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# Conference Report

## Young Designer's Global Conference

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Christine Massawe - Tanzania

Heran Birhanu - Ethiopia

Melat Gebregiorgis - Ethiopia

Samuel Ombs - Nigeria

Seun Taylor - Nigeria

Held on 09-10 December 2020 G.C.



## **Abbreviations**

PSI - Population Services International

SFH - Society for Family Health

SRH - Sexual and Reproductive Health

SRHR/S - Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights/ Service

SDGs- Sustainable Development Goals

YD - Young Designer

MYE - Meaningful Youth Engagement

MYP - Meaningful Youth Participation

## Introduction

The first-ever young designers global conference themed: **MYE: Our Yesterday and Tomorrow with No Barriers** was held on December 09 and 10, 2020. The conference was organized by four young designers and one program assistant across A360 implementing countries; Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania. The platform used to conduct the two day conference was zoom.



## Attendees and Other Stakeholders

45 attendees from 3 A360 countries: Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania were invited to the conference. Out of 45 invited YDs, over 30 young designers were able to attend the two day conference.

Young designers were also joined by members of leadership who were present for selected sessions. Members of leadership present were Matthew Wilson, Jennifer Pope, Alison Malmqvist and Karl Hoffman.

Other stakeholders who provided support in the planning and implementation of the conference included PSI's Senior Associate Communication Manager Emma Beck as well as MIS Manager Sadd Wambangulu and MIS Officer Erick Bonaventure from PSI/Tanzania.



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## Proceedings Explained

### Day one: sessions

#### Opening session

The opening session was addressed by Heran Birhanu, a YD from Ethiopia and Samuel Ombs, a Program Assistant from Nigeria, who declared the conference's official start in their welcoming address.

#### Video

A summarized video showcasing A360 projects in Tanzania, Nigeria and Ethiopia was displayed to get YDs learn about approaches and brands used in different countries: [The A360 Video: Daring Girls to Dream](#)

#### Ice breaker - Introduction

The participants introduced themselves, their names, the country they were from along with a fun fact about themselves.. The goal of this session was to get introduced to each attendee and to encourage participation through familiarization.

#### Experience sharing - MYE

This session was designed to assess the extent to which young people felt they were meaningfully engaged during A360 and to document young people's perspectives on what value (if any) this meaningful engagement added to the effectiveness of the interventions.

As such, an assessment form was sent out prior to the conference to assess young designers' views and experiences regarding MYE within PSI/SFH. The findings from the forms were compiled into a slideshow and was presented in this session. The presentation included short discussions in which young designers were given a chance to elaborate on their answers to the assessment as well as ask and answer questions.

You can see the findings from the MYE assessment forms summarized [here](#).

## Speed dating

The essence of the speed dating session was to engage young designers across the three countries on a smaller platform where they could connect to know one another on an informal note. This session was designed to ease and encourage interaction among young designers as well as participation in the conference as a whole. To this effect, five breakout rooms hosting 9 young designers (3 from each country) were created.

The organising committee then facilitated session using prompts like:

- Who do you look up to and why?
- What does active listening look like to you?
- How effective is youth participation in your various communities?

The session was relaxing and participatory as young designers across the three countries were able to relate better and discuss these questions among themselves.

## Keynote Address

Day one was concluded with an address by Mathew Willson, Adolescents 360 project director, to end the day with a boost of motivation.

## Day two: sessions

### Recap

Day two was kicked off with a brief summary of the activities of day one by Seun Taylor, a committee member also went through the agenda of the day.

### **Experience sharing - Youth Group Representatives outside of PSI/SFH share their experiences regarding MYE**

This session was designed to draw inspiration from meaningful youth engagement strategies and solutions utilized by youth groups outside of PSI. By doing so, we hoped to spark ideas in YDs as they planned the future of MYE in A360 amplify and beyond. The session was also aimed at growing connections of YDs and other dynamic youth leaders.

There were six representatives from different youth groups, two from each country (Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania). The groups were selected based on two criteria; namely, their area of

operation and whether or not their organization is youth-led. The youth groups were the following and insights each shared whilst the session.

- **ECHO** - Ethiopian youth Council for Higher Opportunities: a youth council group under [Talent Youth Association](#), a youth led organization working on young people's empowerment. MYP is assured by involving youth in all stages of the organization including management, Project Operations and Design. Youth are capacitated in building up confidence and experience through training and workshops. Also by promoting commitment between adults and youth in various activities for a better outcome. Most importantly is to have a framework of responsibility, voice and agency into consideration to bring life to MYP and youth groups.
- **EMSA** - [Ethiopian Medical Students Association](#): a pre- professional association of medical students found in Ethiopia. Capacity building is the key to increase knowledge to youth as well as information to have youth fully engaged rather than being just representatives. Youth should be equipped with all resources, recognition and opportunities as a ladder for a comprehensive MYE.
- **One Voice initiative**: A youth led and volunteer driven organisation which focuses on GBV related cases, child marriage, Policy development and research for women in Nigeria.
- **VSO Nigeria**: A Youth Alumni Network; an international development organization working to address poverty and marginalization in Nigeria. Given that Nigeria is a highly populated country in Africa and youth being the majority various youth strategies are introduced to make youth engagement participatory. Youth work in volunteering and peer learning basis in raising awareness in the community on SDGs. A lot of focus is on improving livelihood and education rather than Health inspired by the rate of young people who are unemployed. A constructive youth adult partnership is vital when engaging youth in decisions and suggestions for improvement of the programs.
- **Kipepeo**: A girl child campaign to raise self awareness on Comprehensive Sexuality Education to adolescent girls in Tanzania. Youth are capacitated and engaged in moving around schools in Tanzania raising awareness on SRH. Various strategies used in reaching out other youth and adolescents included sports and entertainment. Amongst challenges that youth faced before breakout of the pandemic was delay from the Local government approval in moving around schools this showcased a massive need of education at community level to prioritize youth programs. This was also an opportunity for young people to cognize their talents and get to learn from them for the improvement of the program.
- **YWCA** - [Young Women's Christian Association](#): a movement working for empowering women and girls in leadership and advocating for SRHR in Tanzania. Youth should be involved in all stages of the program from design phase to Monitory and Evaluation.

When it comes to health related issues other stakeholder like religious leaders and local government should be involved.

### **Skilling up with training**

A form was sent out prior to the conference to assess which training/s YDs have received and how they wanted future training/s to be tailored. After the data from the assessment was compiled, it was transformed into a powerpoint presentation displayed and discussed under this section of the conference. You can find the assessment forms [Here](#)

### **YD Pairing Program**

The idea of the YD pairing program was introduced to participants. The program is meant to keep YDs from all three countries connected. You can find the concept note [here](#).

After the introduction of the program, the Young Designer's Facebook Community Page was also introduced to participants. This will be a platform to share information, opportunities and keep YDs connected. You can find the link to the facebook community here [YD Facebook Community](#)

### **Setting a way forward - Designing better**

In this session young designers planned the future of meaningful youth engagement. In similarity to the experience sharing session, assessment surveys were sent out prior to the conference in order to collect insight on what the future of MYE looks like to them. The assessment was intended to identify areas of weakness, generate ideas on methods of improvement, identify strengths and discuss on how to capitalize and strengthen them.

Answers from the survey were then consolidated and discussed in this session. The setting a way forward session was a live working session in which YDs could not only strengthen points that were made in the survey and subsequent presentation but also new ones (including ones that were inspired by previous sessions).

Finally, opinions, insights and recommendations gathered throughout the session were discussed and constructed into recommendations that were tabled in the round table discussion with PSI leadership.





## **Roundtable Discussion - Addressing PSI Leadership**

The roundtable discussion was designed to provide young designers with a platform for direct interaction with the leadership. In this session young designers discussed their ideas on ways forward based on the talking point presentation prepared on the basis of the ways forward session. Specific points were then highlighted by the facilitator followed by questions/suggestions/ideas were then forwarded by young designers, finalized by reflections by members of leadership. Questions were also forwarded by leadership members to YDs where need arose.

## **Keynote Address**

The conference was planned to end with a keynote address by the CEO of PSI, Mr. Karl Hoffman. However, the two day conference ended with a spur of the moment conversation between the CEO and YDs. The conversation consisted of a check in on how the conference went and followed by questions forwarded by YDs to Mr. Karl Hoffman.

The final session provided YDs with a boost of motivation and a chance to interact one on one with the CEO of PSI. YDs also had the opportunity to ask Karl questions that ranged from his experience as a young leader, PSI's plans for strengthening MYE to more personal questions such as how Mr. Karl finds inspiration.

The conference was concluded with a brief photo session.

## Findings

### The Extent to Which Young People Felt Meaningfully Engaged During A360.

In order to assess if and the extent to which young designers felt they were meaningfully engaged during A360, a pre-assessment form was sent to young designers before the conference. The form, named Meaningful Youth Engagement (MYE) Assessment Form contained 16 questions designed on IPPF's material; Participate: The voice of young people in programmes and policies.

Findings from the assessment forms are as follows:

1. Engagement of young designers was **inclusive**. When asked if YDs believed if youth from all social and identity groups were actively engaged, YDs answered that they believe youth from all social and identity backgrounds are intentionally included in all phases of the program.
2. Engagement was **participatory**. Answers from the form entailed that youth were **actively engaged in decision making**. When asked if they believed that YDs were meaningfully engaged in decision making, they noted that designers and program staff work together to make decisions on program specifics and operations. Young designers also believe that youth's voice is heard to a large extent within A360. However levels of engagement varied in relation to involvement in monitoring and evaluation. While a proportion of YDs believed that youth work in partnership with adults to design, develop and implement program M&E activities, other YDs believe that youth have opportunities to participate in data collection and provision of input into the M&E approach, but youth are not involved in M&E decision making.
3. Engagement was one in which **youth were provided with leadership opportunities**. Young Designers noted that A360 provides opportunities for youth to initiate, design, implement and lead activities in and out of the program. Designers also noted that growing levels of responsibility and autonomy are assigned to YDs in the program. Some youth also highlighted that they felt YDs are provided opportunities to lead specific parts of program activities.
4. Youth Engagement is **acknowledged and rewarded**. When asked whether or not program staff recognize and reward youth's positive contributions and acknowledge youth's value, YDs' answers varied along the following lines. A majority of young designers believe that there are consistent structured opportunities throughout the

program that provide the chance to acknowledge the achievements, contributions, and responsibilities of young people. On the other hand, other designers felt as though opportunities for acknowledgement and reward for the contributions of young designers are present yet they are limited and inconsistent. There were also minor variances which were opinions that there were no opportunities for acknowledgement and reward.

5. **Meaningful Youth Engagement of Young designers adds to the effectiveness of A360 interventions.** Young designers believe that their expertise in matters related to youth and shared lived experiences with the youth targeted in A360, gives them a unique eye which in turn allows them to make contributions that add to the effectiveness of the interventions of the program.

The meaningful engagement of youth added to the effectiveness of program effectiveness by YDs' role in;

- Shaping the design and implementation of youth-appropriate ASRH programs
- Validating and reporting data for decision making
- Evolving programs through situational analysis of community feedbacks
- Leading research/surveys and drive innovation through youth perspectives
- Influencing policy change and increased budgetary allocation through participation in advocacy at state and local government levels

## Young People's Perspectives on the Role of Adult Staff and its Impact on MYE.

1. Youth believe that there has been opportunities for adult staff to learn about sharing power with young people.
2. Young designers believe that program staff provide adequate levels of support to stimulate skill growth. To this effect, young designers stated that staff consistently provide assistance when needed, and program activities are intentionally structured to provide opportunities for youth to solve problems and to allow youth space to struggle with challenges
3. Program staff learn about challenges facing youths in and out of the program to ensure youths feel comfortable in the program and help youth to overcome challenges. When asked on the manner in which staff attempts to learn of the challenges YDs face in order to establish trust and comfort, answers of YDs varied, with some believing that staff makes such inquiries at the beginning of engagement, others believing that inquiries are made consistently and in a structured manner. A significant amount of designers also noted that adult staff recognize and cater to special needs of YDs.

## Findings from Skilling up with trainings

Young Designers across the three countries highlighted some skills that they would like to be trained on afresh or given regular refresher training and would also love to receive certificates upon completion. These include:

1. Bootcamp for research
2. Human Centered Design
3. Project Management
4. Effective Organisational Projects
5. Data Management
6. Data Analysis

## Procedural Findings

The first YDs global conference on youth engagement was a virtual event spread over the length of two days hosting 30+ YDs from 3 countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Nigeria) . As such, the committee has observed the following prospects and challenges related to the conduct of the virtual youth only conference. They are described below;

### Prospects

- The virtual nature of the conference made it possible to host a large amount of designers from over three countries
- The virtual nature of the conference also allowed for the utilizations of virtual tools such as google forms, chat boxes, breakout rooms etc, which in turn accounted for increased participation and engagement of YDs
- The fact that the training was organized and attended predominantly by youth, resulted in a relatively ‘free’ environment in which youth could participate without fear and pressure that was witnessed to a higher extent in sessions during which adults were present

### Challenges

- The virtual nature of the conference made it difficult in the beginning to break the ice, build trust and encourage active participation.

- Bandwidth issues were also experienced by most attendees and organizers and that led to technical issues such as delays and audio/video break ups
- The virtual nature of the conference also made it initially difficult to balance the scales between the organizing committee and the attending YDs which in turn made it difficult to create and foster a safe space in which participation was satisfactory.
- It was also difficult to get all young designers to fill out assessment surveys on time

## General Lessons from the Perception of MYE in External Youth Groups

1. **Have intergenerational dialogue:** by creating a safe space where young people along with adults can sit together and discuss; on different ideas, social issues, possible collaboration points for youth-adult partnership, etc.
2. **Showcase young people's impact:** by increasing the visibility of young people's work to possibly open new doors and opportunities where youth can make even greater impact.
3. **Work around SDGs:** in all programs; define and link program areas to the SDGs so that there's a clear understanding of what young people are contributing to reaching the SDGs.
4. **Engage youth in ALL aspects of the program:** in the planning, designing, implementation of programs.
5. **Familiarize the "Youth Engagement Guideline/Framework/Model" of the organization with young people within the organization:** so that they are aware of the details in which they are integrated in the programs, or any interaction within the organization.

## Recommendations

### 1. A Youth-Adult Advisory Board

The Youth-Adult Advisory Board is a **global** board of equal youth and adult members and is in charge of **strategizing the promotion of meaningful youth engagement**. The board is **advisory** in nature and will focus on providing non-binding strategic advice as to the improvement of youth engagement strategies across A360 countries. The board is also envisioned to be of a **participatory and deliberative nature**. In providing directions for the promotion of MYE, the board is expected to incorporate the views, experiences and concerns of young designers. As such, the board is expected to periodically meet with designers virtually or in person to source the experiences, views, concerns and expectations of designers directly.

In its quest to promote and improve MYE, the board is envisioned to focus on

- Improvement of Adult-Youth Partnership (specifically in terms of the mentorship program discussed below)
- Capacity Building of YDs (specifically in relation to trainings discussed below)
- Improve the youth to youth relationship (specifically in terms of pairing program discussed below)
- Promote and Innovate the participation of youth in decision making/power sharing

### 2. Trainings:

A growing concern among young designers regarding their experiences in A360 was a lack of consistent, constant and unvarying capacity building training. While some designers attested to the fact that they have benefited from 'boot camp' style training, others noted that they have only benefited from limited and scarce pieces of training. Some others also noted that they have not benefited from any training other than on the ground/field training. Designers also shared their concern regarding the lack of certified training.

We believe that training is crucial in ensuring designers are sufficiently skilled and motivated to make more meaningful contributions. To resolve the lack of trainings, the organizing committee suggests the incorporation of;

- ❖ **Increased** volume of **consistent standardized training** that **certifies** designers who have successfully completed them.
  - Refresher Trainings: These trainings are to be offered to senior young designers who have previously received training on specific topics in order to strengthen the skill set of such designers. Refreshment training is to be provided periodically and based on a need based basis in which the area of focus of the training is to be determined on the need of young designers.
  - Exchange programs to nurture Young designers skills
  - Boot camp training: This training is to be offered to new young designers as well as junior designers. The bootcamp is a series of intensive training on skills that are relevant to the designers job description. Trainings can include topics such as;
    - Youth leadership skills
    - SRH
    - Data Management
    - Monitoring and Evaluation
    - Human Centered Design etc...

### 3. Amplified YD Engagement Plan

In order to strengthen meaningful engagement under A360 Amplify, the committee proposes an amplified YD Engagement plan which encompasses different tools of increased engagement including recruitment, tracking and social media engagement.

#### → Recruitment of new YDs

As we embark on A360 Amplify, the engagement of young people who are growingly representative of PSI's target group is of critical importance. To this effect the committee calls for the recruitment of new talent with special focus on the recruitment of marginalized and underrepresented youth.

#### → YD involvement tracking mechanism

The shared experiences of young designers showed that the engagement and contribution of youth isn't sufficiently tracked, documented and shared with YDs. This led to feelings of exclusion and being left out among designers who haven't participated in all or some parts of program phases. To remedy this the committee recommends the adoption and implementation of a youth engagement

tracking mechanism in which all specifics of youth engagement is documented and periodically communicated to all young designers. Updating YDs with information on what is currently being done in their respective projects and specifically the manner in which young designers are being engaged will provide youth with a sense of belonging and ownership. It will also help identify and mitigate favoritism which is one of the areas of concern identified by youth.

→ **Increased social media engagement**

Another area of improvement noted by young designers is in regards to social media engagement. It was pointed out by designers that the current level of social media engagement remains low in all 3 countries. As such the committee recommends the use of social media as a tool of engagement, platform of networking and learning as well as a platform of recognition and acknowledgement of young designers' work.

**4. Designers Pairing Program**


The Young Designers Global Conference was for many designers the first chance to meet and interact with designers from other countries. It was also the first time YDs got the chance to share their experiences with one another at a cross country level. As the organizing committee members were first hand witness to the fruitfulness of sharing experiences among YDs from different countries, we recommend the adoption and implementation of The [Young Designers Pairing Program](#). The program has the objective of

- Generating ideas for collaborative work in our different project activities as YDs,
- Strengthening the practice of experience sharing between YDs from different countries and
- To strengthen the relationship amongst YDs

**5. Adult-Youth Mentorship Program**

Adult-youth relationships based on equal power distribution and a culture of mutual learning and support are the basis of the adult-youth mentorship program. In this program, young designers will be paired with adult staff and leadership from a global level. This will boost meaningful youth engagement by allowing youth to learn from the diverse skill set, knowledge and experience of adult staff and apply it in his/her stay as a young designer. The mentorship program is also envisioned to empower YDs within and





beyond PSI and guide and support young designers' quest into becoming empowered citizens and agents of change.

Mentors and mentees are to be selected on the grounds of availability, willingness, need and similarity of interest areas.



## Annex I

### Conference programme

Time 9 Dec, 2020	Sessions	Session Objective	Speaker/s/ Participants	Session content
	Welcoming	To greet participants	Heran & Sam (Lead)	Speech
	A360 Journey		Seun (Lead)	Video Presentation
	Ice Breaker	To break the ice and familiarize participants with each other.	Christina & Melat (Lead)	Quick introduction
	Experience sharing	To assess YD's perspectives on the value of MYE and MYE in their respective country's YD program.	-YD Eth -YD Tanzania -YD Nigeria	-Presentation, discussion on outcomes  -Anecdotes for story telling
	Speed Dating (With refreshers in each room)	Networking among YDs	YDs	Breakout Rooms
	Conclusion	To end the day with a boost of motivation.	Mathew Wilson	Keynote Address

Time 10 Dec, 2020	Sessions	Session Objective	Speaker/s, Participant	Session Content
	Recap	Recap on Day one's sessions, Introduce the content and timetable of day two sessions and the speakers	Organizers	Short address
	Experience sharing of Youth Groups (outside PSI)	Have representatives from other youth groups share their views and experiences about meaningful youth engagement with YDs.	Melat/Youth Group Representatives	Storytelling and Q & A
	Skilling up with trainings	To gauge the different trainings PSI/SFH has given and assess their impacts and caveats (if any)	A Young Designer	Polls, Discussions
	Break			
	Setting a way forward	To gather insight on how we can strengthen the meaningful engagement of youth moving forward.	YDs	Prompt answering and quick discussion
	YD paring program/idea introduction	To encourage interconnectedness between YDs across the three countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania and Nigeria)	Coordinators to YDs	Short presentation and brief
	Refresher or break			
	Conclusion Pt.1	To gather insight from young designers and have them present their experiences first hand to A360 leadership.	YDs in the presence of PSI/SFH leadership	Roundtable Discussion
	Conclusion Pt.2	To end the day with a boost of motivation.	PSI leadership	Keynote Address

