

# R4Respect™



## R4RESPECT EVALUATION SUMMARY 2016

### **Purpose of the R4Respect evaluation**

The evaluation assesses the functioning of the R4Respect youth participation model from the views of young participants and external adult stakeholders.

### **Who conducted the evaluation?**

This is an evaluation project undertaken jointly by YFS Ltd and the School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith University. Professor Clare Tilbury is the Chief Investigator with Dr Karen Struthers as the research co-ordinator from YFS. The evaluation is funded by the Advance Queensland Knowledge Transfer Partnership, Queensland Government.

### **The timeframe for the evaluation?**

Ethics approval was granted by Griffith University enabling the project to operate from April – December 2016.

### **How was the evaluation conducted?**

The evaluation is adopting a qualitative method in which the views of 14 young participants and 12 adult stakeholders have been obtained via individual and small group interviews.

The interview questions aligned closely with the elements of the TEPPS scale - a measure of youth program participation (Tiffany., Exner-Cortens, & Eckenrode, 2012).

In addition, to items from TEPPS, the researchers added questions to gain information on inclusion issues (that is, whether gender, culture or other characteristics of the youth participants impacted on their participation) and their views on ways to improve R4Respect.



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Figure 1 shows the adapted TEPPS scale that guided the interview schedule with the Youth Ambassadors. The items were similar, yet reframed for the adult stakeholders.

**FIGURE 1** Adaptation of the TEPPS scale to inform the interview schedules

- 1 Adults in the program act on what I have to say.
- 2 Adults at the program respect me.
- 3 My peers in the program value my participation.
- 4 I help decide things like program activities or rules.
- 5 I feel I have a lot of influence over decisions about the program.
- 6 I am very involved in program activities.
- 7 I feel safe when I am involved in program activities.
- 8 My personal identity (my gender, cultural background, physical attributes, sexual identity) affects my participation in the program.
- 9 I will recommend participation in the program to other young people.
- 10 I learn a lot from participating in the program.
- 11 My experience in the program will help me to get a job.
- 12 My experience in the program will help me to further my education.
- 13 The program is having a positive influence on my confidence in being part of public activities.
- 14 The program is having a positive influence on my involvement in community issues or action.
- 15 The program is improving understanding of respectful relationships among young people.



# THE R4RESPECT STRATEGY

The formation of R4Respect was prompted by the need to respond to the attitudes of young people towards interpersonal abuse and violence. The National Youth Attitudes Survey reported that far too many young people displayed violence-supportive attitudes, including:

- **1 in 4 young people think it's pretty normal for guys to pressure girls into sex;**
- **15 per cent of young people think it's ok for a guy to pressure a girl for sex if they're both drunk; and**
- **16 per cent of young people think that women should know their place**  
(*Our Watch, 2015*).

It is also disturbing that since the age of 15 years, 1 in 6 Australian women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a former or current partner (*ABS, cited in Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2016, p. 3*). R4Respect was designed as a strategy through which young people could challenge these disturbing views and experiences among their peer group via a youth engagement domestic violence prevention model. The program logic for R4Respect is based on two theoretical foundations and bodies of evidence:

- **Domestic violence is gender-based violence with men the predominant perpetrators, and that respectful relationships education with young people can overcome the gendered attitudes and values that underpin this violence** (*Flood & Kendrick, 2012; National Plan, 2012; Special Task Force on Domestic Violence, Queensland, 2015*);
- and
- **Young people are capable of being agents of change, rather than simply targets for change** (*UNCF, 2014; Zeldin et al., 2014*).

R4Respect aims to build four pillars of action:

(1) recruitment, training and mentoring of young people from diverse backgrounds to understand and promote respect in relationships; (2) engagement of young people through educational sessions and the development of digital communication strategies; (3) outreach and community awareness activities with a goal to build a youth movement; and (4) evaluation of the strategy. The R4Respect core activities, peer education and engagement of young people through social media, were also informed by the need in the community services industry to enhance capacity, skills and knowledge for working effectively with young people.

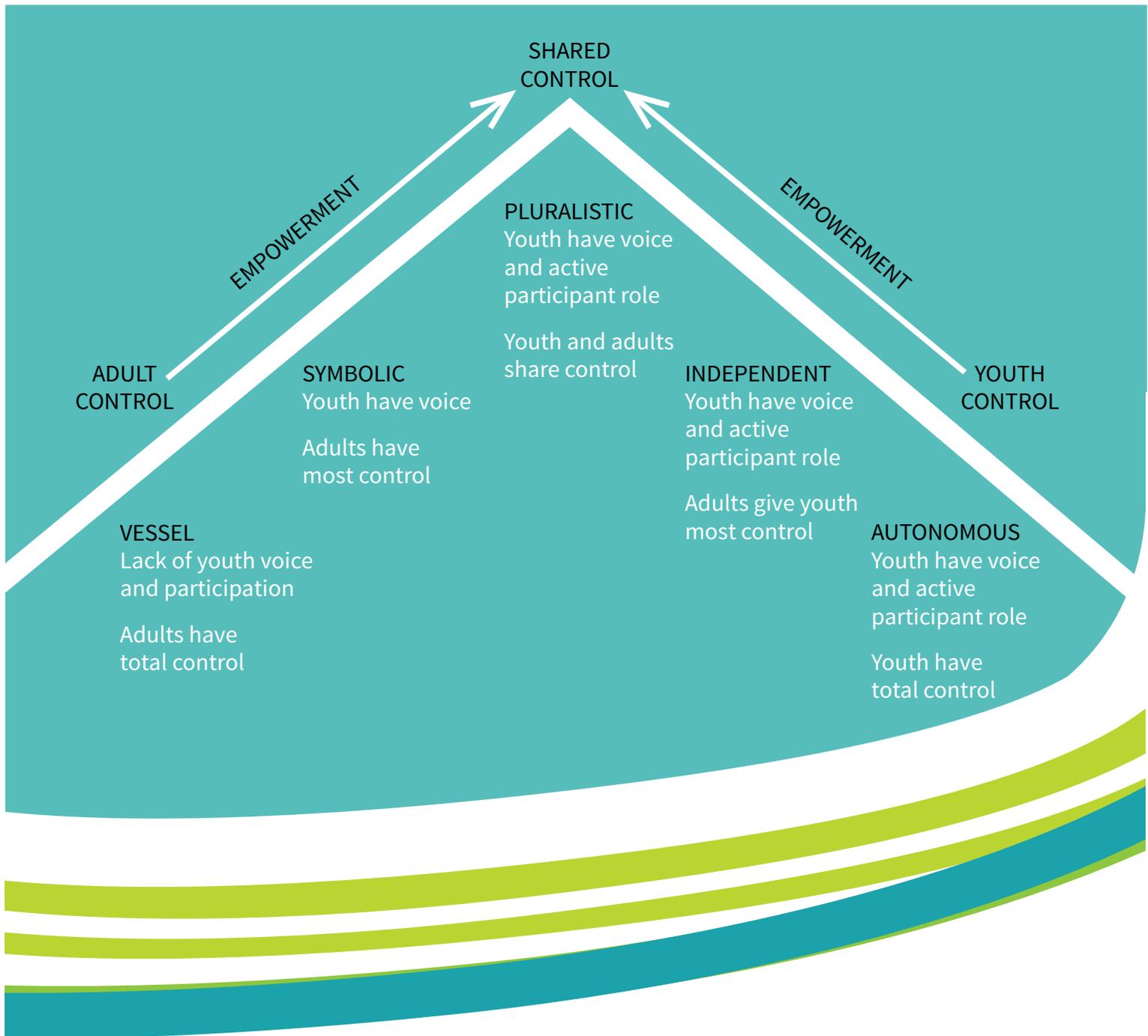
This includes the use technology to communicate with young people (*Youth Affairs Network of Queensland, 2013 cited in Health and Community Services Industry Council, Queensland, 2013*). R4Respect began as an adult-youth partnership with a view to young people taking more control as they gained experience and skills.

R4Respect and this evaluation are grounded in an asset-based framework that views young people as “resources to be developed, rather than problems to be managed” (*Brooks-Gunn, 2003, cited in Bakshi & Joshi, 2014; Wong et al., 2010*). This is in contrast to deficit models which are criticised for viewing young people as apathetic, and focus analysis on youth problems of issues such as substance abuse and delinquency, rather than capacities (*Bakshi & Joshi, 2014; Walker et al., 2014*). The YFS community agency in Logan, Brisbane developed the R4Respect program and recruited young people as ‘Youth Ambassadors’ who could relate to the diversity of life experiences of the local population.

# TYOLOGY OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT PYRAMID

The R4Respect model draws on the youth participation typology developed by Wong et al., (2010) – the Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment Pyramid (TYPE).

The TYPE model describes the range of participation from adult control with young people having no voice to autonomous models where young people have total control. R4Respect began as an adult-youth partnership (a symbolic model) with ongoing empowerment of young people to achieve shared control and future independence.



# FINDINGS

## Major Achievements of R4Respect

Since its launch in September 2015 by the Hon. Leeanne Enoch, Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy, R4Respect has achieved a number of remarkable milestones:

- Outreach to over 3,600 secondary students in Logan and beyond.
- 15 young people mentored, trained as Youth Ambassadors and taking leadership responsibility with 5 new YA recruits commencing in late November.
- Building an online network of 1400+ followers.
- Active participation in 17+ major community events, including Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month May 2016, the SEQ ACCESS Multi-Cultural Summit on Domestic Violence, White Ribbon events and more.
- Presentation to state education professionals at Education House, Brisbane May 2016 which was produced into a video for use in schools.
- Feedback on the Our Watch ad campaign November 2015 and featuring in a video produced by Our Watch.
- Hosting a national forum on Innovation in Youth Participation in partnership with Griffith University, July 2016. 50 participants, including leaders of youth organisations, schools and government agencies.
- Invitation for two Ambassadors to present at an international conference on domestic violence, Adelaide 2016.
- Invitation for Ambassadors to be part of consultative committees for the Australia's National Research Organisation on Women's Safety (ANROWS) and the state based Commission for Children and Young People.
- Employment of 3 young people in positions at YFS Ltd.
- Building the corporate sponsor base to 8 financial contributors and attracting funding until December 2017 from the Department of Social Services, Building Safe Communities for Women program.
- A journal article submitted on the R4Respect evaluation to Children Australia.



# SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES AND COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS IN THE EVALUATION

The TEPPS measure (*Tiffany et al., 2012*) that guides the interviews in this study enabled views to be gathered in two broad areas: the level and nature of young people's participation and the outcomes from their participation. In addition to the items on the TEPPS scale, participants were invited to offer their views on ways in which R4Respect and the nature of the youth participation could be improved. This is also discussed as a theme given its importance in informing the future development of the program. Within these areas, six themes have been selected that capture the breadth of views from participants.

## The level and nature of the young people's participation.

**THEME 1:** Young people feel valued and included in their roles.

**THEME 2:** #R4Respect is moving towards a youth-led model.

**THEME 3:** The importance of diversity in culture and gender.

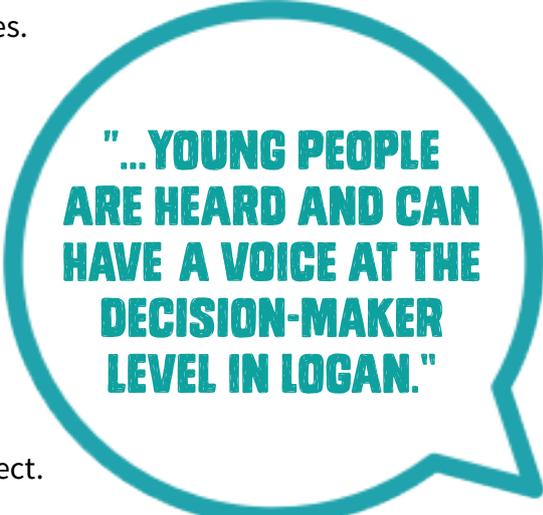
## The outcomes from their participation.

**THEME 4:** Skills development, leadership and networking.

**THEME 5:** Positive impact on other young people.

## Ways in which #R4Respect can be improved.

**THEME 6:** Greater capacity and structure needed for R4Respect.



"...YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HEARD AND CAN HAVE A VOICE AT THE DECISION-MAKER LEVEL IN LOGAN."

## Major themes from the qualitative data

### **THEME 1:** *Young people feel valued and included in their roles*

Overall the YAs felt valued by their peers and adult stakeholders. They made positive comments about feedback they received on being part of a new, unique program. They wanted it to succeed and attract other young people by building an R4Respect movement. They commonly stated that ideas, suggestions and input by youth ambassadors was discussed and considered by ambassadors and adults. They acknowledged that feedback received from adults has been constructive and it has been well received by the young people. One Youth Ambassador expressed this as: "People within R4Respect and YFS have practised the message they have been teaching to young people of respecting other people". The Youth Ambassadors stated that they are encouraged to create new projects and events and propose those to the group and organisations external to R4Respect.

These perceptions were affirmed by several adult stakeholders. They cited examples of the young people taking responsibility for decision-making, planning and delivery of educational messages in the program. One said it was clear that: "...Young people are heard and can have a voice at the decision-maker level in Logan."

The main concerns expressed by the young people related to the lack of clarity in their roles and decision-making and unequal participation among the group, as illustrated in the following comments by youth participants:

- “...my status within the group is not as great as others...”
- “The structure of the R4Respect ambassador group can be unfair at times, when the people here today in this room are all so involved and dedicated, and others have been really uninvolved.”

## **THEME 2: *R4Respect is moving towards a youth-led model:***

There was overwhelming support from the YAs and stakeholders for R4Respect to keep developing the peer-peer, youth led model. Stakeholders were more cautious than the YAs about moving quickly to a youth-led model given the complexity of the gender-based violence that underpins the R4Respect work and the need to maintain high standards of service when delivering program in schools with students.

The YAs acknowledged that the group is increasingly shifting from an adult-youth partnership to being more youth-led. The positive change was expressed by two YA’s as:

- “Our whole motive is young people talking to young people, so young people running the ship from top to bottom is our overall aim, and that will allow us to engage better with schools. It takes out the factor where kids might be intimidated by adults and people more intelligent than they are.”
- “It is becoming increasingly youth led, and that adds to being able to connect with young people and having an organisation that really practices what its message is.”

The external stakeholders all provided positive feedback on the youth participation and peer-education aims of the R4Respect program evidenced in their willingness to recommend the model to others. These stakeholders described the benefits that can occur when young people relate well to and engage with other young people. Comments included:

- “Any model that involves young people learning – and learning from peers – can be effective.”
- “Yes, evidence of them planning and presenting themselves.”
- “Inclusive, rigorous, merit-based process – gives youth a strong voice.”
- “R4Respect is youth led which encourages young people to participate and be involved...young people are interested and learn from the YAs...follow the YAs up after the sessions and on social media...the program is unique and works well because it is youth led from young people within the Logan community.”

External stakeholders expressed some concern about the lack of direction they observed and the capacity of the program to deliver its stated aims. One stakeholder stated that “...direction was lacking when the adults took a step back... that having the entire movement directed by young people may not be beneficial to the organisation”. This person observed the young people performing well in peer to peer education sessions, but expressed a need for adults to remain actively involved in the organisation of R4Respect. Other adults noted that more young people are needed to take the pressure off the small group and that more funding and training is needed to maintain the quality and capacity of R4Respect. One stated that: “You need to ‘scale up’ R4Respect to give it greater capacity.” Several stakeholders recognised the complexity in the gender-based analysis and content that the YAs deliver, and the quality control that schools require when they invite programs into their schools. They suggested that adult mentors may need an active ongoing role in the organisation of R4Respect and training of the YAs.

### **THEME 3: Diversity in culture and gender**

In establishing R4Respect there was a determined effort to recruit young people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds so that the program reflected, and could appeal to, the cultural diversity of the Logan community. In addition, it was considered vital to include young men in an active role to challenge other young men about respectful relationships. The YAs stated that the diversity - a mix of females and males from different cultures and ages- works well for the program and is well received by young people and adult community members.

Comments included:

- “My mixed culture helps me to relate to young people in Logan.”
- “I have not felt that my age has hindered impact.”
- “...having males and females presenting helps to get the message across.”

The stakeholders also commented favourably on the inclusive features of R4Respect:

- “...it assists young people to connect with positive mentors from their culture having the ambassadors from various cultures.”
- “From my observation I believe that having young males within the group of ambassadors has been beneficial to the program as other young males have connected well with the male ambassadors.”
- “Great to have cultural diversity that reps the wider Logan community...in fact there is some criticism that it lacks white Anglo reps.”
- “Really helpful to have male Ambassadors in a field heavy with females...do gender balance in presentations.”

One of the stakeholders encouraged R4Respect to explore the cultural influences in the area of gender-based violence stating that “...there is a need for the YAs to speak more about culture and conflicts with culture and how young people make sense of it.”



## THEME 4: Skills development, leadership and networking

There have been high expectations on the YAs to readily acquire confidence and skills to present interactive sessions in schools; to speak at public events and to do mainstream media and social. The expectations existed as the adult mentors establishing the program understood the need to demonstrate the worth of the program and build its profile in order to attract funding and support. This approach can be demanding on the young people and high risk. Feedback on the program indicates that the YAs capably fulfilled their public responsibilities. The opportunity for paid casual work enabled several YAs to commit more time than others and assume leadership roles. Three have attained ongoing employment at YFS Ltd with two of these positions now permanent. While the YAs expanded their social media followers from 200 to 1400 during the course of the research, they expressed their preference for face-to face contact rather than social media. It became apparent that their primary experience of social media is for social purposes, rather than strategy as required in R4Respect. In the recent recruitment five new YAs have been included in the program and they have higher level social media and digital communication skills. This is expected to result in more strategic use of social media and digital communication to attract young people.

Several YAs acknowledged that they felt “terrified” when first speaking up publicly and doing media. The YAs and stakeholders spoke of the practical experience and confidence the young people are gaining. Several expressed pride in the achievement of reaching over 3,500 secondary students in Logan and beyond in less than 12 months. Comments from the YAs included:

- “I feel like I really will make a difference.”
- “This is good for my study in law, CV and my career.”
- “I am building confidence and public speaking skills.”
- “This has opened a lot of opportunities.”

The YAs spoke of the benefits of networking. They said they are learning a lot by meeting with a wide range of people including support service professionals, politicians and victims of domestic violence. They cited the wide range of learning experiences they have encountered, positive effect on future employment, and importance of the #R4Respect message as the primary reasons for them staying involved in the program.

Adult participants also observed that the YAs are learning a range of skills. Comments included:

- “Young people are speaking genuinely, not scripted.”
- “They learn about themselves, grow in confidence...learn that violence is a choice. Use small groups more to help learning.”

The YAs all indicated that their own understanding of domestic violence, dating violence and related issues was very limited at the start of the program, but it had grown through the training and discussion with others. They all expressed interest in ongoing training. Those who have participated in the *LoveBites* respectful relationships training said they had learnt a lot and could incorporate this into their presentations. Stakeholders who observed the YAs in public activities spoke favourably of their knowledge and skills, yet they also expressed concern that the complexity and sensitivity of these topics required young people to have a high level of training and support. This is particularly important to handle students who may experience distress in educational sessions and to deal with robust debate and difference of views.

## THEME 5: Positive impact on other young people

The YAs all said that they aspire to be role models for young people in the community, and champions of respectful relationships, especially within their culture. Overall, they felt that they are developing as helpful role models to others. The YAs commonly stated that the presentations in schools are having a positive influence on students and that this is reflected in feedback and social media received after presentations. A recent survey taken among high school students who took part in activities run by the YAs showed that 89.5% believed the program had given them a better understanding of respectful relationships and domestic violence. A further 85% said they would recommend more programs like R4Respect in their schools. R4Respect has limited capacity to conduct evaluation of changes in the attitudes of young people following exposure to presentations from YAs. This was identified by some participants as an area for future evaluation.

The YAs also spoke of their efforts to promote the innovative model to other youth organisations. This occurred through a well attended national forum that R4Respect hosted and visits to Ipswich Youth Council and Brisbane Domestic Violence Service. They acknowledged that there is high interest in the model, but the young people in other organisations seem to have limited capacity to take on more activities at the time of this study. BDVS are keen to collaborate and this planning has commenced.



It was apparent that stakeholders valued the role of the YAs and their capacity to engage well with others. Several of the education stakeholders who had witnessed the YAs facilitating activities with students and adults, spoke of how well they gained interest from people of diverse cultures, backgrounds and ages. The educators among the stakeholders spoke favourably about the power of peer-peer education on respectful relationships education and their willingness to promote the model to schools. Comments included:

- “This subject is better when YAs deliver ...young people can relate better.”
- “You can see the students taking notice of the youth ambassadors.”
- “Young people get involved, quite engaged in the process.”



## THEME 6: Suggested improvements to R4Respect

The YAs and stakeholders offered comparable suggestions to improve the youth model underpinning R4Respect. The main point of difference was the internal focus on the YAs – their desire for a clear structure, more equal roles and decision-making - while stakeholders focussed on enhancing the capacity of R4Respect through enlisting more youth members, more training and more funding. Stakeholders also differed from the YAs in suggesting a more enduring role for adult mentors in the program.

Several YAs commented on a lack of direction and inequity within the group with some young people not meeting the responsibilities of the scholarship. It was evident that the YAs all endure financial hardship. The scholarship and any other casual work and reimbursements of costs is an important feature of the program that enables them to participate. Some of the YAs suggestions are evident in the following comments:

- “...assign Ambassadors to specific roles, duties and positions to ensure responsibility and progression of ideas.”
- “Source committed Ambassadors that YFS is able to employ permanently.”
- “More funding is needed, while we are all young people we still all have our own lives. Incentives are important to keep people involved and active within the group.”
- “I would have much a stricter recruitment process, and ensure that the Ambassador’s that were hired are committed. People had an attitude of once they got paid that was all they were there for and they left. That is really the biggest thing that I think should have been done differently.”

The main suggestions from stakeholders are raised in comments like:

- “Capacity is an issue...a few young people are carrying responsibility...need more Youth Ambassadors.”
- “More funding so they can do more...Better budget needed. Greater number of ambassadors.”
- “The stop start nature of funding hasn’t helped.”
- “*Love Bites* training is helpful..You need to make sure young people can deliver the gender-based analysis and respond to questions that students raise.”



# DISCUSSION

The group of young people in this study are taking responsibility to learn and lead a program that raises awareness of domestic violence and respectful relationships. As a group their participation was active, their interest was high and their achievements were met with acclaim. The R4Respect program was reported as inclusive of young people from diverse backgrounds and as a model that fostered participation and skills development for the young people involved.

The study provides:

- (1) affirmation to YFS Ltd and R4Respect members and supporters that the program is worthy of continued development as a unique model of youth participation and
- (2) feedback to the program members on ways it can be improved.

Suggestions were made to expand the capacity of R4Respect; to clarify the roles and structure of the YA team; to ensure active and more equal participation by all youth members, and to meet the training and support needs of the young people who are dealing with the complex issue of intimate partner violence.

The study shows that the R4Respect Youth Ambassadors have a strong sense of mission to improve their own skills and knowledge to lead strategies that reduce the violence and harm that young people can endure in their relationships. The movement of R4Respect from a pluralistic model to one where the young people are more independent and autonomous in all aspects of governance and service delivery with majority decision-making control, will need more time and resourcing to develop, but its guiding principles appear consistent with those recommended by researchers. The R4Respect youth team are off to a good start as agents who are building a movement for young people for social change.



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