

ACT WITH HER: Forging Panoramic Pathways with Girls from Adolescence to Adulthood

Engaging Mentors in Very Young Adolescent Programming: Perspectives from the Frontline

Act With Her is a five-year program in Ethiopia that partners with girls to forge the health, education, and social pathways they need to thrive during the transition to adulthood. We engage girls, boys, and their parents or

caregivers in group sessions over 10 months, and in some areas also work over a longer period to catalyze shifts in social and gender norms and in the adolescent-friendliness of key systems and services.

Designed to separately serve very young adolescents (VYAs) and older adolescents, with a learning period built in between, we engaged the first cohort of VYAs from March 2019 through January 2020, with over 13,000 girls and boys participating in over 500 groups. Through perspectives shared by the groups' "near-peer" mentors (ages 18-24) and our frontline staff WE LEARNED:



Leveraging mentorship is an underutilized multi-sectoral approach

Mentorship models are a win-win across several sectors, with the potential to improve not only adolescent well-being but also better educational, livelihood, or career opportunities for young adults.

Mentors deserve fair compensation but it does not guarantee retention

Despite high overall rates of mentor retention, the groups where mentors were compensated the most due to more program responsibilities were slightly more likely to leave, suggesting multiple factors may drive mentor dropout.



No one-size-fits-all profile for mentor demographics

Engaging mentors with fewer skills who live in the same place as the adolescents versus selecting higher-skilled yet not-as-local mentors carries tradeoffs that will vary per setting.



Mentors may become influential beyond the group space

Some mentors reported they had helped cancel marriages for girls in the community who were not members of their groups.



Mentor supervisors may need help with transparently tracking performance

Our staff were more likely to describe areas of improvement for the mentors in qualitative rather than quantitative formats, pointing to a need for objective rating and reporting structures that managers feel comfortable and confident using.



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