



Generation Now: Youth Leadership at the Nexus of Health, Gender, and the Environment

**Friday 30 January 2026
15:00 - 17:00 hrs
Bangkok**



Youth-Led Advocacy at the Intersection of Health, Gender, and Climate Vulnerability

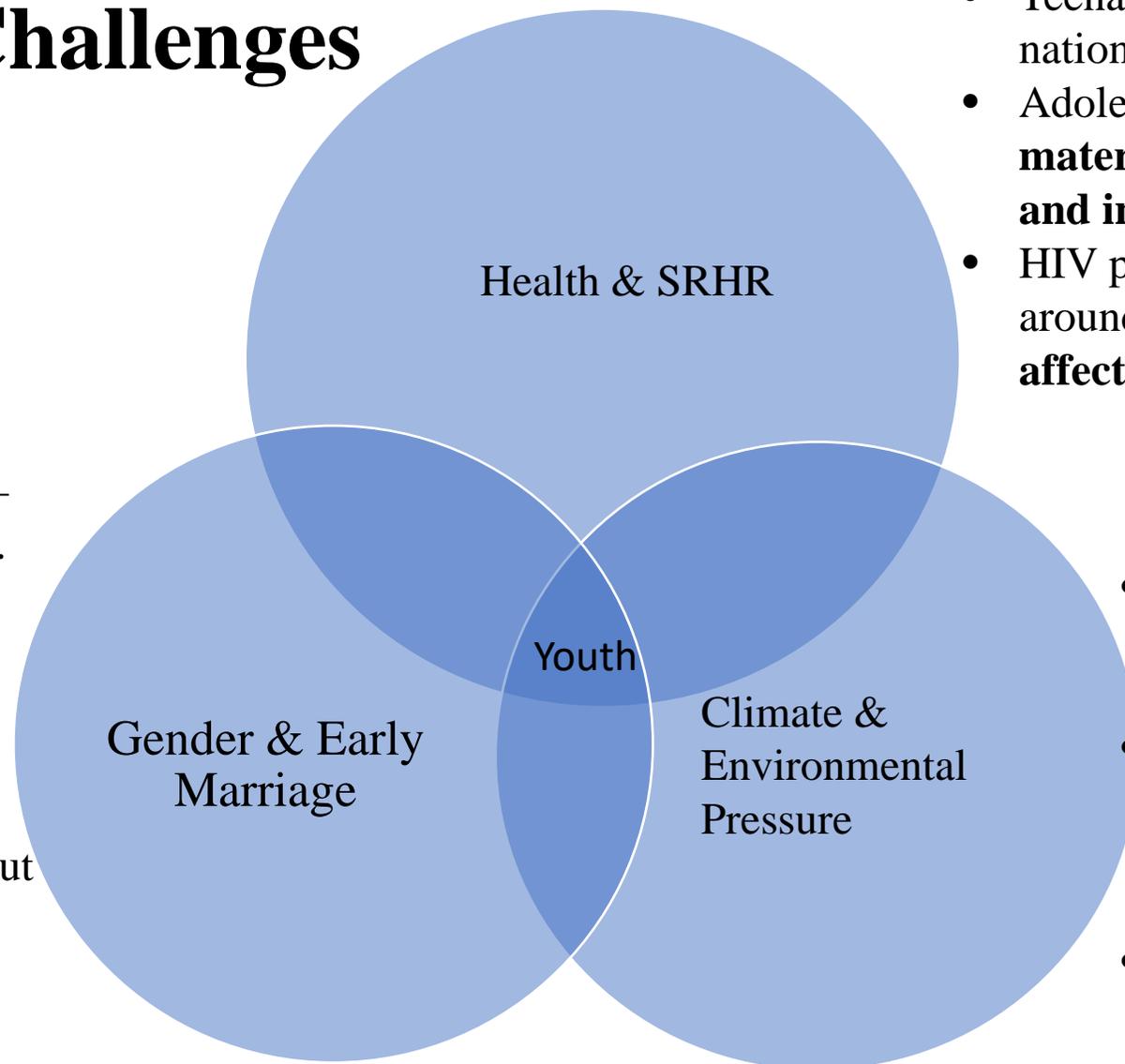


Introduction

- Zambia is experiencing a strong youth bulge, Its population is at 21million with over **65% of the population under 25** and more than **24% adolescents**.
- This presents a potential **demographic dividend**, where a healthy, educated youth population can drive growth.
- However, **adolescent fertility remains high** at about **135 births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19**.
- Without action, early pregnancy, gender inequality, and climate shocks risk turning this dividend into a **demographic burden** instead of an opportunity.



Intersecting Challenges



- **31.4%** of women aged 20–24 were married before 18.
- Child marriage reduces **education completion, labor participation, and decision-making power.**
- The **2023 ban on child marriage** is a milestone, but enforcement gaps remain, especially in rural areas.

- Teenage pregnancy affects **29%** of girls nationally; **35–37% in rural areas.**
- Adolescent pregnancy increases risks of **maternal mortality, school dropout, and intergenerational poverty.**
- HIV prevalence among adolescents is around **3.8%**, with **girls nearly twice as affected as boys.**

- Droughts and floods reduce **food security, household income, and nutrition.**
- Girls spend more time fetching water, increasing **school absenteeism and exposure to violence.**
- Climate variability costs Zambia an estimated **0.4% of GDP growth annually.**

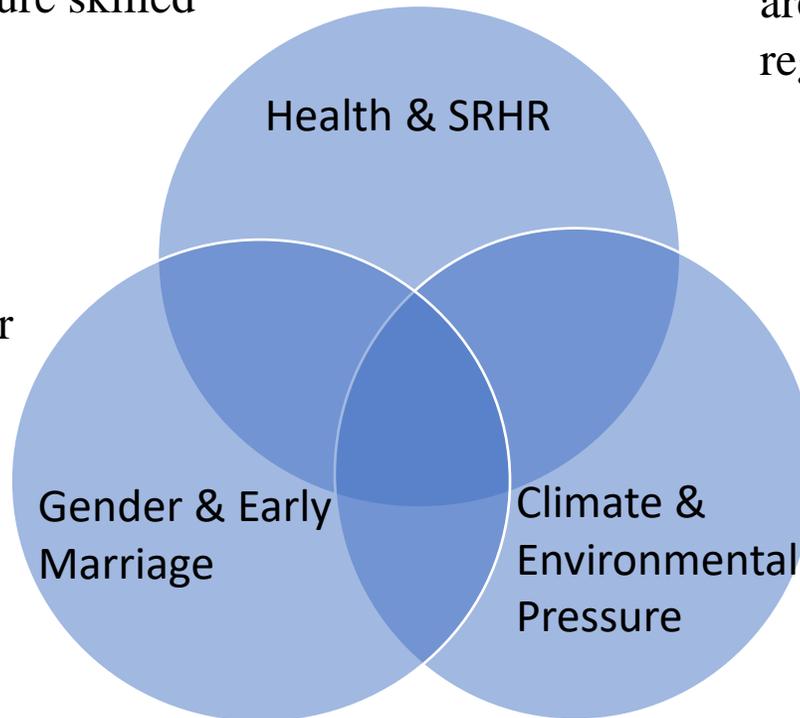


Effects on Youth and Demographic Transition

1. Education loss: Early pregnancy and marriage push girls out of school, shrinking the future skilled workforce.

2. Intergenerational poverty: Children born to adolescent mothers face higher risks of poor health and low education.

3. Economic productivity: Youth trapped in poor health and unpaid care work contribute less to economic growth.



4. Inequality: Rural and marginalized youth are hit hardest, widening social and regional gaps.

5. Health system strain: Adolescent pregnancy and climate-related malnutrition increase pressure on health services.

Key Note: When health, gender, and climate risks intersect, countries risk losing the demographic dividend instead of gaining it.



Generation Now-Empower, Act and Amplify

- Young people are affected by demographic change **BUT** they are also **central to shaping it**.
- **Youth-led** advocacy addresses adolescent pregnancy, climate resilience, and gender norms together.
- When youth are empowered, countries can **convert population growth into inclusive development**. (add countries that have done this and example of specific actions)
- (Add 3 more points that can be included here)





The work that we do at Amref Health Africa



Y-ACT Youth in Action

Powering the promise of tomorrow, with the energy of today!





What we are about

Youth in Action (Y-ACT) is a Regional youth-led initiative established in 2017 at Amref Health Africa Global Headquarters in Kenya. With a current presence in over 21 countries in Africa, Y-ACT mentors, supports and increases the capacity of youth advocates and youth-led organizations to influence youth policy priorities.

YACT believes that Africa's youth have a huge opportunity to shift policy landscapes to address challenges that the youth face and subsequently achieve their full potential. Since its inception Y-ACT has been supported by various partners, contributing to movement building, youth advocacy and capacity strengthening of youth-led organizations in the region.

Y-ACT'S DNA

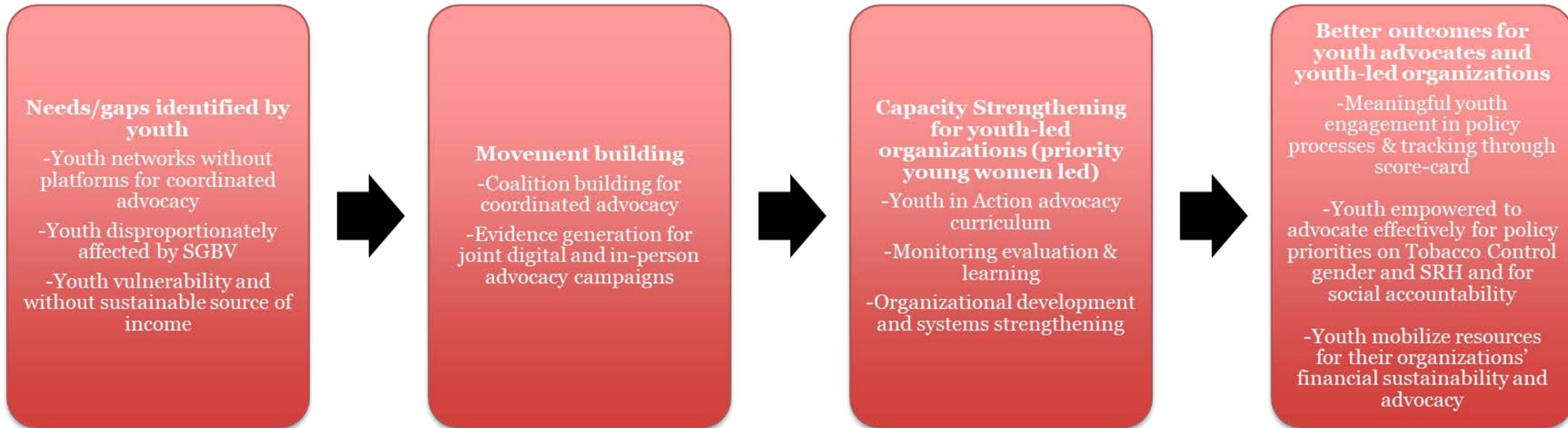
Youth leadership with a flat hierarchy in decision making: Uniquely youth-led youth driven: with all staff aged 35 and below (with mentorship and transition plan by technical/senior staff above 35), and over 70% of staff are young women.

- **Youth Steering Committee:** dynamic global youth experts, who provide guidance to our advocacy work and implementation decisions.





The Y-ACT Model-Youths as agents of Change





Y-ACT Projects

Initiative for Youth-led Advocacy on Tobacco Control

Four Year Project being implemented in Zambia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Kenya.

Goal: To engage young people in advocating for policy change related to tobacco control, particularly through the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

Approach: partnering with three national youth-led organizations and two regional youth-led organizations in the three target countries to promote youth policy priorities and advocate for tobacco control

Empowering Youth for Effective SRHR Advocacy and Policy Engagement in Sierra Leone

Goal; To Nurture a generation of well informed advocates who can effectively articulate their needs and assert their rights.

The project aims to stimulate youth-led advocacy initiatives that address contextually relevant SRHR issues within their communities.

Through informed advocacy and Meaningful Youth Engagement (MYE), we aim to Educate Youth, Build Advocacy Skills, foster Policy engagement and promote community action.



Youth Power Hub

The Youth Power Hub was formed in 2020 as a partnership between [Y-ACT, Youth in Action](#), [UNFPA Esaro](#) and [AfriYAN](#).

The regional online platform is anchored on three pillars of **Education, Engagement, & Mobilization (collective action)** and covers 21 African countries in East and Southern Africa.

Over the last five years, YPH has supported the engagement of 75 youth-led organizations and 354 youth champions in leading youth-led social accountability and ICPD commitment tracking efforts across East and Southern Africa.

On the road towards the anniversary of ICPD 30 and the target date in 2030 for the realization of the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the regional platform plays a crucial role in galvanizing regional youth voices and agency to ensure meaningful youth engagement for policy action for youth identified priorities as aligned to the thematic areas outlined within the International Conference of Population and Development.





Key Messages

- Youth must co-own solutions for sustainability.
- Strong youth networks accelerate impact.
- Youth-led data strengthens policy influence.
- Intergenerational dialogue turns advocacy into action.



THANK YOU



Y-ACT
YOUTH IN ACTION

Youth
for policy
change