THE FUTURE IS YOUNG
L E A R N I N G   S E R I E S

COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE:
The Foundation of Systems Change for Youth Employment

February 2022

GDI
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INTRODUCING GOYN'S "THE FUTURE IS YOUNG" LEARNING SERIES

The Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) is a multi-stakeholder initiative committed to catalyzing place-based systems shifts in communities —cities and rural districts— around the world through the creation of sustainable economic opportunities for "Opportunity Youth," aged 15-29 who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed. Created in 2018, GOYN's current network is comprised of nine communities in India, Africa and Latin America, which together represent over three million such young people. Over the next decade, GOYN aims to directly produce positive outcomes for at least 350,000 youth globally and improve lives for millions more, build community-based Collaboratives that can coordinate work to improve the youth employment ecosystem, and catalyze systemic shifts to accelerate youth participation, opportunity, and equity, ultimately contributing to more peaceful, vibrant communities.

GOYN's *'The Future is Young'* Learning Series seeks to identify and present scalable solutions for youth economic opportunity that can inspire others to act. This first installment makes the case for investing in young people and presents the cornerstone of GOYN's approach: the creation of Collaborative Infrastructure for scaled impact and systemic change.

For digital copies of this document and other GOYN publications, please visit https://goyn.org/#learning.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION:
THE POWER OF ONE TO MANY

Opportunity Youth from GOYN Mombasa sharing their vision for OY.

Deep in a large slum in Mombasa, Kenya, there is a great deal of activity as hundreds of youth gather to pick up plastic in their community for a recycling program. A young man emerges to give instructions with a smile and words of encouragement. Alfred Sigo, the CEO of Pwani Youth Network and a local resident, knows what it takes to mobilize his community for this effort, as well as for dozens of other projects, such as sports and football as a pathway for youth engagement, a radio talk show for youth, schools and health clinics, a COVID response program and connecting youth to employment opportunities. However, despite all of his incredible efforts, Alfred also knows that the challenges for transforming the lives of his fellow youth are systemic and massive in scale. This is why Alfred supported the formation of the Global Opportunity Youth Network in Mombasa, which aims to build collaborative structures to mobilize the entire ecosystem towards change and opportunity for youth, placing them at the center of all progress. Anchored at the centrally-located Swahilipot Hub Foundation, GOYN Mombasa is now going strong and working in partnership with youth and leaders from the private sector, government and training organizations to galvanize investment and transform employment outcomes for the 373,000 youth that are out-of-school, out-of-work or underemployed in Mombasa County.

All around the world, GOYN is working with community leaders like Alfred and Anchor Partners such as Swahilipot Hub Foundation to address the challenge of youth employment by:

1) Designing and implementing solutions for scale,

2) Catalyzing significant and long-term investment in youth employment,

3) Reframing the issue of youth employment and involvement as one of assets and opportunity, and

4) Building collaborative efforts that engage key stakeholders and Opportunity Youth leaders and focus on developing a localized suite of solutions for youth employment.

These collaborative efforts are the focus of this learning brief.

THE NEED FOR A NEW WAY TO INVEST IN YOUTH

Youth Hub in Ramgarh, India.

The sheer size of the youth unemployment challenge requires a "designing for scale" mentality. At the end of 2019, 350 million young people 15-29 (267 million young people are 15-24[1]) worldwide were not in education, employment or training (NEET). In addition, more than three in four employed youth are working in informal jobs, which are less likely to offer a working wage, safe working conditions or social protection. Taken together, these two groups represent over 600 million youth worldwide who are not connected to decent work opportunities, with the majority living in Africa and South Asia. This enormous challenge has been compounded by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted young people as sectors where they typically might access decent work (e.g., hospitality, tourism and services) were hit particularly hard and education and training programs were severely disrupted[2]. Furthermore, "population shifts given the youth bulge, climate change, conflict and urbanization are driving challenges overall, while the changing nature of work in the form of automation and digitization is negatively impacting lower value-added manufacturing and emerging digital jobs."[3] For GOYN, the overwhelming size of the need is a key driver to design and secure funding for solutions that directly lead to scale and long-term sustainability. This is a significant shift as most youth employment interventions are currently sub-scale, and global funding is largely project- and initiative-driven.[4]

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[1] ILO, Global Youth Employment Trends for Youth, 2020

[2] ILO, Statistical Brief: An update on the youth labour market impact of the COVID-19 crisis, 2021

[3] Gugelev, Creating Jobs and Sustainable Livelihoods in a Changing World, 2019

[4] McAuliffe, A Global Opportunity: Get Youth Working, 2019

Solutions at scale require investment at scale. GOYN believes that making the right investments could unlock the tremendous potential of young people and transform communities as diverse as the mega-city of São Paulo, Brazil and the rural district of Ramgarh, India. Unemployment is a devastating waste of this potential and leads to significant negative outcomes not just for individuals, but also for communities and societies as a whole. Conversely, we know that investing in youth pays off. Interventions that support young women and men in the labor market – particularly those that provide market-relevant skills training, promote entrepreneurship and self-employment, subsidize employment, or support jobseekers and employers through employment services – lead to positive effects on employment and earnings of young people and produce economic gains for governments and employers. They also enable young people to develop autonomy, agency and self-reliance.[5] Finally, from a societal perspective, such interventions can bring about improved structural justice, peace and reduced inequity[6].

> *"If you are to make an impact in this space, it has to be through collaboration.*
>
> *Given the complexity and scale requirement of the sector, expertise of multiple stakeholders will be required to tackle the problem."*
>
> Aloka Majumdar,
> Head of Corporate
> Sustainability, HSBC India

Shifting from seeing youth as a challenge to seeing them as an asset, and from fixing youth to fixing systems. From the start, GOYN has used the term "Opportunity Youth." This term intentionally applies an asset-based lens to youth that are often defined by their vulnerabilities or deficits. This framing underscores the social and economic gains from investing in youth, as well as the systemic – rather than individual – nature of the challenges that youth face. Using the term "Opportunity Youth" causes a significant change in how these youth are perceived and in how they see themselves and their ability to achieve their life goals. In addition, GOYN promotes ways of working that put young people at the heart of solution design. Human-centered design principles are used to identify barriers and solutions and co-create strategies to reach scaled impact for Opportunity Youth and their peers. Through this process, youth are invited to engage with stakeholders across the entire community to advance economic pathways. GOYN also works with Opportunity Youth to help them understand and use data to advocate for policy change with employers and government actors, and to develop, oversee and lead the implementation of strategies.

Moving from single interventions to a coordinated suite of solutions designed and delivered by a Collaborative Infrastructure. Many youth employment interventions remain small, disconnected from other sectors, and focus on treating the "symptoms", instead of addressing the systems that create these symptoms and, as a result, are often able to reach only a few thousand young people a year. There is no silver bullet to address youth employment. Each context is different, with different governments, business clusters and opportunities. Therefore, GOYN aims to develop a localized "*suite of solutions*" (demand and labor market mapping, vocational support, job training, placement and entrepreneurship), including a referral network customized to each youth, but executed at scale. In this way, the complexity of systemic, sustainable change becomes manageable at the level of a county, municipality, or district. This is what place-based **"Collaborative Infrastructure"** is designed to achieve.

[5] UN Commission for Social Development, Youth Employment: Impact, Challenges and Opportunities for Social Development, 2007

[6] In future installments of this learning series, we will analyze the full spectrum of the return on investment for youth employment, as well as the diverse financing options for youth employment interventions, including government funding, philanthropy and impact investing.

THE GOYN APPROACH: PLACE-BASED COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Introducing the place-based approach. The youth opportunity ecosystem is very context-specific. Approaches that are effective in certain countries, states, or cities have less relevance in others because of differences in the underlying structural economic factors[7]. A place-based approach means focusing on solutions that are grounded in a deep analysis of the local youth employment ecosystem, are developed and implemented locally and bring together stakeholders active at the local level. The nine communities in which GOYN is currently active include four cities (Bogotá, Pune, São Paulo and Mexico City), two districts (Ramgarh and Barwani), one province (eThekwini), one region (Thiès) and one county (Mombasa). Over three million Opportunity Youth currently live in GOYN communities, reinforcing the need for designing solutions at scale.

GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: MEXICO CITY EL FUTURO ES JOVEN — aspen institute	**Mexico City** Population: 9,209,944 Youth Unemployment Rate: 28% Opportunity Youth: 617,950
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: THIÈS L'AVENIR EST JEUNE — aspen institute	**Thiès** Population: 2,105,707 Youth Unemployment Rate: 49% Opportunity Youth: 305,033
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: PUNE भविष्य आहे युवकाचे — aspen institute	**Pune** Population: 4,120,000 Youth Unemployment Rate: 18.9% Opportunity Youth: 250,000
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: SÃO PAULO O FUTURO É JOVEM — aspen institute	**São Paulo** Population: 12,325,232 Youth Unemployment Rate: 25% Opportunity Youth: 766,000
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: MOMBASA SIKU ZA USONI NI CHANGA — aspen institute	**Mombasa** Population: 1,296,000 Youth Unemployment Rate: 44% Opportunity Youth: 373,000
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: RAMGARH हैं भविष्य युवा — aspen institute	**Ramgarh** Population: 2,105,707 Youth Unemployment Rate: 55% Opportunity Youth: 255,000
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: BOGOTÁ EL FUTURO ES JOVEN — aspen institute	**Bogotá** Population: 8,351,224 Youth Unemployment Rate: 28% Opportunity Youth: 868,697
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: ETHEKWINI THE FUTURE IS YOUNG — aspen institute	**eThekwini** Population: 3,900,000 Youth Unemployment Rate: 38.8% Opportunity Youth: 220,000
GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: BARWANI हैं भविष्य युवा — aspen institute	**Barwani** Population: 1,490,474 Youth Unemployment Rate: 50.2% Opportunity Youth: 303,620

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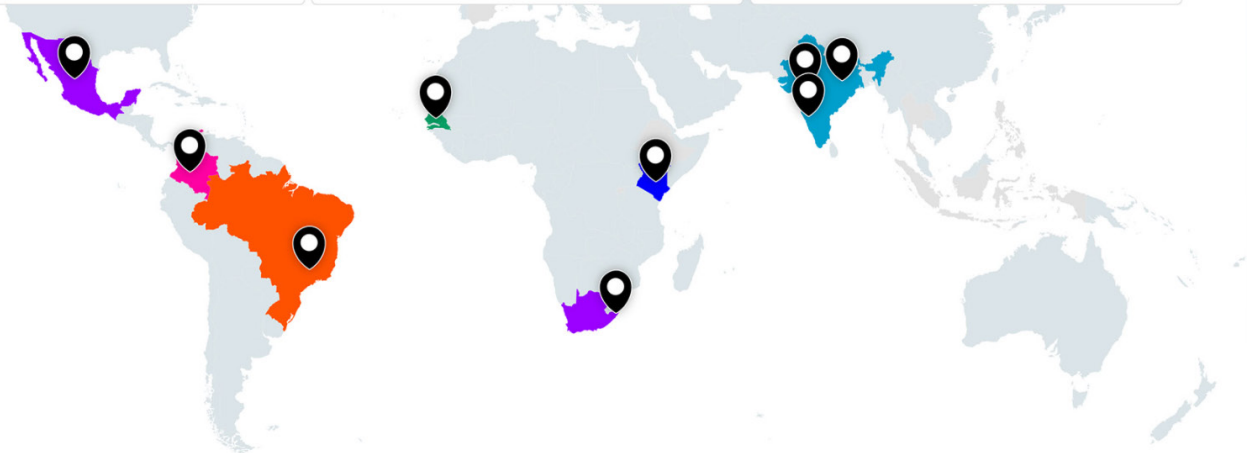
7   USAID, The evidence is in: How should youth employment programs in low-income countries be designed?, 2017

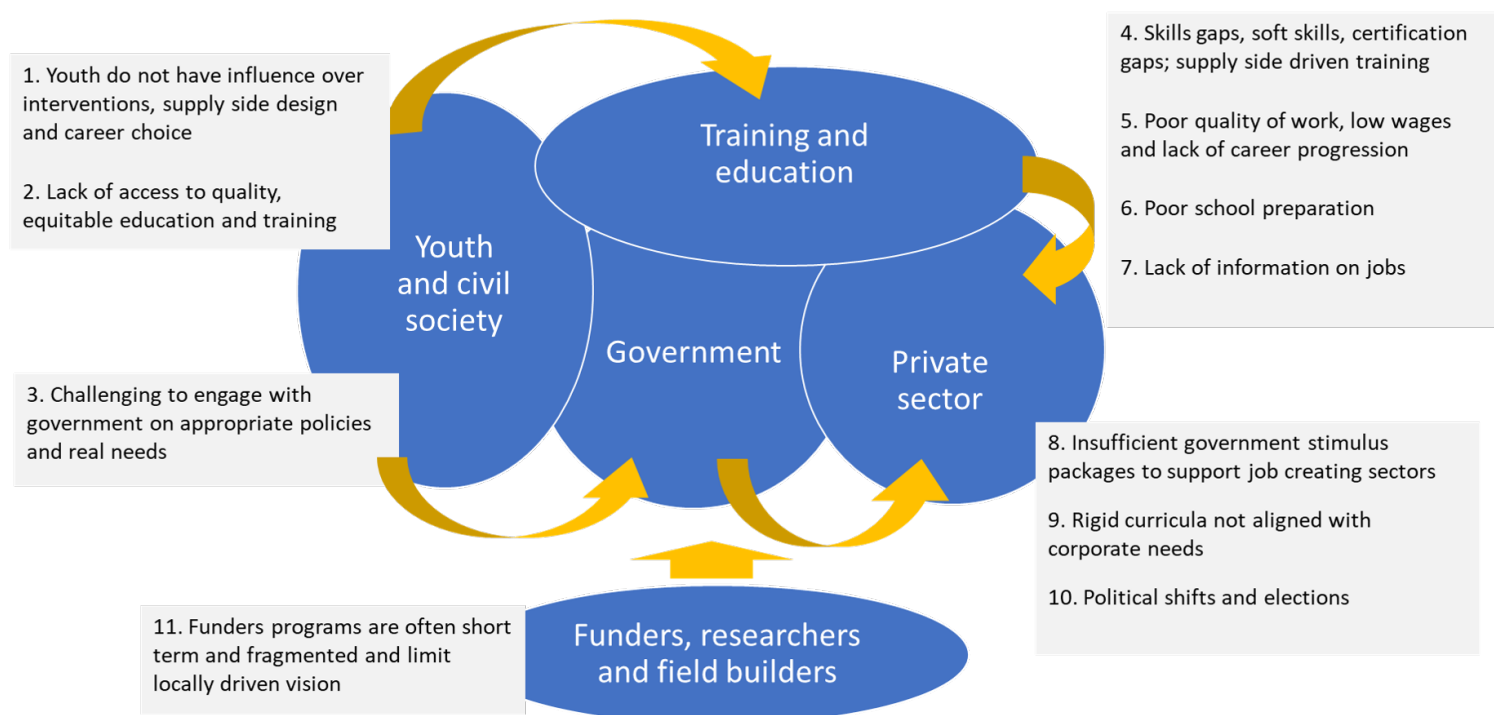# COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

A focus on community-driven development and place-based approaches allows for issues to be solved locally, based on the context of the specific challenges that youth face, such as teenage pregnancy or high drop-out rates. Furthermore, a focus on "place" enables issues to be solved at significant *local* scale. A problem of hundreds of millions is impossible to resolve, but a problem of tens of thousands is achievable. For example, if the total number of unemployed, out of school and underemployed youth is 250,000 in a community, local partners can focus on reducing that number and address the range of systemic issues that contribute to the challenge. Feedback loops are also shorter at the community level, with greater and immediate accountability among stakeholders if there is transparency and clear and frequent communication across the ecosystem.

Collaborative Infrastructure[8] is designed to create deep, long-term connections between different points of a network – in this case, stakeholders within the youth employment ecosystem. GOYN Collaboratives bring together actors from different sectors who share a common vision and commitment to addressing youth employment in their community, including stakeholders from the public and private sectors, education and skilling providers, civil society organizations and Opportunity Youth themselves. The purpose of these Collaboratives is to build collaboration, mutual accountability, trust and ownership over the challenges, strategies and solutions to youth employment in the long term as well as weather any political changes that inevitably come in each community. GOYN Collaboratives are further unique in that they focus on leveraging extensive data sets and information for decision-making, bringing together community stakeholders who may have previously been left out of decision-making (such as youth themselves). Collaboratives also seek to address existing power imbalances among stakeholders from different sectors by building capacity, encouraging constructive dialogue and strengthening feedback loops within the local ecosystem. This type of approach is much more difficult at a national or regional level: it is through the power of community-driven development and ownership that Collaborative Infrastructure works best.

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[8]   The GOYN approach to Collaborative Infrastructure builds on work done in North America over the last decade by the Aspen Institute (through the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions) and FSG, with communities implementing this type of collective impact structure as well as Global Development Incubator's approach to community-based multi-stakeholder initiatives. The GOYN approach also benefits from the work of Youth Build International and its deep work with youth in the USA and around the world, and from Catholic Relief Services' models in the global context and commitment to scaled impact.

Feedback loops and breakdowns in the youth employment community ecosystem

1. Youth do not have influence over interventions, supply side design and career choice

2. Lack of access to quality, equitable education and training

3. Challenging to engage with government on appropriate policies and real needs

4. Skills gaps, soft skills, certification gaps; supply side driven training

5. Poor quality of work, low wages and lack of career progression

6. Poor school preparation

7. Lack of information on jobs

8. Insufficient government stimulus packages to support job creating sectors

9. Rigid curricula not aligned with corporate needs

10. Political shifts and elections

11. Funders programs are often short term and fragmented and limit locally driven vision

Youth and civil society

Training and education

Government

Private sector

Funders, researchers and field builders

Source: GDI

# LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS: SETTING UP COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Just like physical infrastructure, the GOYN Collaborative Infrastructure needs to have the right foundations to function. Significantly different to most coordination efforts, and as per the Collective Impact methodology, GOYN has adopted an established and institutionalized approach to building the Collaborative Infrastructure rather than a loose, purely relationship-based collaboration. Each of the structures that make up the Collaborative Infrastructure require clear terms of references, with specified and limited time to serve, roles and responsibilities, and a process that aims to reduce any politics or preferential treatment of those who serve in these roles. Moreover, to ensure power-sharing, it is preferable that Collaborative members take a leadership role in the design and implementation of the strategy.

The **GOYN Collaborative Infrastructure** supports the community to rigorously examine **causes and drivers of youth unemployment** and accelerates **economic opportunity pathways** that can create population-level impacts.

The standard GOYN Collaborative Infrastructure is made of **five core structures**:

1. **ANCHOR PARTNER AND CORE TEAM**
2. **YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP (YAG)**
3. **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP (MSAG)**
4. **WORKING GROUPS**
5. **BROADER COLLABORATIVE**

GOYN COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

YAG

ANCHOR PARTNER & CORE TEAM

BROADER COLLABORATIVE

MSAG

WORKING GROUPS
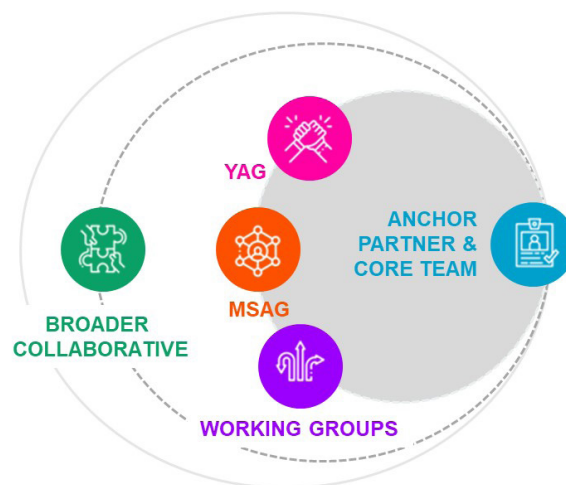
Collaborative Infrastructure is made up of five specific institutional structures:

1. GOYN Collaboratives are established and coordinated by an *Anchor Partner.* The Anchor Partner is a local institution, with deep and long-term ties to the local community, that takes on the coordination and facilitation role in the Collaborative, bringing stakeholders together, building a common vision and driving joint activities. Importantly, the Anchor Partner is not the sole implementer, nor even necessarily an implementer, of youth employment initiatives in the community. In fact, in each area prioritized for intervention by the GOYN Collaborative, the most competent stakeholders will take the lead to implement identified solutions.

2. The **youth advisory group**, made of current and former Opportunity Youth, meets regularly to review data, develop strategies and pathways, and guide implementation through participation in working groups.

3. A **multi-stakeholder advisory group (or "Executive Committee")**, brings together representatives of the key ecosystem stakeholders. Critically, this group must include senior leaders from government, private sector, service providers, including training and educational organizations, civil society, Opportunity Youth themselves, and funders. To encourage ownership and accountability, collaborative members are often asked to lead on a strategic pillar.

4. GOYN Collaboratives design and implement interventions through technical **working groups**, in key sectors such as health, creatives, logistics, hospitality and tourism or cross-cutting themes such as career journeys, digital enablement or policy action.

5. Regular convenings of **the broader Collaborative** (organizations connected to GOYN but not involved in the multi-stakeholder advisory group or working groups) enable sharing of progress and feedback, as well as the development of **a referral networ**k. Youth employment issues are never just about employment, and GOYN actively builds this referral network to connect young people with sports groups, health services (including mental health), artistic and creative centers, and other youth hubs and supports.

It is important to note that the Anchor Partner participates in building their own capacity as well as the capacity of other partners, especially other civil society organizations in the local ecosystem. Key areas of capacity-building include developing a scale mindset; systems thinking; data-driven decision-making; Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL); resource development and fundraising; cross-sector collaboration; research and analysis; youth voice and inclusion; and policy and advocacy. These capacity-building efforts are a key part of distributing power locally. Finally, in order for Opportunity Youth to participate meaningfully, the Anchor Partner team organizes training workshops to build and/or strengthen their personal agency, capacity to work with data, and policy and civic engagement, and puts youth at the center of strategy design and implementation.

KEY ROLES OF THE COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

There are five key roles and responsibilities that the members of the Collaborative (Anchor Partner, Youth Advisory Group, Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group and Working Groups) play. These include aligning on the vision, developing and jointly implementing the strategy, coordinating stakeholders, enabling data-driven decision-making and leading communications.

Roles of GOYN Collaboratives

1. Aligning on a shared vision for youth economic opportunity

If stakeholders do not understand the problem in the same way, they are unlikely to agree on the solutions to adopt. The first task of the Collaborative is to develop a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to youth employment in the community, on which a common unifying vision for the community can then be built. This shared visioning is supported by the Anchor Partner through the presentation of detailed data and evidence that can help stakeholders arrive at a common understanding of the issues and potential ways forward.

"A Mombasa with increased access to youth opportunities, employability and freedom of expression"

2. Developing and jointly implementing a strategy

Once the Collaborative has arrived at a shared vision, it takes on the responsibility to co-design and implement a long-term strategy to drive change in the community. Because the strategy is owned by the Collaborative rather than any single organization, it can be championed by all stakeholders and leverages the existing strengths and assets in the ecosystem, sharing implementation responsibilities across the members of the Collaborative.

GOYN strategies are developed through multiple rounds of community workshops
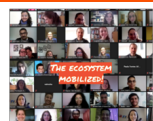
3. Coordinating stakeholders and holding them accountable

By providing a structure and processes for coordination, the GOYN Collaborative ensures ecosystem stakeholders keep pushing in the same direction. Stakeholders gain visibility on their respective assets and activities, and can use the Collaborative's communication channels to request or share information. The Collaborative also enables stakeholders to make and demand public commitments from one another, driving a sense of accountability to one another.

In Pune, Collaborative members are asked to lead different parts of the GOYN strategy

4. Enabling data-driven decision-making

Through the Anchor Partner, the Collaborative continuously collects data and evidence on the state of youth employment in the community, monitoring overall progress as well as the impact of specific interventions or campaigns led by the Collaborative. This constant data-gathering exercise enables the Collaborative to make strategic decisions informed by hard facts and evidence.

GOYN Collaboratives develop a unique set of localized data on youth economic opportunities

5. Leading communications and advocating for change

The Collaborative develops a joint communications strategy on youth employment, enabling its key messages to reach a much broader audience than any one organization could reach. This consistent joint messaging at scale is critical to advocate for change and remove the structural barriers to youth employment in the community.

GOYN promotes a positive narrative that positions youth as an asset to be invested in

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"There are different levels of collaboration. What GOYN asks is a much deeper level of collaboration, because it's not only about collaborating with the ones we agree with, but also the ones we don't agree with."

Daniela Saraiva Santos,
Lead, GOYN São Paulo

Collaborative session with Opportunity Youth in GOYN Ramgarh

LESSONS LEARNED FROM AROUND THE WORLD

In every community, GOYN does not move forward with strategy development and design until the Collaborative Infrastructure is in place. This is done alongside data gathering and ecosystem mapping. There is a genuine commitment to this approach and a set of checks and confirmations to ensure that this infrastructure is set up, as well as extensive capacity-building through weekly meetings and workshops to help build and sustain the approach to institution-building and systemic change. From these efforts, three key learning areas have emerged:

1. BUILDING A STRONG COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

2. PARTNERING WITH YOUTH

3. CO-DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING INTERVENTIONS

Learning Area #1: Building A Strong Collaborative Infrastructure

1. **Attracting & choosing the right Collaborative members.** While the issues GOYN seeks to address are systemic, having the right individuals around the table is critical to start developing solutions. To be effective, members of the Collaborative need to feel empowered to act, and to be recognized as leaders by their peers. In that regard, professional seniority is essential. For example, the multi-

stakeholder advisory group of GOYN Ramgarh convened by Anchor Partner Transform Rural India Foundation includes, among others, the Executive Director of Syngenta Foundation, the principal of the local government college, a senior UNICEF advisor and the CEO of a local nonprofit. This peer networking is key to building a community of collaborators and driving respect and accountability. It is critical that the selection of this group be devoid of politics and favoritism.

2. **Defining the roles and responsibilities of Collaborative Infrastructure members.** Collaboration is no easy task, and while it does partly rely on the creation of strong informal relationships, it rarely starts there. To keep Collaborative members engaged and committed, it is important to communicate early and regularly, both about what is expected of them individually and on what the Collaborative aims to achieve collectively. Terms of reference and Memoranda of Understanding are helpful tools to formalize these expectations.

3. **Creating a sense of ownership & mutual accountability.** While Collaboratives bring different stakeholders to work together on shared issues, they are more than a simple convening body. In an effective Collaborative, all members share a sense of ownership and commitment to the goals agreed upon by the Collaborative. Creating this sense of ownership, mutual trust and accountability requires early and continuous engagement with Collaborative members, who must participate actively in the visioning, strategy development and goal-setting process. There should also be transparency and commitment to data to evaluate progress and impact. Finally, having each group member have some aspect of leadership over a part of the strategy has proven very effective. For example, GOYN Pune has advisory group members lead different parts of its strategy related to entrepreneurship, technology, logistics, and mentorship.

> *"Collaboration can create magic."*
>
> Mrinal Gharpure,
> Director, GOYN Pune

4. **Proving the value proposition of the Collaborative Infrastructure.** There are significant competing interests on people's time and efforts. To overcome this challenge, Anchor Partners should seek to identify "low-hanging fruit": minor coordination issues that can be addressed in the first year of the Collaborative and deliver easy "wins" to demonstrate the value of collaboration. In the longer term, distributing activities and leadership drives ownership, as does the re-granting or allocation of funds from Anchor Partners to others in the community, or providing benefits such as laptops, desktops and negotiated airtime or allocations of staff members to support the work. GOYN Collaboratives should also be responsive to urgent needs in their communities. For instance, in the rural district of Ramgarh, India, thousands of migrants returned to their villages at the outset of the pandemic. GOYN Collaborative members joined forces to provide immediate relief and rehabilitation support to vulnerable migrant youth returnees and their households, managing to link over 3,000 households to various government schemes and benefits in record time.

5. **Output metrics for measuring success.** Ultimately, the strength of a Collaborative will be measured by the changes it manages to effect in the community. Because these changes can take time, other metrics can be used to measure the strength of the Collaborative Infrastructure. GOYN uses an annual self-assessment system, where Collaborative members and Opportunity Youth are asked to assess how well the Collaborative is performing in different areas, such as diversity, Opportunity Youth engagement or private sector involvement. Over time, however, evaluating the effectiveness of the collaborative towards improving youth outcomes will be critical.

Learning Area #2: Partnering With Youth

1. **Partnering with youth.** GOYN takes a partnership approach to youth engagement: Opportunity Youth are involved from the very early days of the GOYN Collaborative in the community, and participate actively in data collection and analysis, strategy development and decision-making. This enables young people to see and understand the whole GOYN journey and to develop a sense of agency and ownership over the process. For example, in eThekwini (South Africa), the GOYN team first set up an interim consultative group of Opportunity Youth, which led the design of the terms of reference and selection process for the formal Youth Advisory Group. This approach, which is typical of GOYN communities, enables young people to have a direct say in the way they are represented within the GOYN initiative.

    > *"We should not just involve young people in these conversations because it is the right thing to do, but because we see the value in what young people have to say, the value in their experiences. It is not just about their perspectives. It's that they are already thinking about the solutions."*
    >
    > Maria Paula Macias,
    > Youth Engagement Manager,
    > GOYN Bogotá

2. **Creating an enabling environment.** Not all youth who join GOYN Collaboratives come ready to engage with senior community stakeholders on an equal footing. Investing in training and coaching is key to enable their full participation in the Collaborative. For example, GOYN Pune trained Youth Advisory Group members on presentation skills as a preparation to participate in working groups. But it is not only the young people who need training. Adults in the Collaborative also need to learn how to adopt a partnership mindset and interact with young people effectively, so that the whole Collaborative becomes a space that welcomes, acknowledges, respects and highlights youth voices.

3. **Building trust.** Ultimately, the creation of this enabling environment is about building trust between youth and other members of the Collaborative: trust that their voices will be listened to, the diversity of their experiences recognized, and the reality of their challenges acknowledged. This trust is essential to facilitate the sharing (and therefore identification) of existing structural barriers to youth economic

opportunity in the community. Once established, this trust can lead to incredibly powerful insights. For example, in Mombasa, Ramgarh and São Paulo, GOYN Youth Advisory Groups organized youth-led discussions on structural injustices in their communities, which has led these communities to raise these issues more vocally and intentionally.

CASE STUDY: GOYN Bogotá: Action-based research for and by young people informs decision-making

GOYN Bogotá and its vibrant Collaborative Infrastructure of 50 organizations have worked hard to ensure that Opportunity Youth contribute to co-designing pathways that will shift youth employment outcomes at scale. Throughout 2020, the Collaborative included youth as an invaluable part of the research team mapping the youth employment ecosystem, in co-designing interventions and critically, in the Collaborative's close interactions with local government and key decision-makers where it has elevated the profile of Opportunity Youth and the challenges they face.

In March 2020, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, GOYN Bogotá produced a first-of-its-kind survey of 1,489 Opportunity Youth in Bogotá to understand the state of their socio-emotional, economic and developmental well-being in the midst of the pandemic and provided a blueprint of actions to be prioritized by the collaborative. The study was widely disseminated and was able to feed city-wide decision-making regarding the impacts of COVID and needed supports.

Learning Area #3: Co-Designing And Implementing Interventions

1. **Developing a community-driven strategy.** It is crucial that the GOYN strategy in community is designed in partnership with the entire Collaborative, and not just driven by the Anchor Partner. Though time-intensive, this process is essential to building a sense of collective ownership over the strategy and developing interventions that respond directly to the needs of the community. This will typically happen over a series of facilitated community workshops. For example, in Mexico City, GOYN hosted a series of four three-hour workshops over a one-month period, bringing together 30-50 participants to look at data, hear from Opportunity Youth and start identifying potential ways forward. The GOYN strategy in Mexico City directly evolved from those discussions. In Thiès, the GOYN team has started building its Collaborative by doing extensive stakeholder consultations over multiple weeks, which is key to build awareness of GOYN and will facilitate the establishment of the Collaborative in due course.

2. **Designing for scale.** GOYN has the ambitious goal of impacting a significant number or percentage of Opportunity Youth in each community which requires designing interventions that can reach tens of thousands of youth. These interventions typically need to focus on lifting structural barriers that

prevent long-term economic gains for Opportunity Youth, or providing enablers that can support entire segments of the labor market. For example, GOYN Mombasa facilitated the creation of the Mombasa Entrepreneurship Resource Center for Youth, which will consolidate entrepreneurship support resources for all youth in the community.

3. **Leveraging others & scaling what works.** Finally, Collaborative Infrastructure should seek to identify the assets (funds, expertise, resources, connections) that exist in the ecosystem, and to leverage those to achieve systemic change. This approach is both efficient (no duplication of efforts) and empowering, as it recognizes the strengths that each stakeholder brings to the Collaborative. For example, GOYN Ramgarh is leveraging expertise from local training providers to develop Enterprise Facilitation Hubs in strategic locations across the district, which will provide aspiring and existing entrepreneurs with an easy access point to curated resources.

CONCLUSION

Systems change is hard. Scalable and sustainable solutions are difficult to design, even harder to implement, and cannot be defined and owned by people outside of the community, nor by any one organization or stakeholder. Place-based Collaborative Infrastructure provides the frame and tools to bring stakeholders together and facilitate these efforts. This is not a short-term endeavor, as it may take months--even years--to build a successful model. The long-term commitment and sustained investment in collaborative-led change is often at odds with the more typical 2-3 year funding cycles of many donors. However, based on the early findings from the GOYN approach, setting up a place-based Collaborative Infrastructure lays the foundation for accountability and local ownership for a strategy that can be implemented at scale, survive political cycles, support a diverse and complex suite of solutions, adapt as the context changes, and facilitate the coordination and acceleration of existing efforts. Moreover, keeping Opportunity Youth at the center of the Collaborative Infrastructure builds momentum and ensures sustainably all of which will yield enormous dividends in the long term. As Alfred Sigo from the GOYN Mombasa community attests, the impact GOYN has had on Opportunity Youth in the county and globally is significant:

"I am a big believer in young people being co-creators in solutions that work for them. Further, the only way to create improvements at scale is through a multi-sectoral approach. GOYN is creating systems shifts that enable youth and partners to push for changes they deem necessary not just here [in Mombasa], but both nation-wide and worldwide."

Excited by this piece and want to know more about GOYN or how to implement Collaborative Infrastructure in your community? Please get in touch with Jamie McAuliffe, Director at GOYN, at Jamie.McAuliffe@aspeninstitute.org.

Future installments of the GOYN 'The Future is Young' Learning Series will continue to explore themes related to youth economic opportunities, sharing lessons learned by GOYN communities to inform and inspire other organizations seeking to make a difference in young people's lives.