



Report of The PACT Advocacy and Social Accountability Workshop

WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Ugwumba Ikenna, Ekanem Itoro | The PACT Capacity Building Workshop | September
1, 2003. Venue: Zoom

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The latest United Nations estimates shows that young people make up for over 1.2 billion of the world's total population and are faced with diverse issues that bother around their health and development. Adolescents and young people are disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic, with various determinants that predispose them to the effect of the disease, e.g. stigma & discrimination, non-participation in decision-making, poor funding & lack of political will, etc. Despite a 47% cut in new infections between 15 and 24 years old since 2000, we're well behind the objectives of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and UNAIDS Fast Track Strategy 2016-2021, which were set for adolescents and youth. Their targets are still much lower. In terms of access to services, adolescents younger than 18 need parental consent for HIV in 40 out of 104 countries with data available in 2019, and adolescents in 26 out of 90 countries require consent to use contraception, including condoms. The lack of CSE, poverty, gender inequalities, and GBV have adverse effects on the access to prevention services for young people. Structural Barriers, such as the age of consent, the criminalization of HIV transmission, and key populations. Youth have the right to represent themselves on policy platforms but still, youth participation varies from about 80% in LA, WCA, and ESA in regions across the Caribbean to less than 50%. After the UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS in 2021 it was felt that young people in all our diversity be involved in the planning and strategizing, but we must also be involved in the implementation and monitoring, and evaluation of services.

The PACT is at the forefront of youth-led social accountability and advocacy for the different policies and government interventions that intend to address the health and wellbeing of adolescents and young people especially in the areas of HIV/AIDS and SRH. The need for strengthened advocacy efforts that yield desired change has always been a topic for discussion across all regions. With countries coming to see the importance of young people in driving the society and advancing development The PACT sought to strengthen the capacity of its member organizations and young people across West and Central Africa on advocacy and social accountability. This was to enable them deepen their advocacy and social accountability efforts towards achieving the overarching goal of a better health outcomes and sustainable development for young people across the region, and for them to be supported in engaging in effective advocacy strategies and activities that can be adapted. This exercise was a 3-day virtual activity that was carried out via the Zoom meeting platform and had over 25 participants from across the region. Participants were drawn from member organizations of The PACT, and youth-led and youth-serving organizations working around issues such as HIV/AIDS, youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), drug policies, sex workers, human rights, and LGBTQI persons.

The sessions were facilitated by the Ekanem Itoro, the Advocacy Working Group (AWG) Lead, and Ikenna Ugwumba, a member of the AWG; and was moderated by Grace Akpan, Capacity Working Group member. This activity was also conducted in the Asia-Pacific region for the same target groups with the same format.

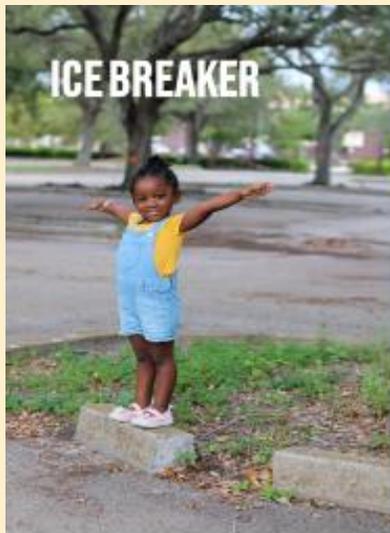
GOAL & OUTCOMES

To promote a youth-led, data-driven accountability mechanism globally, to ensure youth engagement in tracking the policies, laws, and practices needed to end the AIDS epidemic globally, and build an evidence base for advocacy to monitor implementation of the 2021 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

- ✓ PACT member organizations use capacity for increased engagement to effectively mobilize for influencing law and policy dialogues on all young people's HIV/SRHR priorities.
- ✓ Global, regional, and national HIV/SRHR policies are influenced by youth-led and evidence-based advocacy to protect and ensure all young people's HIV/SRHR priorities.

DAY 1

Day 1 started with the Chair of the PACT running through the objectives of the workshop, the expectations from The PACT & the participants, and the format with which the sessions will be conducted. This was followed by an ice-breaker where participants were asked; “the funniest thing they ever did as a child” – this was to create a more relaxed and interactive space for the workshop. Responses from the participants were hilarious as well as daring, such as Joshua telling the audience when he ate yam with water, Akshay saying he abused his grandparents when he was little – although he isn't proud of it in retrospect –, and Wattara who collected money for 3 text books that didn't exist.



*What's the most
funniest thing you
ever did as a child?*



This followed the dissemination of the pre-test assessment, and a brief introduction to the agenda centering on advocacy strategies that has worked in the past. Soon after, participants shared their experiences on advocacy and social accountability mechanisms strategies that had worked and are still working for them in pushing for change – this was co-facilitated by **Ekanem Itoro and Ikenna Ugwumba**. The pattern was them to share challenges, success stories, and social accountability strategies applied. Some of the experiences shared can be seen below.

Joshua Otei in and his team in Nigeria figured out in 2019 that the percentage earmarked for gender interventions in the Cross river state (Nigeria) budget was just 0.17%. This led to advocacy which resulted in findings that the low budgeted percentage was mainly due to the fact that gender wasn't seen as a priority issue for the state. After consistent advocacy to various stakeholders, the gender allocation for the state was increased to 10% in the 2020 appropriation.

James also from Nigeria raised the issue of harm reduction and Hepatitis in his state as priority issues in his state. He and his team had to come up with an advocacy roadmap, questioning why Hepatitis funding shouldn't be funded beyond awareness creation, and advocating for increased funding. He further gave insight about the strategy that was employed, conducting research that was used to engage with Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), and National AIDS and STI Control Programme (NASCP) Nigeria. He and his team found an ally in the Director of the World Hepatitis Foundation, and also included pharmaceutical companies.

Charles shared his experiences of the advocacy campaign with young sex workers to address primitive laws in his country. He and his team identified the biggest challenge being that law makers did not understand the peculiarities of sex workers and young key populations.

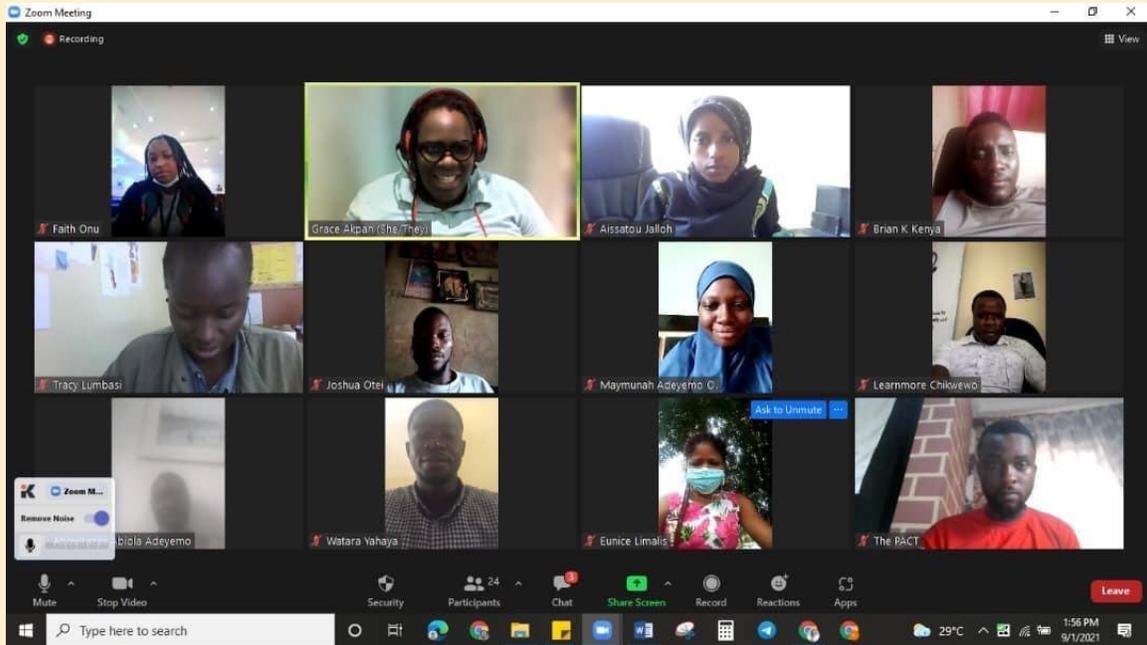
Jess and his team identified a county where sex workers usually face harassment from law enforcement agencies and some clients, leading to an advocacy campaign targeting the police to build allies in assisting to amplify the concerns and challenges sex workers face, leveraging informal coalitions that were existing, while building a new ones. However, due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic many participants couldn't take part in the consultations.

Aissatou from Liberia identified storytelling as a strategy which she and her team employed, getting young people living with HIV to share their stories as a means to get them amplified. Stakeholders were sensitized on these issues with a view towards addressing them. Also COVID-19 restrictions had an impact as it affected large gatherings limiting consultations to virtual engagements. There was also the issue on budgetary allocation for young people as their needs weren't allocated for. She also highlighted the forming of a coalition who are engaging the national legislature leading to a conversation to pass a supplementary budget to impact the lives of young people.

Watara from Ghana shared his experiences, and gave insights in advocating for key populations in his country. He established that the Ghanaian government are very hostile to activities of key populations, discouraging human rights defenders from advocating for their issues. He also shared that currently the parliament are about passing a law criminalizing activities of KPs and there isn't an avenue to engage lawmakers. Advocates advocating for these issues are being targeted and this has been leading to poor results.

Ekanem asked the participants if they felt funding was a key challenge for youth-led advocacy campaigns? The response was mixed with some persons saying it is and others saying it isn't. **Funding is a key challenge for youth-led advocacy engagements, however, forming and strengthening coalitions can help galvanize funding for advocacy.** Also, it was identified that a dearth in funding isn't necessarily a barrier in conducting youth-led advocacy.

The facilitators harmonized all the stories bringing out the lessons and challenges for participants to take home in preparation for Day 2. The first day ended with a recap and participants feedback from the workshop so far – that was shared on [Mentimeter](#).



DAY 2

Agenda:

1. Strategies for Advocacy
2. Social Accountability

Day 2 started with an ice breaker and a brief recap from Day 1. Participants were asked what their worst virtual meeting was. Soon after, they listed some critical learnings from the previous day which are listed below;

- Budget analysis

- Research for advocacy
- Human rights issues
- Forming consortium and leveraging allies
- Lack of funding not a barrier to youth-led advocacy

The flow went into a dialogue session where participants were asked what they understood was advocacy with responses suggesting it to be action, systemic approach to impacting change, carrying out research and using it to influence change, championing a cause etc. The facilitator further went on to define advocacy which was in line with the definitions listed by the participants. This session was facilitated by **Ekanem Itoro**.



The definition by the facilitator explains advocacy as a process leading to a goal which is mostly centers on impacting change.

Why is Advocacy important?

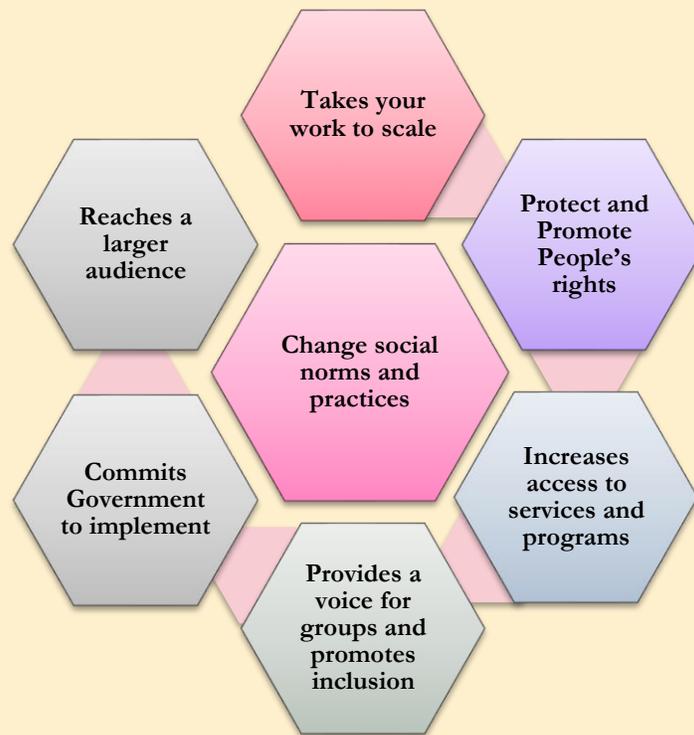
In maintaining the flow of the workshop and the aim to foster interaction during and after the activity, the question was thrown to the participants for them to share their thoughts.

Akshay said “advocacy is important because the LGBTQI in his country are usually animalized, and this will enable him to continue the push for decriminalization.”

Fanny Bessen said “advocacy is important because it amplifies the voices of vulnerable people and groups.”

Tracy Lumbasi felt that it meant scaling up the work. “It leads to more awareness of the issues of her communities”.

Adebimpe shared that it is important to her because it protect the rights of the community members she serves.



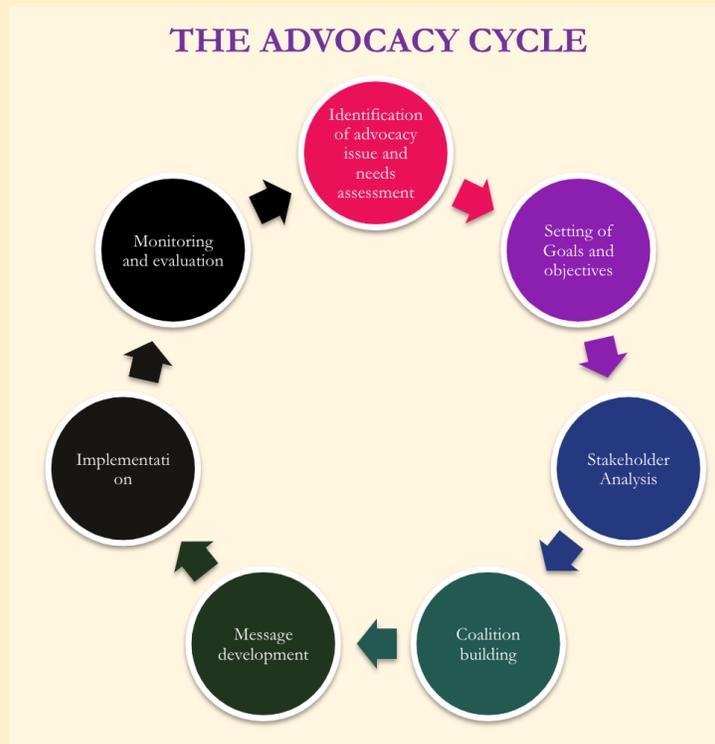
The above photo explains advocacy is important as shared by the participants. The explanation adds to the points shared by the participants, talking how it helps changes social norms and practices, provides a voice for groups and promotes inclusion among other things.

Before the break, the first session for day 2 ended with the explanation of the advocacy cycle that defines an advocacy campaign or an activity. The cycle can be seen below. It was noted that monitoring is an ongoing process in advocacy campaign while evaluation occurs periodically depending on the given time as defined at the inception of the campaign.

To close out the session, the participants were introduced to some advocacy strategies that has been employed by The PACT and other youth-led interventions in the past. They include;

- ✓ Face to face engagement with relevant government agencies
- ✓ Organizing a demonstration or sit-in
- ✓ Use of articles (position paper & petitions (Zambia petition)
- ✓ Use of media (traditional & new media)
- ✓ Attend key high level event e.g HLM.

The participants also shared strategies they had employed as individuals and as an organization.



Youth-led Social Accountability

After the break the workshop went into the youth-led social accountability session which was interactive and was facilitated by **Ikenna Ugwumba**. Participants were asked to provide definitions of social accountability with most of the respondents saying it means holding government accountable, and ensuring decision-makers are accountable to their commitments. The definition provided by the facilitator can be seen below. It was also noted that social accountability just like advocacy is a systematic approach involving the use of data as evidence.



Participants were further introduced to the Social Accountability Stairway as seen in the photo below. It showed a pictographic process from gathering evidence to following up on commitments by decision-makers. One key aspect was the part of rallying support and building coalitions as this is important in amplifying social accountability efforts just as in conducting advocacy.

This was followed by introduction to various social accountability tools which are, but not limited to;

- ❖ Shadow reports
- ❖ Citizen report card (Uproot)
- ❖ Budget tracking
- ❖ Facility audit
- ❖ Scorecards

Participants also shared experiences on some tools they had used e.g. articles documenting findings, and insights on some of the tools listed above, especially on budget tracking (**Joshua Otei**) where he and his team had to track the budget for gender intervention which was used as evidence base, and scorecards. Ekanem also familiarized the participants with the Uproot citizen report card, and explained to them the intentions of The PACT to engage them in the process.

The session ended with feedback from the participants and their expectation from The PACT going forward. That culminated in the end of Day 2 of the workshop where participants also shared how they saw the sessions for Day 2 on [Mentimeter](#).

WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY YOUTH-LED SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY?

Think of a word that best describes Youth-led Social accountability

Youth-led social accountability involves young people (aged under 25) using data in holding duty bearers directly accountable for the delivery of youth friendly services as per the national or local guidelines and policies




DAY 3

The agenda for Day 3 was to familiarize participants with The PACT's Advocacy Strategy template which can be downloaded [here](#). The aim of this was for participants to fill the strategy document and submit to The PACT for seed funding for implementation. This session was facilitated by Ekanem Itoro and Grace Akpan.

Before this was done, participants filled the **post** assessment form that was disseminated online evaluating the impact of the knowledge gained and its usefulness to their work. One of the participants expressed over the zoom platform how the knowledge of advocacy and social accountability she had gained as a result of this training, was refreshing to her memory, and how she is excited to apply them in her organization.

The facilitator ran the participants through the different sections of the advocacy strategy, guiding them on how to fill them and submit after populating. The strategy had a column to identify the **priority advocacy issue, and the advocacy framework** involving the goal, objectives, and indicators & evidence needed. Also had sections for **tracking partners, listing targets, and developing targeted messages**. Other sections include the **activity plan, activity budget, advocacy roadmap, learning and improving; and notes**.

For participants who expressed interest in becoming members of The PACT, they were directed to send an expression of interest to the Chair of The PACT through their member organizations. This was to be sent to the [The PACT](#)'s correspondent email address – which was also the email the participants were to send their filled advocacy strategy to.

As a tradition throughout the workshop, participants were again invited to visit [Mentimeter](#) to share their thoughts on their experience of Day 3 and the workshop at large with response as, insightful, educative, and informative among others.

The workshop ended with a closing remark from the new Chair of the PACT assuring participants of the readiness of The PACT to support their advocacy strategies and workplan.

