



dance4life ChangeMakers

Who we are

We, the dance4life ChangeMakers, are a group of young people representing a diversity of youth constituencies in our home countries, whom we consult on a regular basis in order to voice their needs and demands in international decision-making spaces.

The youth constituencies we represent vary from youth parliaments to juveniles, from students to sex workers, from young people living in slums to religious youth groups.

We, the dance4life ChangeMakers, understand diplomacy and sensitivity, however also embody the boldness and courage of the youth generation demanding their rights to be fulfilled.

We are a diverse group of young people ranging from 19 till 27 years of age, and we live in 8 countries spread over three continents. We represent youth voices from Pakistan, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Nepal, Ethiopia, Ghana, and The Netherlands.

We, the dance4life ChangeMakers, are a completely youth-led group joining forces to advocate for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people. We believe that connecting to people's hearts is necessary to achieve change. Therefore, our advocacy will be characterized by personal stories of positive change and debunking myths around sexual and reproductive health issues.

What we stand for

We believe not that people are vulnerable, but that they are made vulnerable. Therefore, we will show how young people are agents for change at all levels by bringing their stories to decision-makers. We have the legitimacy to approach decision-makers because we are in touch with the needs of many young people at community level.

We demand the right of young people to lead a healthy, joyful, safe and meaningful life to be fulfilled. We know that fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights is a requirement to achieve this. In order for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and specifically goals 3 and 5 – to succeed, it is necessary that young people have access to the right information and services to protect their health and well-being. In particular, to protect themselves from HIV and AIDS, in accordance with target 3.3.

Although Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Youth-Friendly Services are not included in the 2030 Agenda, goals 3, 4 and 5 and the references to the ICPD Programme of Action provide opportunities to address CSE and YFS as preconditions for achievement of the goals. We know that continuing to promote these issues is necessary for fulfilment of the rights of young people, as well as for achieving the new set of global goals. Especially since adolescents are the population group currently left behind in the global AIDS response, accelerating their access to the right information and services becomes even more urgent.

We experience the impact comprehensive sexuality education can have on the choices young people make in their daily lives, through being involved in the educational programs of dance4life and being in touch with the realities of young people at community level. We want to bring these realities to where they need to be heard: at national and international decision-making fora. Using the real stories of young people in our advocacy ensures that our messages are experience-based and align with the realities of the youth population in the countries we live in.

What we aim for

The voices and needs of young people from grassroots level are listened to in international and national decision-making spaces, leading to increased support for comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services.

Legitimacy

dance4life works in 19 countries spread over 5 continents, where since 2004 a total of almost 2 million young people have been reached with our school programs. dance4life facilitates youth leadership at all levels: from the community to the international level. An example is the establishment of national youth consortia in several countries in Africa, Asia and Latin-America that are actively and meaningfully involved in national SRHR policy development. Furthermore, several Southern youth advocates have received intensive support from dance4life to engage in the ICPD and Post-2015 processes at international level, as youth advocates, young panellists, and official youth delegates.

How we will do it

The core activities we envision are:

- Organizing regular consultations with the youth constituencies we represent and collect their input and stories.
- Developing story booklets and other advocacy tools fed by this input.
- Organizing a global campaign aimed at debunking myths around sexuality education.
- Connecting with decision-makers at national and international level to have them listen to our stories and messages.
- Mutual capacity strengthening and mentorship.
- Synergizing with our participation in UNAIDS' The PACT, the Have You Seen My Rights Coalition, the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, Women Deliver, and the UN Youth Envoy's Youth Gateway Partnership.

Young people are consulted by us, young people, to develop messages that truly reflect our needs and rights. Many misinformation and myths still exist around sexuality education, which is why we want to address these in our global campaign.

How we will measure it

Next to measuring achievements on implementation level, we also aim to measure increased support of decision-makers for our voices and demands. Together with the group we will design mechanisms for this.

This is us



"I dream of access to youth-friendly services everywhere in the nation" - Kelvin, 21, Kenya

I am a youth advocate for dance4life Kenya and Network for Adolescents and Youth of Africa. I come from Kibra Slums in Nairobi, where young people are very much exposed to risks such as drug abuse, prostitution, early pregnancy, rape, unsafe abortion, and contracting HIV. My wish is to speak to, for and with these young people to make sure their sexual and reproductive needs and rights are adequately met. I represent youth from two community-based organizations in Kibra Slums, as well as students from several universities.

"I look forward to the day that the government will prioritize the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people in the National Health Strategy." - Chanda, 27, Zambia

I coordinate the dance4life National Youth Council in Zambia, which is a diverse constituency of young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Consulting them allows me to voice their realities and to empower them to take the lead in the formulation and implementation of non-discriminatory and non-judgmental SRHR policies.



"To break existing taboos we need to make our messages comprehensible and uncontroversial." - Naba, 22, Pakistan

As a National Youth Council Member being affiliated with other youth networks as well, I am backed up by a dynamic and diverse group of young people. Working with these young people made me realize that lack of knowledge on sexual and reproductive health issues is not something occurring in rural areas only, it is also very present in urban life. I want to advocate for sexuality education that encompasses everything between bodily awareness and topics such as sexual harassment and early marriage.



"I believe that sustainable development can only be achieved if young people are empowered to take part in decision-making processes." - Teshager, 19, Ethiopia

Empowerment can and should happen at all levels. I have educated young people on the consistent use of contraceptives and regular medical tests, including high-risk groups such as juveniles. However, as the next generation leading global development efforts, empowerment should go beyond sexual and reproductive health information only.





“Through my experience as a peer educator in the past four years, I learnt how crucial access to the right information is in the fight against AIDS.” - Peter, 26, Uganda

Sexual and reproductive health has such far-reaching implications on all areas of life, we have to make sure young people are well informed and empowered. I want to bring my experience and network as a peer educator to the next level, and advocate for fulfillment of young people’s rights.

“Even when good SRHR policies are in place, advocacy is still necessary for effective implementation at local level.” - Rupa, 27, Nepal

As a long-term SRHR activist and current coordinator of the National Youth Council, I have access to networks of young people living with HIV, young LGBT, young sex workers, young drug users, among others. Lack of information or misinformation makes young people in my country suffer unnecessarily. I want to work towards a youth friendly society, in which all young people – regardless of their identity or status – have access to non-judgmental SRH information and services.



**“Youth leadership and gender equality are key contributors to sustainable development.”
- Edith, 25, Ghana**

Being an experienced advocate at national and international level, I have the privilege to pass on my experience to this group of young leaders. Comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services should be strongly linked to HIV programming in order for it to be effective. I have advocated for this both at the national level, together with the Ghana AIDS Commission, and at the international level in several UN processes. During the past years, my focus has been on ICPD and Post-2015. It is now time to focus on the implementation of the SDGs and to advocate for inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services in national implementation plans.



**“I believe that every young person has the potential to become a changemaker, whether on community level or anywhere else.”
- Tess, 27, The Netherlands**

From my experience als an advocate, I think there is too little attention for the actual realities of young people. The talk is about statistics, technicalities in use of words that are supposed to make the difference for young people on the ground, and UN jargon that only high-level advocates really understand. Of course, these will all remain important in formulating resolutions and implementation plans, but we should not forget to reflect what is really going on at grassroots level. Consulting young people and feeding our advocacy with their stories will make for messages that truly reflect our needs.

