

## **Title**

*Youth on the Frontlines: Advancing Bodily Autonomy and Leadership through regional youth networks*

## **Background**

Young people in Latin America and the Caribbean are navigating the compounded effects of multiple, intersecting crises: climate emergencies, forced migration, political instability, and the growing influence of well-organized anti-rights movements. These crises disproportionately impact women and girls, often disrupting access to sexual and reproductive health services, increasing gender-based violence, and undermining bodily autonomy—particularly in contexts of displacement, environmental disasters, and weakened health systems.

At the same time, young people are not passive recipients of these crises. Across the region, youth activists are organizing, mobilizing, and leading innovative responses that link health, gender justice, and environmental action. Central to these responses is the creation of regional youth networks that allow young people to collectively resist anti-rights narratives, advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and strengthen leadership rooted in local realities while connected across borders.

## **Abstract**

This presentation explores how the creation of regional youth networks serves as an effective, youth-led response to multiple crises at the nexus of health, gender, and the environment. Drawing on IPPF's long-standing commitment to youth leadership and governance, the session will showcase how structured investment in youth—through regional networks, dedicated youth leadership roles, and accountability mechanisms, has strengthened advocacy, expanded access to SRHR services, and amplified youth voices in regional and global decision-making spaces.

Using the IPPF Youth Network model as a case study, the presentation will demonstrate how youth-led regional articulation enables rapid, context-specific responses to climate-related emergencies, migration dynamics, and anti-rights discourses. By centering youth leadership within institutional structures, through governance quotas, dedicated funding, and results-based accountability, IPPF offers a scalable good practice for advancing intergenerational collaboration and sustainable change.

The session positions youth not as the leaders of tomorrow, but as Generation Now: leaders actively shaping solutions at the crossroads of health, gender equality, and environmental justice.

## **This panel will:**

- Examine how multiple, overlapping crises, climate change, migration, political instability, and anti-rights movements impact young people, particularly women and girls, in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Showcase IPPF's good practices in fostering regional youth networks, including youth-centered governance, funding commitments, and the Youth Networker model.
- Highlight concrete examples of youth-led advocacy that have influenced policies, expanded access to SRHR services, and strengthened regional solidarity.

- Analyze how these networks generate impact in their respective regions, including policy changes, increased access to SRHR services, and strengthened youth leadership
- Offer lessons learned and recommendations for governments, civil society, and international organizations seeking to meaningfully invest in youth leadership during times of crisis.

**Key messages:**

- *“Youth are not just responding to crises, we are redesigning the systems meant to survive them.”*
- *“Regional youth networks transform individual resistance into collective power across borders.”*
- *“Investing in youth leadership is not symbolic participation; it is a strategic response to global crises.”*
- *“Without youth at the center of health, gender, and environmental action, there is no sustainable future.”*