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Summary Report of the Rapid Assessment of Myanmar Youth Stars, MYANMAR



jumpstart



JumpStart is APCOM's flagship capacity strengthening programme for community organisations. We work to improve, and build on an organisation's existing management and advocacy, while encouraging leadership for a community-led HIV response. The project serves as well as a catalyst for regional, sub-regional and national networks to explore their core competencies that they can build on and, at the same time, explore skill development areas that they still need. JumpStart started as a partnership of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and APCOM.

JumpStart developed two unique tools to assess the network or organisation: the Rapid Assessment Apparatus (Rap App), a scoring tool which assesses a community organisation in its operations and performance against programmatic and organisational criteria and the Dissemination Plan Template (D-Plate), a tool to assist community organisations to use the available strategic information in doing more systematic and planned advocacy.



The Rapid Assessment Apparatus is an assessment tool joint designed by APCOM and AFAO under this initiative to assess the core competencies of an organisation or network against eleven programmatic and organisational areas. The networks undertook a facilitated self-assessment process to identify their capacity and technical needs. the findings were the bases for technical support.

Summary Report of the Rapid Assessment of Myanmar Youth Stars, Myanmar
(Based on data and information collected through the APCOM/AFAO Rapid Assessment Tool, May 2015)

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Myanmar Youth Stars (MYS)

is a membership network representing young key affected populations (YKP) aged 15 to 30 years old, including men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender women, people who use drugs (PWUD), sex workers and people living with HIV (PLHIV). Founded in 2013, MYS aims to respond effectively to the inequality, stigma and discrimination faced by marginalised young people in Myanmar who are at a higher risk of HIV infection. Its vision is a Myanmar where young people from key affected populations are free from the risk of HIV infection, have a healthy and developed life, and live in an environment with equal rights.

MYS has more than 700 members in 14 regions of Myanmar. It aims to build the capacity of YKP through leadership training, English classes, communication training, and internet workshops. It distributes information on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support with the main objective of contributing to a decrease in HIV prevalence among YKP in Myanmar.

MYS was assessed in 17 key organisational and programmatic areas, using the **Jumpstart Rapid Assessment Apparatus (Rap App)**. The Rap App is one of the core tools of JumpStart, an MSM and Transgender network capacity strengthening initiative implemented through a partnership with APCOM and the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO). The tool allows us to create a snapshot of the strengths and technical support needs of an organisation at a given time, based on 11 key organisational and programmatic criteria, and 6 criteria on engagement with key affected populations. The tool was completed by MYS during a facilitated self-assessment process at a two-day meeting in Yangon in May 2015.





TOP THREE TECHNICAL SUPPORT PRIORITIES

A. Partnerships and networking

The network has a range of partners including NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies. However it does not actively seek new partnerships and would benefit from support to identify potential partners and advocacy allies, both in Myanmar and across the region. It would also benefit from support to improve partner engagement, including external communication training.

B. Strategic information

MYS conducts regular meetings with its members in the townships surrounding Yangon and uses these to gather information, particularly regarding members' experiences of stigma and discrimination. This information is a valuable asset for the network, and MYS needs support to ensure it is using and disseminating the information it collects to improve its advocacy messages to decision makers, policy makers and development agencies. It could also be used to stimulate further research and data collection. Training in community research or data collection would also be beneficial.

C. Advocacy capacity

MYS tackles a number of advocacy issues relating to young people but it does not have a clear advocacy strategy. Advocacy therefore tends to be ad hoc in nature, and the network fails to effectively use the platforms available to it (for example its partnerships with development agencies and NGOs).

MYS would benefit from technical support to develop an advocacy strategy, based on a theory of change. This would give a clear sense of its priorities as a network, and would enable development of a workplan, budget and monitoring plan for its advocacy work. It would also ensure everyone in the organisation promotes the same key messages.



RESULTS

Myanmar Youth Stars achieved a total score of **157/216** in the Rap App. It was assessed in 11 key areas and 6 sub-areas, both organisational and programmatic, with each area having a maximum score of 12. A summary of the data and information from each key area is outlined below.

A. ORGANISATIONAL CRITERIA

i) Governance

MYS is governed by its Central Executive Committee (CEC), composed of nine young MSM and transgender volunteers aged 19-29. The CEC is responsible for overseeing the network's projects, and has an oversight role with regard to decision-making for the organisation. The members of the CEC conduct monthly face-to-face meetings. The CEC has drafted a constitution, but it has not been finalised or endorsed by the Board.

MYS also has a Board composed of four people who provide mentoring and guidance to the CEC. The Board had regular meetings in 2012/13, but now only one member is active. Board members are re-elected annually. There is no clear delineation of strategic decision-making between the CEC and the Board.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS has the basic components of good governance in place, but needs support from its partners to **recruit more active Board members**. MYS plans to apply for official registration in 2016, and prior to that it would be useful for CEC and Board members to have **training on governance structures, separation of governance and management responsibilities and working within a constitution/by-laws**.

ii) Staffing

MYS is implementing three projects with the International HIV and AIDS Alliance (IHAA), with a total of six contracted staff (two with direct contracts with MYS, four with contracts with the IHAA). The network follows IHAA's organisational policy.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS urgently requires technical support to secure funding to **establish a well-staffed secretariat**. An MYS organisational policy will then need to be developed.

iii) Finance

The three joint IHAA/MYS projects have separate budgets which are managed and monitored either by the IHAA or by MYS. The CEC and staff maintain and monitor the organisation's financial records within a structured system, and prepare and submit donor reports regularly. It has not yet been audited.

The network uses the IHAA as its fiscal agent. It has finance staff, with different roles for each project, but some overlap.



RESULTS

(continued)

Recommendations for next steps

MYS seems to be managing its finances well for an organisation of its size, but needs to ensure that regular audits are written into all project budgets. If the network expands, it will need support to develop a financial management system so that it can take full responsibility for its own finances.

iv) Resource Mobilisation

The network does not currently have sufficient funding to cover its core costs. It has managed grants from the Global Fund and the UNESCO ranging from \$10,000 - \$50,000, and it is able to develop proposals and actively network with potential funding partners to seek information on funding opportunities. However, it does not have a resource mobilisation plan, and funding proposals are usually developed following invitation from donors. MYS is concerned it lacks credibility due to its young representatives. In addition, it does not have a dedicated resource mobilisation staff member, and it is not yet officially registered which makes access to funding more difficult.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS would benefit from technical support to **develop a resource mobilisation plan**, including a **donor mapping** exercise. More established partners in the region could provide mentoring to enable it to build stronger, more equal relationships with donors. Finally MYS needs support from an external consultant to **develop funding proposals for core funding** for the network, which in turn would allow it to employ a dedicated resource mobilisation staff member.



RESULTS

(continued)

v) *Partnerships and Networking*

MYS has a range of partners including NGOs (Colours Rainbow, Kings and Queens, Seven Networks, Lotus, Ayenmyenmyitta), international NGOs (the IHAA, MBCA and MDM), UN agencies (UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA) and regional networks (APCOM, YVC, AFAO). It uses national and regional meetings to engage with potential partners, when invited, and maintains regular communications with current partners.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS CEC members and staff need training on **how to engage effectively** with new potential partners including a **partner mapping** of the region. It would also benefit from support from a regional network to **connect national youth networks** from across the region to enable them to share experiences and information and support each other.

vi) *Membership*

MYS has 1742 individual members aged 18–30 years from 17 townships across Myanmar. YKP are actively involved in the network, with the exception of young people who use drugs (PWUD) and young sex workers. Consultation with members takes place through social media and occasional meetings, although MYS has not yet been able to organise a general meeting for all members due to financial constraints. Members are represented at annual meetings with the secretariat and the Board by elected township focal persons, who hold consultations with the members in their township. The focal points are also tasked with recruiting ten new members per quarter from their township. MYS gathers information relevant to its members through consultation with service providers, other networks, and through social media.

The network keeps membership records based on submitted application forms, but there is no membership database. It is challenging to keep communication with members going as some do not have email addresses, people change phone number without informing MYS, and phone calls are expensive.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS needs technical support to develop a secure membership database (this is something the Poz Home Center has done successfully in Thailand so they might be able to offer support). It also needs urgent financial support from its partners (perhaps UN agencies) to support annual or biennial general meetings open to all MYS members.



RESULTS

(continued)

B. CRITERIA ON ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY AFFECTED POPULATIONS (KAP)

This section of the Rap App aims to measure the engagement and scope of the network's work with KAP, with the goal of identifying opportunities to expand coverage.

Overall, MYS has very good engagement with key affected populations, but it needs further support to **engage with young sex workers and young people who use drugs**. It would also be useful for the network to learn from other networks about working with members who are facing **multiple vulnerabilities**.

i) MSM engagement

MYS achieved a maximum score in this section. The issues facing young MSM have been well-integrated into the organisation's work, and its activities include addressing stigma and discrimination and advocating for MSM participation in policy and strategy around sexual health and rights.

There are seven MSM in the CEC and MSM comprise approximately 60% of the membership. MSM focal points represent young MSM members during meetings and consultations.

The network shares information with and gathers information and stories from the young MSM community through advocacy workshops organised in partnership with other stakeholders. Social media is also used to target young MSM.

MYS is well-positioned to advocate on behalf of its members. It would be beneficial for MYS to **learn from other networks which also represent PWUD and sex workers** to ensure it is reaching its young members who are facing multiple vulnerabilities.

ii) Engagement with transgender people

The issues faced by transgender people are well-integrated into the network's work, and it addresses bullying and harassment, the rights of transgender women to education and employment, and challenges such as the cost of hormone treatment and medical transition, including ARV interaction with hormone treatment.

The young transgender community is not represented in the Board or the current CEC. It is represented in the membership, and from the 17 townships in Myanmar 5 focal points are transgender women.

The same approaches with regard to communication and events are taken with MSM and transgender people, with similar methods of sharing and gathering information. The network aims to include awareness on young transgender issues in all trainings and communications.



RESULTS

(continued)

iii) *Engagement with young people*

As a national network for young key affected populations, the issues they face are well-integrated into the organisation's work. It addresses issues of stigma, discrimination and violence, particularly in healthcare settings.

All members of the CEC are aged between 19 and 30 years old. Social media has become the most important way for the network to share information with its members. MYS is also using online software under the REACT project for sharing information on prevention, treatment and harm minimisation. There may be opportunities to develop a case study based on its experience in this project.

iv) *Sex worker engagement*

The issues faced by young sex workers, both men and transgender women, are well-integrated into MYS's work. The network addresses legal issues relating to sex work, collects evidence of arrests of sex workers for carrying condoms, and works to fight the denial of ARVs to young sex workers in detention.

There is sex worker representation in the CEC, but this could not be disclosed during the Rap App due to the need for confidentiality. There are members of the network who are sex workers, but they do not participate actively in the network's activities. Issues faced by sex workers are often not directly discussed during meetings.

The township focal persons are responsible for disseminating important information to sex workers. They also share information with the national sex worker network during joint meetings.

MYS should continue to work closely with the national sex worker network, and should discuss the **potential for developing joint projects** to support young sex workers.

v) *Engagement with PWUD*

The issues faced by young people who use drugs are well-integrated into MYS's advocacy work. It addresses legal issues such as the arrest of young people in possession of drug equipment, and advocates for provision of information on legal support and the establishment of methadone centres. The network provides education to reduce stigma and discrimination towards people who use drugs, and uses a peer-to-peer approach to engaging with YPWUD. However, engagement is a challenge for MYS due to non-disclosure and hard-to-reach groups, and the network tries to overcome this by building a rapport with the community and carrying out frequent outreach work.

YPWUD have never been represented in the Board or the CEC. The membership is made up of at least 10% PWUD, but this may be higher to non-disclosure.



RESULTS

(continued)

vi) *Engagement with PLHIV*

The challenges faced by PLHIV are well-integrated into MYS's advocacy work. MYS aims to support sex workers, transgender women and PWUD living with HIV who are arrested and need support to access ARVs. The network also undertakes advocacy to ensure YKP who are living with HIV can access treatment and psychosocial support.

PLHIV are represented on the Board and the CEC but the number was not shared due to non-disclosure. PLHIV are represented in the membership but they do not have strong engagement with the network.

MYS notes that although access to ART in Myanmar has improved, there has not been a focus on youth and work is now needed to better engage with young PLHIV.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS urgently needs to source funding to **employ secretariat staff who can increase engagement** with its members. MYS need support to develop **better methods of communication** to ensure that the network is reaching all members, including harder-to-reach MSM, YPWUD and young sex workers.

C. PROGRAMMATIC CRITERIA

i) *Project design and management, including monitoring and evaluation*

MYS is currently implementing three projects in partnership with the International HIV and AIDS Alliance (the Link UP Project, REACT, and an advocacy project), including on strengthening sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for young key populations, gathering information about human rights violations on sex workers aged between 10 and 24, advocating for sex workers' rights and capacity building of YKP to carry out advocacy work.

MYS has no official system for monitoring and evaluating its projects. The CEC and staff have not had training on project cycle management. The network's projects tend to be donor driven rather than community driven, and MYS is aware of this.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS would benefit from technical support to **develop proposals which are based on and responsive to community needs**, and on approaching and negotiating with donors on potential projects. It needs **project management training** for staff and CEC/Board members to facilitate greater awareness, ownership and accountability for project design and implementation. The training should include managing the full project cycle from inception and design to tracking progress and evaluation. MYS needs urgent support to create and implement a **monitoring and evaluation system** which can be used across its projects.



RESULTS

(continued)

ii) Technical Capacity

MYS staff and the CEC have a good knowledge of HIV and the issues facing YKP. The CEC would like training on human rights to be better able to engage in policy and law making. The network also feels it would benefit from focused training in advocacy and communication.

The network provides its members with technical support on human rights, HIV, gender and SRHR. This support was provided in 17 townships in 2014, and the network aims to extend the support to 5 more townships.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS requires **training on human rights** (this is something that a human rights NGO in the region may be willing to provide). Other technical support requirements on advocacy and communications are discussed in those sections.

iii) Advocacy

MYS carries out advocacy work through events and campaigns, producing advocacy statements and attending high-level government meetings. It shares real-life case studies at meetings so the voices of its members are heard. It focuses on the SRHR of KAP, advocates for youth-friendly services to be included in National Strategic planning, and works to reduce stigma and discrimination towards YKP and to build members' capacity through trainings and workshops.

The network documents its advocacy activities and shares the outputs with its partners. Advocacy priorities have been identified but these have not been agreed across the organisation so there is no strong unified voice on advocacy issues.

The network's main advocacy targets are the Government: the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Welfare, and law enforcement bodies. The network uses its partnerships with UNAIDS, UNESCO and IHAA to carry out advocacy, and is a member of regional networks like YVC.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS staff and CEC members need support to build their capacity in advocacy through a **practical training workshop** based around a theory of change, and including identifying advocacy priorities and how to carry out effective advocacy, with an advocacy strategy as an output.



RESULTS

(continued)

iv) Communications

Regular meetings between the CEC and secretariat encourage internal communication, and when possible members are represented at meetings through a focal point. Externally, communication is regular but through social media rather than face-to-face meetings. Almost all the staff in contract with MYS have access to a computer, email account and internet.

The main challenges facing MYS in communications are a lack of time, resources and members dispersed over a wide geographic area, with some areas lacking internet access.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS would benefit from support and advice from other networks across the region on how to **improve communication with its members**.

v) Strategic Information

The network regularly accesses and receives strategic information from national and regional sources. However, it does not have a regular way of sourcing information from its members and stakeholders. Information from MYS members is very valuable as a way of highlighting the challenges faced by YKAP. This information should be used to produce policy briefs, papers, and studies, as well as to stimulate further research and data collection.

Recommendations for next steps

MYS needs technical support from its partners to build its capacity to **use and disseminate the information** it collects from its members. This should include how to collect the information and how to use it to access funding for YKP activities.



TECHNICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rap App has shown that MYS needs significant technical support in order to fulfil its potential as the Myanmar national network for young key populations. The next steps highlighted in this report in terms of the technical support needs of the organisation are summarised below, by short, medium and long-term.

Short-term

- Access core funding to support secretariat operations, including dedicated finance and resource mobilisation staff.
- Support from a consultant to develop membership guidelines, a membership MOU, and a secure membership database (the latter support may be provided by the Poz Home Center, Thailand).
- Develop a funding proposal for partners (perhaps UN agencies) to cover the cost of annual or biennial general meetings open to all MYS members.
- Finalise MYS's strategic plan, focusing on community needs rather than those of donors. Ideally this would be done through the general meeting (see preceding point).
- Carry out donor and partner mapping.
- Develop a Human Resources Manual and Recruitment Policy.
- Develop an organisational policy.



TECHNICAL SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

Medium-term

- MYS would benefit from support and advice from other networks across the region on how they communicate with their members.
- Increase capacity of CEC members and staff in advocacy through a practical training workshop based around a theory of change, including how to identify advocacy priorities and how to carry out effective advocacy, with an advocacy strategy as an output. This would include gathering of information from and engagement with community members.
- Identify potential partners and advocacy allies, both in Myanmar and across the region. It would also benefit from support to improve its partner engagement, including training in external communication.
- Build technical capacity in human rights (this is something that a human rights NGO in the region may be willing to provide);
- Develop proposals based on the network's strategic plan (see short-term recommendations above) and mentoring in how to negotiate with donors on potential projects.
- Build capacity in governance through training on governance structures, separation of governance and executive functions, and on working within a constitution/by-laws.
- Develop a Resource Mobilisation Strategy including a donor mapping exercise.
- Develop a Communications Strategy (internal and external).
- Support from a regional network to connect national youth networks from across the region, to share experiences and information.
- Project cycle management training for staff and CEC/Board members to facilitate greater awareness, ownership and accountability for project design and implementation.

Long-term

- Secure core funding to build and support a secretariat and corresponding organisational activities.
- Improve BC's engagement with regional networks to encourage information flow from regional to country level.
- Maximise the use of advocacy platforms such as Country Coordinating Committee, technical working groups and other national and regional networks.
- Promote itself as a potential research partner.



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*We are united in our courage to
advocacy issues that affect the lives
of men who have sex with men and
transgender people, including HIV,
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