importance of safe space to build trust; less jargon; power balance; fun as integral part; build on their experience; listen to them before decision is made on their level of contribution).		
Partnership, Advocacy and Story- telling (to promote adoption of A360 approach)	- Participate in and provide leadership at Technical Working Group meetings - Be part of the Insight share out event - Identify local partners for prototyping/piloting solutions - Collaborate with implementing partners on roll-out of prototypes and pilots - Serve as watch dog to assure quality and make duty bearers accountable - Take part in communication activities (e.g. interviews or writing of blogs/op-eds) - Contributing to learning activities - Participation in change-agent platform	- Professional fee; transport - Budget to run the change agents platform - Capacity building budget to develop their communication and advocacy skill	