



Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Advocacy and Accountability

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACPHR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights	MENA	Middle East and North Africa
Al Muntada	Palestinian Non-Governmental Organization	MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
AOCA	against Domestic Violence against Women Advocacy and Organizational Capacity Assessment	MSWG	Multi-Sectoral Working Group
Area C	The Fully Israeli-controlled and only contiguous territory in the West Bank	MTR	Mid-Term Review
CAPAD	Christian Agency for Peace and Development	NCAJ	National Council on the Administration and Justice
CCC	Country Coordinating Committee	NEOA	Nyatike Evangelism One Accord
CCORPS+	Coalition of Civil Society Organizations on Maputo Protocol Ratification in South Sudan	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CECOME	Centre for Community Mobilization and Empowerment	NICA	National Independent Church of Africa
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	PaRD	Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organizations	PCSS	Presbyterian Church South Sudan
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women	PFA	Psychological First Aid
CUC	Court User Committees	PMC	Programme Management Committee
CWG	Communications Working Group	PoW	Power of Women
ECSS	Episcopal Church South Sudan	PSCCW	Psychosocial Counselling Centre for Women
EFFD	Egyptian Foundation for Family Development	PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
ELJCHL	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land	RARCSS	Revitalised Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan
F2A	Faith to Action Network	RJMEC	Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation
FBO	Faith-Based Organization	SBCC	Social and Behavioural Change Communications
FCM	Feminist Consultation Methodology	SCS	Strengthening Civil Society
FEMSpace	Feminist Empowerment Movement Space	SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
GJ4P	Gender Justice through Interfaith Spaces	SEF	Safe Engage Foundation
GSWG	Gender Sector Working Groups	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
GTMEL	Gender transformative monitoring, evaluation, and learning	SIHA	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative	SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	SoP	Standard Operating Procedures
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development	SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
ILO	International Labour Organization	SSIC	South Sudan Islamic Council
IMC	International Labour Organization	SSPC	South Sudan Pentecostal Church
IMM	Ibrahamia Media Centre	SSYOC	South Sudan Youth Organization Coalition
IOs	Inua Mama Mjane	STO	Short-Term Outcome
IPV	Intermediate outcomes	ToC	Theory of Change
JISRA	Intimate Partner Violence	ToR	Terms of Reference
LGBTIQ	Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer	ToT	Training of Trainers
LWF	Lutheran World Federation	TWG	Technical Working Group
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
		WPP	Women's Political Participation
		WROs	Women's Rights Organizations
		YW4A	Young Women for Awareness, Agency, Accountability and Advocacy
		YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
		YWRG	Young Women Reference Group

Message from the YW4A Partnership and Initiative Lead

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reach the journey's midpoint with the YW4A initiative, I am proud to share our progress and the transformative impacts we have collectively achieved as YW4A partners and stakeholders during 2023. This year was another milestone and a crucial checkpoint to reflect, recalibrate, and reenergize our goal to strengthen and diversify the participation of young women, amplifying their voices in decision-making processes that shape gender-just laws, policies, norms, and practices concerning their bodily integrity and equal participation.

Our approach in 2023 was deeply rooted in feminist evaluation principles, focusing on outcomes and empowering the process itself. This reflection enabled us to look beyond the numbers and sincerely appreciate the stories and voices of those at the heart of our initiative—the courageous young women and dedicated community members in Egypt, Kenya, Palestine and South Sudan.

The achievements highlighted in our Mid-Term Review speaks volumes about the power of collective effort. Over 4,000 young women across the four countries have risen through our RiseUp! Leadership model. They have turned skills into action, leading economic initiatives and advocating for critical issues such as gender-based violence and early marriage, reaching over 41,000 other young women. These young leaders are not just participants in our programme but agents of change within their communities.

From Kenya to Egypt and Palestine, these young women have enhanced their lives and ignited change in their communities. In Kenya, they have turned skills learned into sustainable projects like soap making and mat weaving, improving their economic independence. Advocacy for safe shelters in Migori County showcases their growing influence in local governance. Similarly, participants in Egypt and Palestine have spearheaded initiatives that champion gender equality, health, and political engagement, with projects ranging from artistic advocacy to mentorship programmes. These efforts demonstrate their agency and leadership.

Yet, as we celebrate these gains, we confront stark realities. The escalation of conflict in Palestine brought profound challenges, including the cessation of operations by our partner in Gaza, the Aisha Association for Women and Children. Their displacement serves as a stark reminder of the human cost of conflict and underscores our unwavering commitment to advocating for peace and justice in the region.

Despite these adversities, our resolve remains unyielding. Together with 16 women's rights organizations, we have influenced notable policy changes, including the landmark ratification of the Maputo Protocol in South Sudan. Additionally, our engagement with religious institutions to promote gender equality and positive masculinities within their frameworks has seen positive shifts toward more inclusive practices.

Looking forward, we are more committed than ever to this cause. Our partnership and collaboration are our strengths; your support is our backbone. Together, we will continue to empower, to challenge the status quo, and to create environments where young women can thrive safely and freely.

As we prepare for the opportunities and lessons of the remaining years, let us carry forward the momentum fortified by our achievements and lessons learned. We invite you to continue this journey with us, driven by a shared vision of a world where every young woman realizes her potential and leads her community toward a more equitable future.

With heartfelt thanks and unwavering commitment,

Thabani Sibanda



World YWCA

Partnership and Initiative Lead, YW4A Initiative

Introduction



The YW4A Programme aims to enhance young women's leadership and tackle sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Egypt, Kenya, Palestine, and South Sudan. To achieve this, the programme focuses on building organizational and advocacy capacity; building young women's transformative leadership; promoting gender-transformative norms by working with faith-based actors; and influencing the effective implementation, repeal, adoption, and/or amendment of laws and policies to promote young women's leadership and eliminate SGBV.

This report is a consolidated summary of the work conducted by partners under the YW4A Programme in 2023. The report includes reflections around the implementing environment, programmatic performance and progress, the programme operational strategies, and the learning agenda.

1. Programme implementation context

The operating environment of 2023 presented a dynamic landscape of opportunities and challenges, exerting varied impacts on programme implementation across Palestine, Egypt, Kenya, and South Sudan.

In October 2023, the Israel-Hamas war broke out in [Palestine](#), disrupting YW4A programming. To date, the conflict has cost thousands of lives, displaced entire communities, destroyed infrastructure, hampered economic development, and posed challenges to the partners on the ground. The humanitarian crisis has diverted attention and resources towards addressing the urgent needs of the most vulnerable. UN Women recognizes that displaced women and girls (over 493,000), along with new female-headed households, face distinct and pressing needs and vulnerabilities that require immediate identification and action. Displacement exacerbates the levels of gender-based violence (GBV) and psychological trauma by increasing women's vulnerability to sexual and labour exploitation, trafficking, and forced marriage. In this context, restrictions on movement and security concerns have aggravated challenges in programme implementation by affecting the effective functioning of CSOs, hindering access of programme staff to the office, restricting in-person meetings, preventing the planning and execution of activities, and threatening the well-being of activists, and humanitarian and development workers. In a context in which humanitarian efforts have taken precedence over long-term development projects, to ensure the continuity and success of vital programming in Palestine, the YW4A partners continue to monitor the situation. Likewise, planning for 2024 has required adaptation and mitigation measures to respond to the evolving situation in Gaza and the West Bank in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA).

In [South Sudan](#), the operational context of the last year has been characterized, on the one hand, by the influx of approximately 300,000 people fleeing the conflict in Sudan and, on the other hand, by the election campaigns ahead of the elections to be held in December 2024. In the run-up to the elections, concerns have been raised that efforts to address women's rights issues, including the transposition of crucial legislation, may be sidelined. However, positive developments emerged following the signing of the Maputo Protocol in February 2023 and the depositing of the instrument of ratification.

In this regard, the coalition-building workshop held in July—under the YW4A programme—provided an opportunity for YWCA South Sudan, CCORPS+, and Legal Action Worldwide to advocate with the Ministry for the adoption and enactment of legislation requiring alignment with the Protocol and for the acceleration of the necessary legal reforms to advance women's rights.

In 2023, **Egypt** witnessed further economic and political instability, marked by record-high inflation due to the devaluation of the Egyptian pound, disproportionately impacting the population's livelihoods. Economic stress has diverted citizens' interests away from issues such as reforming gender discriminatory laws, while they struggle to meet other basic needs. Despite government initiatives to ease restrictions on civil society, the civic space in Egypt continues to shrink. As a result, NGOs have been facing challenges in obtaining approvals to conduct their events. Towards the end of the fourth quarter, some YW4A activities were disrupted due to security clearance requirements for physical gatherings. In the run-up to the presidential elections, freedom of speech and assembly were severely curtailed; organizations advocating for specific causes encountered harassment, intimidation, arrests, and imprisonment. These limitations hampered public outreach campaigns and the dissemination of information. Egypt's political climate remains cautiously stable, as the same administration was re-elected. However, there is uncertainty regarding potential policy shifts and bureaucratic changes.

During 2023, the implementation of the YW4A programme in **Kenya** proceeded smoothly, with some exceptions observed in Meru County. In Meru, activities experienced slight interruptions due to ongoing protests surrounding impeachment motions targeting the female Governor. With the conclusion of the electioneering period, Kenya experienced periods of unrest and sporadic violence, due to the weekly protests initiated by the opposition party. The protests diverted national attention to resolving property damages and injuries on civilians. Meanwhile, the government did not explicitly reaffirm its commitment to implement the commitments adopted during the Gender Equality Forum. Therefore, YW4A partners and women's rights organizations (WROs) continued to advocate for the adoption of these commitments, including the eradication of GBV. The Generation Equality Forum held in July 2023 served as a pivotal moment for reflection among various stakeholders around the government's commitment to ending GBV by 2026. Indeed, in September 2023, the Kenyan Ministry of Public Service, Gender, and Affirmative Action took a significant step by appointing the Multi-Sectoral Working Group (MSWG), which provided a platform for WROs and young women to channel their recommendations and participate in national policymaking.



2. Reflection on risks and mitigation measures

This report highlights the significant risks that materialized during the implementation of the YW4A programme in 2023. Please refer to the [**2023 Detailed Risk Assessment and Mitigation Matrix**](#) for a detailed overview of the risks.

2.1. External risks

Security incidents and movement restrictions for political reasons. The conflict in Palestine has imposed restrictions on movement and narrowed civic space, preventing the implementation of programme activities, including leadership training and advocacy plans under pathways 2 and 4. The impact of the recent political escalation on programme implementation has been medium in the West Bank and high in Gaza (all implementation was suspended). In the meantime, there were minor disruptions to the programme resulting from public order disturbances. In Kenya, there were a series of anti-government rallies orchestrated by opposition leaders which led to restrictions on movement and disrupted security. In South Sudan, there were attacks on aid workers, restricting the mobility of YW4A staff and partners. Finally, in Egypt, during the presidential elections, the security apparatus imposed stricter measures that led to increased

scrutiny and censorship of advocacy work and the suspension of physical meetings. In response, some activities were put on hold, postponed, or relocated; social media campaigns, online engagements, and multi-sectoral platforms were used to implement certain activities; an adaptation plan was designed for the implementation of the programme in Palestine; and additional precautions were taken during face-to-face gatherings.

Economic challenges, including inflation, and currency deterioration. Egypt and Kenya experienced economic challenges, including inflation and currency deterioration which partially contributed to the underspending registered by partners in both countries. Partners in Egypt did not get the actual value of the Euro currency within the economy due to dual exchange rate regimes, while the rising oil prices and the increased flight fares resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict hindered the delivery of some face-to-face activities. In Palestine, most citizens lost their livelihood after 7 October due to the suspension of the issuance of work permits in Israel. Regarding Kenya and Egypt, partners worked closely with their finance teams and the Consortium Lead to restructure the activities to work within the available budget. Overall, the deteriorating economic situation will be considered when planning activities in 2024 to ensure this will not affect the engagement of young women in the programme.

2.2. Institutional risks

Fraud/corruption risk: During 2023, concerns emerged regarding the financial integrity of the South Sudan country lead—YWCA South Sudan—as inconsistencies between reported expenses and actual funds disbursed were detected during in-country monitoring visits, hinting at potential internal control deficiencies, thus heightening the risk of undesirable organizational activities. These discoveries were made through proactive measures like in-country monitoring visits and cash flow reconciliations. Additionally, there is a significant risk of underspending in South Sudan, particularly in programmatic and operational budget lines, including sub-grants to WROs. As a response, the Consortium Lead suspended additional financing to YWCA South Sudan and planned a specialized audit of FY2022 and 2023 activities in collaboration with the MoFA, involving an internationally recognized audit firm. In Egypt, IMC hired a professional auditor to ensure accountability and proper financial management among WROs, developing a regulated financial system.

YWCA Kenya provided technical support to partners for effective financial management, implementing budget monitoring strategies, while YWCA Palestine employed a Code of Conduct and internal controls to mitigate fraud risks.

Human resource management and staff turnover: All partners within the programme encountered challenges related to staff transitions, with notable changes occurring in Egypt, Kenya, and Palestine, and within technical leads such as the Faith to Action Network and World YWCA. In Egypt, the resignation of the IMC Programme Manager—towards the end of 2023—, led to adjustments in programme direction and execution, though the transition was efficiently managed, ensuring continuity. Similarly, YWCA Kenya faced staffing changes but swiftly replaced departing staff with individuals familiar with the programme. Faith to Action Network experienced disruptions due to key staff transitions, requiring adjustments in programme implementation until new staff were onboarded.

In Palestine, despite the departure of the General Secretary, programme operations continued under new leadership while a replacement was sought. Additionally, in South Sudan, a staff member planning maternity leave shared necessary handover notes due to partnership uncertainty. Delays in recruiting the World YWCA Technical Programme Manager in Eastern Africa led to hands-on support from other team members until the role was filled. Throughout these transitions, efforts were made to ensure minimal disruption to programme activities and maintain efficiency in implementation.



2.3. Programmatic risks

Conflict sensitivity risk: During the 2023 Inter-Religious Convention, discussions arose regarding using terms such as 'feminist' and 'feminism' during a workshop led by the World YWCA with its **Feminist Consultation Methodology**. Concerns were voiced that such terminology might hinder engagement with faith leaders due to perceived radical connotations within religious circles, potentially leading to disengagement from dialogue. As a mitigation strategy, the World YWCA engaged in discussions regarding the inclusion of the term 'feminist', emphasizing its importance in empowering young women to seek justice and challenge social norms, with a consensus among participants. Efforts were made to address negative dialogues surrounding women and power within interfaith communities, facilitating respectful dialogues and partnerships for gender justice initiatives.

Communication materials for critical events were sensitively drafted to address potential challenges in conveying messages effectively. At the same time, partners like YWCA Kenya and those in Palestine actively integrated conflict-sensitive approaches into programming. In Palestine, the armed conflict has profoundly impacted the population, exacerbating human rights violations such as SGBV.



These challenges have subtly influenced participant selection processes for programme activities, with preferences sometimes based on social or faith-based affiliations. This dynamic has led to demotivation among participants, especially young women.

Exclusion and marginalization of young women, WROs, and FBOs from the MENA region: Young women from the MENA region have underscored the crucial necessity for conferences to ensure full inclusion of all participants, advocating for interpretation services from Arabic to English. They have highlighted that language barriers often result in the repeated selection of the same individuals to attend regional and international events where English is the primary language. Failure to address these language barriers could lead to the exclusion and marginalization of young women from the MENA region, as well as WROs and faith-based organizations (FBOs), ultimately limiting their participation and perspectives in conferences and programme activities.

As a result, MENA partners have been encouraged to proactively engage with conference organizers beforehand to ensure translation to Arabic, promoting inclusivity in external meetings and conferences. Additionally, for programme activities, partners will use resources within their organizations and YW4A budgets to address this need, convening participants to ensure interpretation services are provided.

“*Our situation is catastrophic. All our houses are destroyed. We moved to a basement where we don't have access to the internet. I have to go out to connect. We feel the building shaking and could be demolished at any time. The bombing frequency escalates every day. My other cousin was killed yesterday, and we haven't buried him yet. Our spirits are very low; I'm writing to you with my tears falling down my cheeks. I cannot believe our situation now. There is no bread or water. Anything we receive, we give to the children and elderly.*”

*Kareemah Al-Majaydeh, a young woman from Gaza in the YW4A programme
- October 16, 2023.*

3. Programme performance dashboard



Annual Financial Performance						
€2,210,441	€2,369,441	Project Delivery - 64% Project Staff Cost - 30% Overheads - 6%	Delivery - 81% Admin - 15% M&E - 4%	Palestine - 25% Kenya - 26% Egypt - 24% South Sudan - 25%	Outcome 1 - 24% Outcome 2 - 26% Outcome 3 - 25% Outcome 4 - 25%	€:US\$ - 1.082245 €:CHF - 0.972167 €:E - 0.870293 <small>(www.afb.com/)</small>
Approved Budget	Actual Expenditure	Expenditure Breakdown	Staff Investment Efficiency	Investment Allocation		Currency exposure
2023						
€2,047,463	€2,035,840	Project Delivery - 58% Project Staff Cost - 36% Overheads - 6%	Delivery - 81% Admin - 15% M&E - 4%	Palestine - 27% Kenya - 29% Egypt - 21% South Sudan - 23%	Outcome 1 - 25% Outcome 2 - 22% Outcome 3 - 27% Outcome 4 - 26%	€:US\$ - 1.053783 €:CHF - 1.005217 €:E - 0.852601 <small>(www.afb.com/)</small>
Approved Budget	Actual Expenditure	Expenditure Breakdown	Staff Investment Efficiency	Investment Allocation		Currency exposure
2022						
€2,503,487	€1,892,791	Project Delivery - 62% Project Staff Cost - 32% Overheads - 6%	Delivery - 80% Admin - 16% M&E - 4%	Palestine - 24% Kenya - 29% Egypt - 21% South Sudan - 26%	Outcome 1 - 32% Outcome 2 - 21% Outcome 3 - 26% Outcome 4 - 21%	€:US\$ - 1.18318 €:CHF - 1.081316 €:E - 0.860039 <small>(www.afb.com/)</small>
Approved Budget	Actual Expenditure	Expenditure Breakdown	Staff Investment Efficiency	Investment Allocation		Currency exposure

Annual Programme Performance		
Young Women Reached	In 2023	Since 2021
Egypt	2,109	2,173
Kenya	2,959	4,014
Palestine	1,352	1,644
South Sudan	1,500	1,880

Country	Laws and Policies Worked 2023	WROs and FBOs Reached	
		Primary	Secondary*
Egypt	i. Draft of unified law to combat violence against women ii. Law of women Quota (25%) iii. Mother Guardianship and custody iv. 6 PSEAH Policies	a. Egyptian Foundation for Family Development b. Sabaya El Khier for Community Development c. El Farah for Development Association d. Blooming Rose Coptic Association e. Egyptian Without Borders Association f. Coptic Orthodox Church g. Evangelical Church h. Al-Azhar University i. The Egyptian Family House	Alrowwad Development Association-Sidi Bishr, Al Noon Foundation/Ain Shams; Care Egypt for Development; Care-Nakheel; Commander Muhammad Anwar Centre (Sea Scouts Club); Beautiful Wishes Association; Charity Martyrs Association; Women's Voice Association; Abu Safin Association; Community Development Association-Ambroso; Nefertari Association-Ezbet El Haggana; Together we rejoice-Muhammad Naguib; Al-Ajami neighbourhood; Sawary Foundation-Ragheb; Sila Charity Association; Development Without Borders Association; Social Justice Association for Development and Human Rights; Egyptian Association; Women's Voice Association; Association for the Preservation of the Holy Qur'an; Al-Amin Association in the Amriya region; Cityland Hall Al-Urwah Al-Wuthqi Association; Bint Al-Nil Association; Giving and Hope Association; Kawkab El Sobh Foundation-El Haouaria; Sidwa for Development and Human Rights; Caritas Association; All together in heaven; Church of the Virgin Mary and Saint Paul in El Hadara El Jadida; Not Alone Foundation; and Al-Urwah Al-Wuthqa Association.
Kenya	i. Kisii Gender policy ii. Migori SGBV Bill iii. Implementation of SGBV policy in Meru	a. YWCA Kenya b. YWCA Meru c. YWCA Kisii d. SEF e. CECOME f. Inua Mama Mjane g. Kisii SDA h. NEOA i. NICA	nsembe CBO; The eagles for life Kenya; International Solidarity Foundation; Dagwoye; Girl power; A million Hugs; Aipec; Daraja mbili vision; Uzuri Women Empowerment Hub; One to all Initiative; Youth and Women Advocacy Network; GOCESO Women Network; Tunaweza Empowerment Organization; Msichana Empowerment Organization; CIHEB-Kenya; and Zinduka Kenya.
Palestine	i. Draft law on domestic violence improved and lobbying with government to pass it into law. ii. Preparing draft law on sexual harassment in public spaces. iii. Lobbying the government to remove the exception clause or specify the reasons for the exception in the 2019 child marriage law. iv. Increasing young women's political participation through inclusion in university student council elections.	a. YWCA of Palestine b. The Psychosocial Counselling Centre for Women (PSCCW). c. YWCA of Jerusalem d. Alharah Theatre e. ELCJHL	Sa'eer Municipality; Tarqumyah Women's Club; Palestinian Medical Relief Society; Union of Palestinian Women Committee; Alshyoukh Women Cooperative Society; Beit Oulah Women's Club; Kharas Women's Club; Palestinian Agricultural Relief Society; Wadi Hussein Center and Kindergarten; Alahmah Charitable Center -Beit Oulah; Alwe'am Charitable Society-Sourif; Palestinian Workers Union-Yattah; Beit Alrouh Alfoqah Women Association; Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists; AlThahreyeh Youth Club Society; Alfawwar Popular Committee; Alkoum Village Council-Beit Qaddoum; Yattah Women Center; Alkarameh Center-Alazoun; Bitello Women Center; Kufur Nimeh Kids Club; YWCA Ramallah; Deir Jrer Women Center for Development; Ibdal' Cultural Center; and the Al Muntadar Coalition.
South Sudan	i. Ratification of the Maputo Protocol ii. The Anti-GBV Bill iii. The Family Law Bill iv. The Constitution-making Process	a. YWCA South Sudan b. YWCA Mundri c. Self-Help women d. YWCA Juba e. Christian Agency for Peace and Development	Steward Women; Women for Justice; Action Girls Africa; National Women Empowerment and Rehabilitation Organization; Wake up Women Development; Consulted Center for Empowering Women; Community Organization for Peer Educators; Adeesa Support Group Organization; Anika Women; New Vision; Emerging Young Women Leaders Programme; Environmental Conservation Recovery; Seventh Day Adventist Church Juba; South Sudan Youth Coalition; Islamic Council Juba; Episcopal Church of South Sudan; Action Girls Africa Organization; STEWARDWomen; Women for Justice and Equality; Presbyterian Church Juba; and WAYEI-Women and Youth Empowerment Initiative.

*Reached through various activities in the programme

4. 2023 Programme Strategies and Activities

4.1. A reflection on programme strategies and activities against annual targets

For a detailed review of activities implemented under each Immediate Outcome (IO) and Short-Term Outcome (STO), please refer to the [**YW4A 2023 Detailed Activity Report**](#).

Transversal activities. Participation in recognised international conferences such as the Interreligious Convention in South Africa and the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference in the Netherlands—where the YW4A team showcased programme successes such as the impactful Rise Up! Leadership training in conflict zones like Palestine and South Sudan—provided invaluable opportunities for meaningful engagement with partners. Collaborative YW4A platforms, such as Global and National Review and Planning Meetings, facilitated better integration among various pathways. At the same time, monitoring and evaluation efforts (including in-country visits) bolstered financial management and accountability.

Communication and advocacy efforts were amplified through events such as Women Deliver 2023 and online campaigns like **#ThursdayInBlack against SGBV**. Safeguarding and capacity-building initiatives were tailored to specific contexts (e.g., establishing a violence complaint hotline by the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt) and monthly training sessions aimed to enhance the financial management skills of partner organisations. Learning and Reflection processes facilitated adaptation plans amidst challenges, including political escalations in Palestine and Kenya. At the same time, collaborative efforts in the Programme Management Committee (PMC) and Country Coordinating Committee (CCC) meetings streamlined programme implementation and realignment.

The Steering Group ensured strategic oversight and risk mitigation, while the evolving role of the Young Women Reference Group (YWRG) in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) reflected ongoing adaptation efforts. Additionally, MEL tools and Theory of Change (ToC) review enhanced programme effectiveness and accountability through tracking progress and adaptation.

In 2023, under **Pathway 1**, YW4A organized six Advocacy and Organizational Capacity Assessments (AOCA), such as workshops spanning four countries to evaluate the baseline capacity of new WROs, sharing workshop reports, and capacity development priorities with consortium partners. Mid-term reassessment workshops involving 19 WROs used the AOCA methodology and tools to reflect on institutional capacity changes due to YW4A. In Kenya and South Sudan, WROs, FBOs, and young women have significantly strengthened their general and legal advocacy capacities, evident through active community engagement, policy involvement, and successful initiatives (e.g., establishing SGBV courts).

Across all four countries, regular meetings have facilitated continuous assessment and tailored support, enhancing advocacy effectiveness. Coalition building and networking have emerged as pivotal strategies, fostering intergenerational cooperation and collective impact on gender equality and SGBV issues. Safe spaces for young women have propelled collaboration and informed national advocacy priorities, steering the planning and execution of advocacy endeavours. Through sustained support and mentorship, WROs and young women are empowered to perpetuate their efforts, promoting a culture of ongoing learning and enhancement within their communities.

Pathway 2 of the programme focused on empowering young women to enhance their leadership skills and promote gender equality. Notable initiatives included adapting the Rise Up! Transformative Leadership model and communication tools based on feedback from consultation sessions. Training sessions on Psychological First Aid (PFA) proactively minimised the potential re-traumatisation of GBV survivors, while storytelling workshops bridged generational gaps and empowered young women to share experiences. Networking with community leaders led to units providing psychological support to GBV survivors, partnerships with national centres, and leadership training groups, advancing

and amplifying young women's voices. Social media campaigns advocated for gender equality and life skills training, empowering young women to conduct business. On the other hand, integrating monitoring and evaluation tools ensured consistent reporting, while leadership training within safe spaces empowered participants to address GBV issues. Despite challenges, the programme persevered in creating safe spaces and advancing dialogue on gender equality and women's rights, strategically aligning activities, and promoting collaboration between stakeholders to empower young women and contribute to significant social change. Ongoing efforts continue to empower young women as leaders and advocates for gender equality, nurturing a more inclusive and equitable society.



In **Pathway 3**, faith leaders have actively engaged in global and regional advocacy efforts, notably showcased at the Women Deliver conference in Kigali, where the programme highlighted its gender assessment methodology. In Egypt, faith institutions implemented activities outlined in their Gender Action Plans, including training programmes and workshops on gender equality. Collaborative efforts led to workshops engaging young women, WROs, and faith leaders to develop Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) messages emphasising the importance of young women's involvement in advocacy.

Similarly, in Kenya, faith institutions pursued Gender Action Plans, organising meetings and mentorship sessions to promote gender equity. Interfaith dialogues facilitated collaboration to address GBV and advocate for policy implementation. Faith leaders are developing Awareness Action Plans to implement initiatives within their communities to broader gender policies or

strategies, providing frameworks to monitor and evaluate progress towards gender equality goals. The capacity of faith leaders and institutions has been enhanced through training to ensure they possess the knowledge, skills, and resources to execute the plans. Despite challenges, including the Palestine-Israel conflict, faith organisations persist in advocating for legal reforms to advance gender justice. In contrast, faith champions within FBOs actively promote positive masculinities and challenge harmful social norms.

In **Pathway 4**, media advocacy efforts in Egypt during the 16 Days of Activism focused on simplifying legal concepts regarding guardianship rights. Led by a young female lawyer, these initiatives garnered over 700 views and sparked discussions among legal associations and policymakers. Monthly meetings and workshops addressed challenges faced by mothers in divorce cases, leading to the establishment of legal consultation offices. Partnerships facilitated legal and policy reforms in Kenya, including memos on implementing the two-thirds gender rule. At the same time, advocacy initiatives in South Sudan resulted in policy advancements such as ratifying the Maputo Protocol and developing critical legislation such as the Girl Child Education Bill.

Despite challenges, young women in Palestine continued to amplify their voices against GBV through their participation in international and regional events. Strategic alliances and networking with decision-makers enhanced young women's capacity. They empowered them to lead advocacy initiatives (e.g., establishing a Court Users Committee in Kenya, which has facilitated evidence-based advocacy). Training sessions on engaging with UN mechanisms equipped young women with the skills to organise themselves effectively and advocate for their rights. At the same time, their participation in global events such as Women Deliver 2023 has expanded their perspectives and allowed them to exchange strategies to advance gender equality and women's rights.

4.2. Programmatic performance and progress against indicators

The mid-term review (MTR) report presents YW4A's progress against all short-term (STOs) and intermediate outcome objectives (IOs) until the end of June 2023. This section presents updated tables concerning YW4A's indicators linked to the basket of indicators that require



annual reporting. **WRGE 5.2.1** YW4A intends to work with the same 27 WROs throughout the programme. However, the programme experienced dropouts by some WROs, though it promptly managed to identify and onboard new WROs. By the end of 2023, YW4A was partnering with 26 WROs across the four countries of intervention. Notably, two new organisations—YWCA Juba in South Sudan and Aisha Association in Palestine—joined the initiative in August. Table 2 shows the WROs (five in total) that joined the programme in 2023.

Table 1. Annual progress against the MoFA's basket indicator WRGE 5.2.1

MoFA basket indicator	YW4A indicator	Level of disaggregation	Egypt			Kenya			Palestine			South Sudan			Total number of targeted WROs (27)****
			Baseline 2021*	Actual 2023**	Target 2025***	Baseline 2021*	Actual 2023**	Target 2025***	Baseline 2021*	Actual 2023**	Target 2025***	Baseline 2021*	Actual 2023**	Target 2025***	
WRGE 5.2.1	# of WROS with enhanced capacity to advance young women's rights to bodily integrity and equal participati on in decision- making	Women-led CSOs (WRG045)	5	2	5	2	0	2	5	1	5	3	1	4	16
		CSOs not women or youth-led(WRG047)	1	0	1	2	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	1	6
		CSOs both women and youth-led(WRG048)	0	0	0	4	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	1	5

* Baseline 2021: unique WROs reached in 2021 and part of baseline study (n=25)
 ** Actual 2023: as to present the unique number of WROs, it only includes new WROs reached in 2023
 *** Target 2025: the total targeted number of organisations participating in Pathway 1 is set at 6 in Egypt, Palestine, and South Sudan, and 9 in Kenya
 **** Division per disaggregation code stems from baseline study, the number of WROs per code can vary over time due to changes in the organisation's leadership or age

By the end of 2023, YW4A was partnering with 26 WROs across the four countries of intervention. Notably, two new organisations—YWCA Juba in South Sudan and Aisha Association in Palestine—joined the initiative in August 2023. Table 1 shows the number of WROs (five in total) that joined the YW4A programme during 2023. In 2023, YW4A partners conducted various activities to strengthen WROs' advocacy skills and organisational vitality. Examples include training in Kenya on policy advocacy and county budget engagement; digital and legal advocacy training and monitoring and evaluation training in Palestine; social media advocacy training in Egypt; and coalition-building training in South Sudan. As outlined in the MTR report, a mid-term capacity assessment was conducted to capture potential changes in 19 WROs' capacity and quantitative AOCA measures compared to the baseline. The AOCA reports have now been validated with the respective WROs, resulting in slight changes in AOCA measures and capacity categories for some WROs compared to the data presented in the MTR report. Notably, adjustments were made for three WROs in South Sudan and three WROs in Egypt. **See the Updated AOCA Mid-Term Measures.**

The data shows an overall increase in the organisations' capacity levels, with fewer WROs falling within the very limited or limited capacity categories. The capacity increases are visible in all four countries. Of the 19 WROs, 13 organisations moved up one level, and three WROs moved up two levels on the 7-point AOCA scale.



This means that 84% of the WROs that joined YW4A in 2021 have already met YW4A's IO1 target to move one level up or more on the AOCA scale. While three WROs show a higher AOCA measure at mid-term compared to baseline, their AOCA measure falls within the same AOCA category—none of the 19 WROs regressed in capacity. While WROs have shown improvement in capacity, there remains a need for further strengthening, particularly in applying an intersectional approach to advocacy efforts, diversifying engagement with young women, and enhancing organisational vitality. Many WROs face challenges with financial resources, relying heavily on volunteers and limited grants for advocacy work. Additionally, they need to improve their capacity to implement MEL activities and SEAH policies developed with support from YW4A. The individual AOCA mid-term reports of WROs provide insights into their capacity-building needs, guiding consortium partners' interventions in 2024 and informing WRO learning sessions.

WRGE 5.2.2 Initially, the YW4A programme aimed to reach 17,540 young women. However, following a reassessment based on MTR findings, consortium partners collectively decided that achieving this target within the agreed timeline posed significant challenges. During the MTR, young women emphasized the importance of quality support throughout the programme. This led to a strategic decision to ration the recruitment of new cohorts in certain countries to ensure resources were allocated for the ongoing support to strengthen initially recruited participants. Consequently, the endline target was revised to 13,700 to prioritize the quality of services provided to young women, ensuring sustainability beyond the programme (for the breakdown per country, we refer to the MTR report). The revised targets were submitted to the MFA for approval (see Table 2).

In Kenya, a total of 2,959 young women were reached through the Rise Up! Leadership training programme, bringing the overall number of young women to 4,014 in 2023. In South Sudan, a total of 1,500 young women (out of the 1,585 target) participated in the RiseUp! Leadership training, contributing to a cumulative reach of 1,880 young women catching up with target shortfalls in 2021 and 2022.

Table 2. Annual progress against the MoFA's basket indicator WRGE 5.2.2

MoFA basket indicator	YW4A indicator	Level of disaggregation	Egypt				Kenya				Palestine				South Sudan		TOTAL 2021-2022		
			Actual* 2021	Actual 2022	Target 2023**	Actual 2023	Actual* 2021	Actual 2022	Target 2023	Actual 2023	Actual* 2021	Actual 2022	Target 2023**	Actual 2023	Actual* 2021	Actual 2022***		Target 2023	Actual 2023
WRGE 5.2.2	# of young women who have gained awareness of their rights, deepened their understanding of women's rights issues, and the ability to generate support around a common cause.	Female youth (WRG049y)	0	64	1,700	2,109	355	700	1,400	2,959	0	292	1,900	1,352	22	358	1,585	1,500	9,711

* Based on Pathway 2 baseline situation (2021) which reached 22 YW in Egypt and 214 YW in Palestine. However, these YW were only part of the RiseUp cohort 1 trainings that materialized in 2022, hence the baseline shows 0.
** In some countries, the targets originally set in the Annual Plan 2023 were adjusted during 2023. This table includes the updated targets for 2023.
*** Upon validation of the South Sudan data, we came across a mistake in the reporting of the 2022 actuals. A total of 358 instead of 150 YW were trained in RiseUp! during 2022. This has been adjusted accordingly.

In Egypt, 2,109 young women were reached through the Rise Up! Leadership training in 2023, exceeding the planned target of the year. To address previous target shortfalls, Egypt expanded the number of training groups to promote transformative leadership skills during the summer break. In Palestine, the initial target in 2023 was 1,900; however, 1,352 young women were reached through the Rise Up! Leadership training that year. The country revisited its initial target of 2,200 due to rising implementation challenges. By the end of 2023, the cumulative number of young women throughout the programme's duration reached 9,711—representing 71%—of the revised overall target of 13,700. To improve the programme's effectiveness in 2024, the programme will implement a robust MEL system for leadership training and enhancing quality assurance measures to comply with feminist safe space standards.

5. Advancing Advocacy and Policy Reform

The YW4A programme diligently monitored advocacy activities and progress towards legal and policy reform in Egypt, Kenya, Palestine, and South Sudan. The YW4A advocacy approach builds the capacity of young women to lead these processes, collaborating closely with WROs and FBOs. There is evidence of tangible efforts and some gains contributing towards changing policies and laws.

5.1. Legal and Policy Advocacy

5.1.1. Young Women Leading Processes



EGYPT

In Egypt, young women have been equipped with legal knowledge through training, networking, and advocacy opportunities, empowering them to co-design, lead, and implement advocacy activities. The young women demonstrated their enhanced leadership capacity in different self-driven initiatives (e.g., initiatives for educating peers on political awareness and participation, raising awareness about mother guardianship and custody rights, drafting recommendations at the Lawyers' Camp, and contributing significantly to legal framework improvements).



The dissemination of policy briefs developed in 2022 promoted a shared understanding of legal concepts among young women, facilitating a deeper engagement with complex legal matters.

Egyptian WROs have organised camps and discussions on domestic violence and women's political participation, with young women leading these efforts. Moreover, WROs and young women collaborated on a recommendation letter highlighting flaws in the draft unified law to combat violence against women, strategically involving legal professionals. This collaborative approach demonstrates a commitment to addressing women's rights issues at policy and grassroots levels. Throughout 2023, WROs in Egypt have revised their safeguarding policies against SEAH to align with programme guidelines and cater to organisational dynamics, including discussions on partnering with FBOs to bolster safeguarding measures and address instances of exploitation, abuse, or harassment within faith institutions.



KENYA

During the reporting period in Kenya, significant progress was observed in advocacy initiatives at national and county levels. WROs and young women leveraged linkages with county governments through Gender Sector Working Groups (GSWG) to advocate for implementing or developing county gender policies. Notably, WROs in Meru and Migori counties advocated for policy review and gender bill development, while civil society collaboration with the county government in Kisii County led to the forthcoming launch of the Kisii Gender Policy in February 2024.



Active engagement with policymakers through county forums and the GSWG ensured WRO participation in policy development concerning GBV, with WROs in Kisii County contributing to the county gender policy and those in Meru spearheading the establishment of the Meru SGBV court.

Young women also played critical roles in advocacy, using media engagement, op-eds, and social media platforms to address gender issues and advocate for implementing human rights legal instruments. They participated in evidence-based advocacy and capacity-building workshops, demonstrating leadership potential in policy and legal reform processes. The programme facilitated the participation of young women, FBOs, and WROs in national engagements such as the Generation Equality Forum and county planning and budgeting processes to advocate for resource allocation to prevent and respond to SGBV.



PALESTINE

In Palestine, the young women's leadership journey was shaped by diverse capacity-building trainings, including RiseUp! Leadership training, media advocacy training, and coaching on engaging with UN mandates. Using these skills, they facilitated discussions in communities and universities about young women's priorities, supported their peers in the implementation of women-led initiatives, and participated in international platforms, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They collaborated internally and formed coalitions with other young female lawyers to engage in legal research and submission processes.



This collaboration strengthened their advocacy efforts to hold their governments accountable for their commitments. Following engagement with treaty bodies, recommendations were shared with the young women and incorporated into future advocacy strategies. Collaboration with the Hurra Coalition, supported by Equality Now, extended their advocacy reach regionally,

facilitating mutual learning and amplifying messages about issues affecting young women and girls through social media platforms. However, the absence of a functioning parliament challenges legal advocacy and governance, hindering legislative processes and delaying essential reforms necessary to address societal challenges. Despite these obstacles, young Palestinian women demonstrated increased proficiency in digital advocacy, leveraging online platforms to amplify their voices.



SOUTH SUDAN

Despite the volatile environment in South Sudan, advocacy efforts have yielded tangible progress in policy and legal reform, driven by the collaborative efforts of WROs and young women. Notably, the ratification of the Maputo Protocol marked a significant milestone, accelerating other legal advocacy objectives. Along with young women, the Self-Help Women Development Organization spearheaded advocacy for the Girl Child Education Bill in Western Equatoria State, which is currently in the draft stage with state legislature support. This demonstration of increased understanding and capacity in legal reform and advocacy underscores the sustainability of the knowledge and skills acquired. Young women conducted follow-up visits to critical institutions (e.g., the Ministry of Gender, Parliament, and the Fifth Vice President's Office) and monitored bill progress. They gained more profound insight into the legislative process. Feedback received through these engagements has been insightful and informed the advocacy campaign.



By recognising gaps in legislation, the programme prioritised the repeal of section 247 of the Act, which does not criminalise marital rape. A comprehensive review of the Penal Code Act 2024 is planned, focusing on human rights norms. Collaborative efforts at the Specialized Committee aimed to advance the legislative agenda and provide crucial support to GBV survivors. Individual initiatives—such as affiliation with the Revive South Sudan political party, leading consultations, engaging with high-level government officials, providing feedback on the status of laws and policies under review, and participating in radio talk shows—exemplify young women's proactive approach in advancing YW4A initiatives and ensuring sustainability beyond programme closure.

5.1.2. Young Women's Self-Led Advocacy Initiatives

In Kenya, FEMspaces have taken proactive steps towards economic empowerment to mitigate the risk of SGBV, engaging in various business initiatives. For example, in Nguruna, Migori County, young women from Wanashujaa FEMspace started a handmade floor mats business, later leasing land to cultivate sweet potatoes. In Umoja FEMspace, in Kisii County, young mothers supported by CECOME gather regularly to address community challenges and contribute to a savings scheme, venturing into businesses, including soap-making and blended juices.



Advocacy efforts by young women and WROs in Migori County have focused on operationalising safe shelters due to issues such as early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), using skills gained from advocacy workshops to engage with local authorities effectively. Reports, led by lead ToTs in Kenya, indicate significant growth in FEMspaces, with members now more confident and actively involved in leadership roles,

community engagement activities, and economic empowerment initiatives such as teaching each other skills such as hairdressing and basket weaving.

Following the Women Deliver Conference 2023, young women from Egypt and Palestine initiated various projects inspired by the YW4A programme, disseminating insights to around 50 participants through interactive sessions on gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, advocacy, and gender justice. Palestinian delegates proposed artistic advocacy projects—aimed at positioning art as a tool to raise awareness and promote gender equality—and proposed leveraging social media platforms to highlight success stories. In the meantime, Egyptian delegates suggested sessions for high school girls on leadership and self-autonomy, women's political participation, harmful social and gender norms, training sessions on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and filmmaking workshops.

These initiatives aim to catalyse positive change within their communities by challenging stereotypes, raising awareness, and empowering women through education and creative expression. These proactive initiatives aimed to extend the impact of the YW4A programme beyond the conference, engaging diverse audiences and empowering young women to drive meaningful change in their communities. They showcase young women's agency, resourcefulness, and commitment to advancing gender equality and women's rights. Recognizing the significance of these projects in advancing gender equality, sustained support is essential to realize their transformative potential and bring about lasting change.

5.2. Faith-based Advocacy

5.2.1. Assessing Impact, Sustainability, and Policy Faith-based Advocacy Efforts

The programme globally strengthened the advocacy capacity of FBOs by leveraging its faith lead, Faith to Action's network membership, to create platforms for advocating social justice and condemning violence against women. In 2023, this initiative saw substantial engagement, offering faith literacy resources and hosting webinars, reflection sessions, and global gatherings. These sessions aimed to empower young women within faith communities, enabling their involvement in decision-making processes and challenging harmful norms with the support of religious texts.

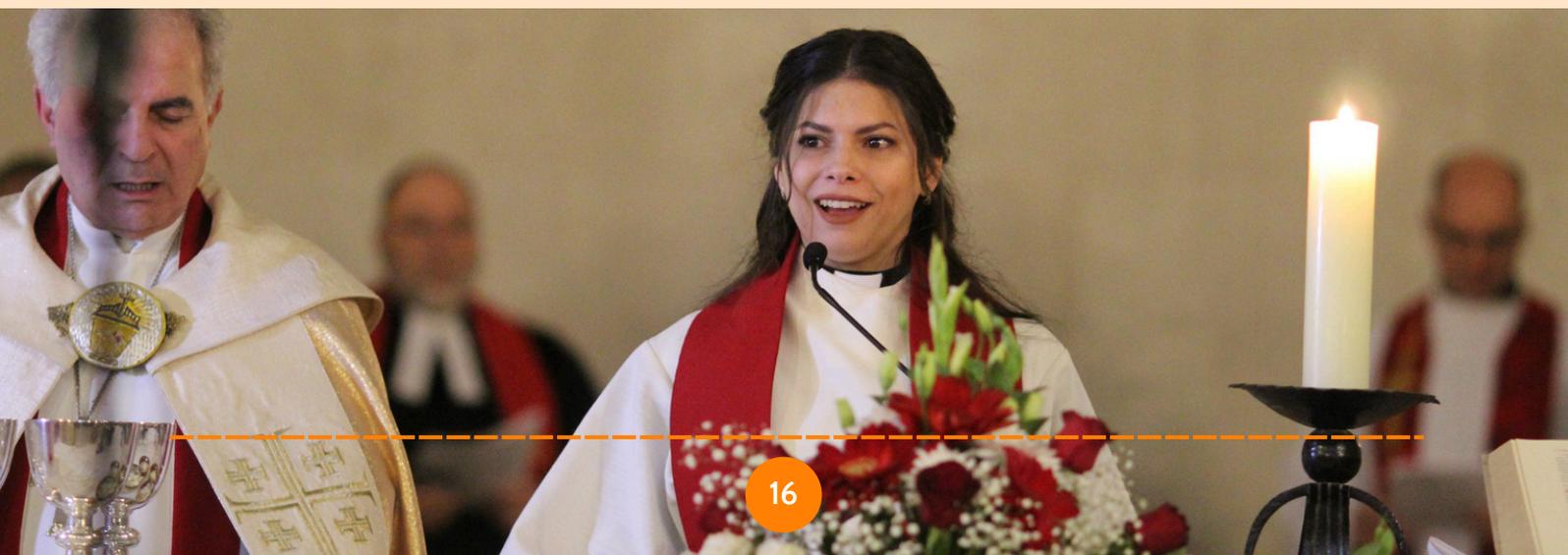
The Interreligious Convention, attended by 160 faith leaders, facilitated diverse engagement and peer-to-peer learning, enhancing faith actors' agency and advocacy skills to challenge gender-discriminatory norms and advocate for women's rights, particularly notable in South Sudan and Kenya. Faith partners' engagement in global platforms—such as the Netherlands Feminist Foreign Policy Conference, the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and the Asia Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment Network—has strengthened advocacy efforts and expanded their networks, amplifying the programme's impact within the faith community and beyond at regional and international levels.

The programme has also been linked with activities conducted by other initiatives. For example, through the Faith to Action Network's involvement in the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA), the programme facilitated a roundtable dialogue during the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference. This event emphasised the crucial role of women faith actors in implementing feminist foreign policies, with the ELCJHL showcasing the YW4A Gender Justice work in Palestine, promoting an inter-religious space for gender justice champions to strategise and share experiences. The programme's advocacy agenda within the faith community prioritises enhancing faith literacy as a strategy for sustainability, supporting the development of a publication challenging harmful norms and catalysing discussions on women's rights in Islam.

The programme created safe spaces to address discriminatory doctrines and behaviours within faith communities through online webinars and participatory consultations. On endorsement by Al Azhar University and Muhammadiyah in 2024, this publication will be integrated into the teaching curricula of these recognised institutions, ensuring a broader impact.

In **Egypt**, integrating training curricula within institutions like Al Azhar University and Protestant churches enhanced the sustainability of the programme's impact. These curricula extend beyond YW4A, which is evident in ongoing faith institution activities. For instance, the Coptic Orthodox Church independently conducted comprehensive gender equality training for its youth members, addressing critical issues such as violence against women and FGM. The church's efforts underscore the importance of gender equality, educating on SGBV root causes, preventive measures, and post-GBV care. Visible changes are apparent within targeted faith institutions. The Coptic Church has scaled up SGBV awareness interventions among congregants and plans to establish a WhatsApp hotline for GBV reporting. At the same time, the Evangelical Church implemented the YW4A curriculum, equipping young faith leaders with the knowledge to propagate gender equality messages. YW4A contributed to institutional changes in Al Azhar University, including training Muslim faith leaders on women's rights and adopting gender-progressive policies. Though changes are incremental due to bureaucracy, they signify progress in transforming gender norms beyond the programme's scope.

In **Kenya**, faith institutions such as NICA have made significant progress in implementing Gender Action Plans, which is evident in quarterly meetings, raising awareness of gender disparities, and establishing a dedicated Young Women's department. Institutional changes include drafting a comprehensive Gender Policy and creating a scholarship fund for young women pursuing theological studies. Similarly, in Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Kisii, progress was made through an internal meeting with women leaders to deepen their understanding of women's rights and gender equality, drawing upon biblical scriptures advocating gender equity. Embracing the positive masculinities approach, SDA Kisii challenged societal norms, providing a supportive environment for dialogue and empowerment during church camps.



Nyatike Evangelism One Accord also increased young women's representation in leadership positions, adhering to the two-thirds gender rule. Faith leaders demonstrated their commitment to gender inclusivity by revising the EOA Constitution, engaging with young women and incorporating SGBV bible study guides.

Establishing the Al-Hakimat Interfaith Council in **Palestine** marks a significant milestone in promoting dialogue and collaboration among diverse religious communities beyond the YW4A programme. Through this council, YW4A strengthens partnerships with the judicial sector to advocate for revising discriminatory family laws and enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes. The Al-Hakimat Council sustains itself by collaborating with other faith organisations, including the ACT Alliance and the Gender Justice for Palestine Working Group, broadening support networks. Faith champions within the council have amplified their impact by sharing YW4A-developed resources (e.g., policy reports and research papers) with other CSOs and bilateral organisations. These resources, alongside a forthcoming documentary film, are powerful tools to mobilise support for gender justice initiatives among faith actors in Palestine.

The ELCJHL has mainstreamed gender within its policies, witnessed through the election and ordination of women in decision-making roles, and actively advocates for women's leadership within the church and society, organising sessions and campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms.

In **South Sudan**, targeted faith institutions are actively addressing gender disparities and challenging prevailing social norms. While progress has been made in female participation in leadership roles—through the execution of gender action plans—tangible systemic changes remain elusive. For example, the South Sudan Islamic Council saw the election of a woman to a senior position as part of the gender action plan. The SDA South Sudan prioritised training on women's rights and leadership skills, resulting in increased female participation in decision-making processes within the church. Similarly, the Presbyterian Church South Sudan (PCSS) and the Episcopal Church South Sudan (ECSS) focused on integrating gender equality into church documents and supporting women's projects, including purchasing a water tank to support women's economic initiatives.

The South Sudan Pentecostal Church (SSPC) emphasised creating safe spaces, capacity building, and awareness sessions for women, resulting in increased reporting of GBV. YW4A-supported gender actions have been integrated into organisational strategies, ensuring ongoing efforts beyond the programme's scope.

6. Vision for Local Partnerships

The YW4A programme and partnership are grounded in principles of inclusion, alliances, and collaboration, aiming for collective decision-making and knowledge transfer among all partners. By carefully addressing power dynamics, the programme ensures the involvement of young women and WROs in all aspects.

6.1. Partnerships with WROs and FBOs

The YW4A programme consistently and deliberately enhanced the capacity of WROs and FBOs to become experts in law, women's rights, legal advocacy, and media advocacy aiming to drive legal reforms to endure impact beyond the programme's duration. Organisations underwent continuous training through the legal advocacy technical partner Equality Now to fill capacity gaps. WROs and FBOs have shown growth in understanding the law and advocacy skills. They bolster programme effectiveness by leveraging networks and local partnerships, gaining community support. In South Sudan, WROs proposed a coalition to advocate for legal priorities and engage in policy review processes, while in Kenya, WROs actively engage in decision-making processes, share best practices, and participate in county-level CSO networks and national-level coalitions.

The programme's commitment to engaging FBOs throughout all phases, from planning to implementation and monitoring, yielded meaningful results in 2023. This inclusive approach allowed FBOs to contribute unique perspectives and expertise, sparking innovative ideas and solutions—with WROs and young women—by facilitating impactful activities at national and sub-national levels (e.g., interfaith dialogues, SBCC dissemination campaigns and community dialogues on positive masculinities).

The programme significantly strengthened the knowledge and capacity of FBO partners through targeted awareness sessions addressing identified gaps in terms of behavioural change methodologies, religion and gender, and financial management. FBOs actively engaged in international conferences, including Women Deliver and the Inter-Religious Conference in South Africa, as well as national events, nurturing collaborative relationships as equal partners and ensuring representation in all learning meetings. Monthly meetings and one-on-one support sessions 2023 facilitated implementation progress review, activity planning, and technical support provision.

The process in 2023 generated valuable findings and recommendations for the 2024 planning. The MTR allowed for rethinking methodologies and approaches to better align with young women's needs and provided a useful space for different YW4A stakeholders to meet, interact, share perspectives and knowledge, and sometimes facilitate first-time encounters between participants. Moreover, WROs and FBOs played crucial roles in the AOCA process, critically assessing their capacity enhancement trajectory and drafting recommendations for future interventions, shaping learning sessions for 2024.

Country-specific Initiatives

In **Egypt**, the programme successfully integrated two new WROs, enriching its capacity to address diverse needs in education and young women's empowerment. IMC facilitated a participatory approach, ensuring the active involvement of young women and WROs at every stage through consultations and workshops, promoting transparency, accountability, and equitable decision-making. Addressing power dynamics, the programme provided capacity-building support to enhance skills and leadership abilities, resulting in WROs' leadership and ongoing engagement in advocacy strategy development. Moreover, IMC partnered with FBOs to engage critical religious leaders in promoting gender-just norms and values, involving Orthodox and Evangelical churches, Al Azhar University, and the Family House interfaith organization in developing curricula on women's rights and gender equality from a faith perspective. Training sessions raised awareness among faith leaders on distinguishing between religious teachings and harmful social norms related to GBV and women's rights, with subsequent activities involving the creation of Gender Action Plans to address GBV issues within FBOs.

Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions on positive masculinities involved disseminating concepts and methodologies to promote positive masculinity traits within religious communities, engaging young men and women.

In **Kenya**, WROs have spearheaded the planning of county activities, including the International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign, mobilizing resources from partner organisations and leading technical working groups in counties like Kisii and Migori. Country coordination meetings involving WROs, FBOs, YWRG members, country leads, and technical partners have been crucial to address challenges and develop action plans for 2024. At the YW4A Kenya annual reflection and planning meeting, collaborative opportunities across pathways and partners were identified to enhance efficiency, addressing past challenges (e.g., the exclusion of Pathway 3 partners due to implementation deviations). Positive developments such as the training on positive masculinities for WRO representatives and the AOCA for the Safe Engage Foundation have led to the integration of community dialogues on positive masculinities in FEMspaces and the increase of FBOs' engagement in activities at both national and county levels. Strengthening intra-alliance collaboration, particularly between FBOs and other partners, was emphasised for joint planning efforts.

In **Palestine**, WROs have joined coalitions like Al Muntadar, enhancing their understanding of cultural nuances and values and tailoring legal advocacy accordingly. WROs are also part of the Hurra Coalition for regional legal reform, facilitating cross-learning and regional advocacy. In Palestine and Egypt, WROs, FBOs, and representatives of the YWRG developed and implemented advocacy strategies jointly, providing mutual guidance and capacity support (e.g., EFFD and PSCCW offer legal advice and opinions at the country level in Egypt and Palestine). Close collaboration with WROs, FBOs, and young women in adapting activities during Q4 in response to changes in the Palestinian context was crucial for successful adaptation and planning. This participatory approach will continue into 2024. Monthly coordination meetings with WROs and FBOs have played a vital role in addressing challenges collaboratively, exploring solutions, and identifying opportunities for collaboration to maximise the impact of implemented activities.

The programme collaborated with CAPAD in South Sudan to engage young women from various faith-based institutions. This collaborative approach ensures inclusivity and addresses issues related to young women's lived realities across different areas and walks of life, involving diverse FBOs in joint efforts.

6.2. Partnership with Young Women

The partnership with young women under the YW4A programme has manifested in the following areas:

Leadership and Advocacy Capacity Strengthening:

Throughout the year, the programme prioritised transferring knowledge and leadership roles to young women across the four countries, enhancing their capacity in law, women's rights, and advocacy alongside WROs and FBOs. In Kenya and South Sudan, refresher training was provided during gatherings, such as FEMspace reflection and quarterly meetings. In the MENA region, virtual sessions focused on specific issues such as workplace sexual harassment and engaging UN human rights mechanisms. Partners ensured representation from diverse backgrounds, including marginalised groups, including young women with disabilities, promoting inclusivity. Additionally, young activist survivors of SGBV were offered safe spaces to share experiences, promoting mutual support and collaboration and acknowledging and celebrating their courage and leadership as activists.

In Egypt, partners prioritised addressing power dynamics within partnerships by providing capacity-building support and resources to young women, enhancing their skills, knowledge, and leadership abilities. Their meaningful inclusion ensured that their perspectives were valued in decision-making processes, notably in developing the Egypt 2024 advocacy plan. Quarterly review and planning meetings enabled them to review implementation progress, ensuring their interests were effectively addressed. Meanwhile, in Kenya, young women and WROs have demonstrated ownership and leadership in programme efforts, mainly through establishing FEMspaces, where they drive initiatives for holistic advancement. Lead ToTs have formed groups addressing specific needs of various demographics (e.g., young mothers, young women in the Muslim community, those with disabilities, sexual minorities, teenagers); addressed community issues related to SGBV; held duty

bearers accountable; and joined community structures and referral pathways, becoming points of contact for SGBV cases. In Palestine, young women actively participated in YW4A training. They engaged in national, regional, and international coalitions and conferences, which empowered them to make meaningful contributions on a larger scale (e.g., sharing their advocacy tactics and strategies in formulating initiatives when they participated in the Al Hurra Coalition in Doha). Young women have played a vital role in driving the programme forward, actively participating in both the planning and implementation stages and contributing innovative ideas.

Taking Up Leadership and Advocacy Spaces: In 2023, the programme supported opportunities for young women to exercise leadership and contribute to meaningful dialogue and action at various levels. To meet some of these women, refer to the Annex 4. Stories of young women's leadership journeys.

Young women have participated in different international advocacy and development spaces. One such opportunity was the virtual parallel session titled **'Conflict, SGBV and Technology: Learnings from Young Women in Gaza'** during the NGO Forum of CSW67. Through this session, the World YWCA amplified the voices and experiences of young women from Gaza, regarding the impact of conflict and technology in mitigating SGBV. Other platforms were the Women Deliver 2023 and the Interreligious Convention.

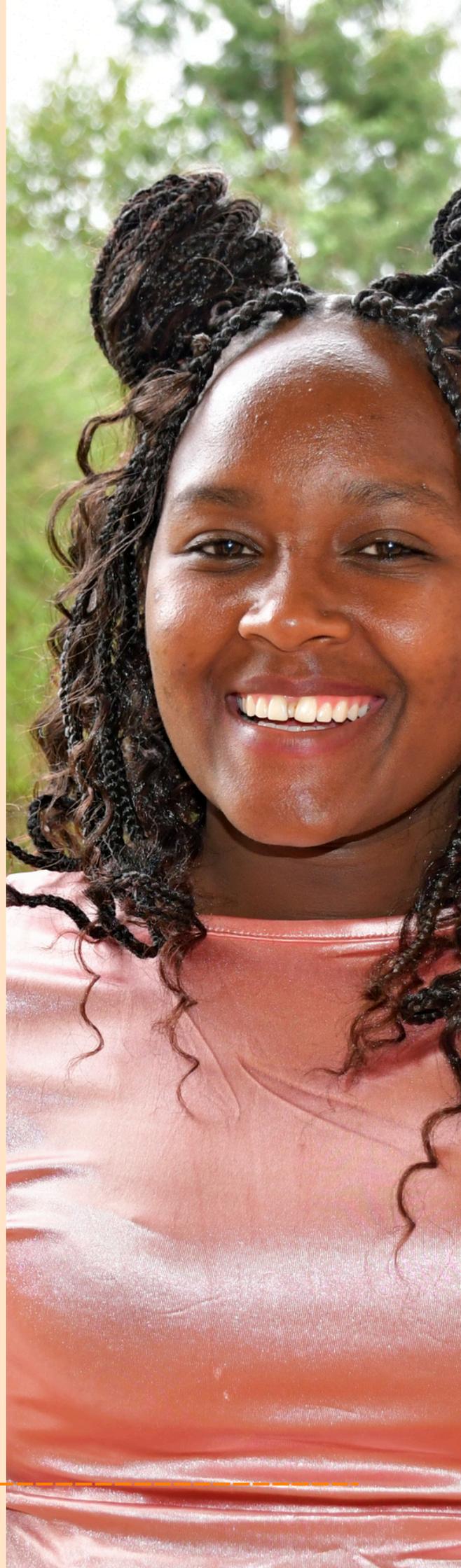
Through the YW4A programme, Christine Alphons—founder of the Safe Engage Foundation in Kuria, Kenya—participated in the Goalkeepers' Event in New York to accelerate SDG progress. Following the event, she felt inspired by witnessing other young women recognized for their leadership roles, underscoring the profound impact of acknowledging and celebrating transformative leadership within communities. In another event, Batool Sanad from Palestine, at the Women Deliver conference, demonstrated the programme's impact on young women's agency and leadership. Empowered by YW4A training, she courageously advocated for inclusion and diversity in a conference session on barriers to gender equality. She emphasized that the Israeli Occupation in Palestine is not just political but also a rights and humanitarian issue that is a significant barrier to gender equality.

In Kenya, young women participated in the Girl Summit 2023 to promote and protect the SRHR of women and girls and in the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and NGO Forum to raise awareness about the Maputo Protocol. Young women in the four countries demonstrated their agency by creating safe spaces and leading initiatives alongside their peers (e.g., organising roundtable discussions with decision-makers on workplace sexual harassment). Additionally, they showed adaptability by developing emergency plans and collaborating with national coalitions to address emerging priorities.

Faith-based Initiatives: In 2023, the programme prioritised the active involvement of young women at all levels of activities with faith actors and institutions, ensuring their meaningful engagement. For instance, Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church development committee included young women and men alongside faith leaders while developing gender action plans. Young people managed their platform at the Inter-Religious Conference in South Africa. Pre-conference sessions provided a platform for young women and men to voice their needs and challenges, shaping discussions during the youth pre-conference and the main event. Young women participated as panellists, attended sessions with faith leaders, and engaged with decision-makers in the faith space to enhance their leadership skills.

Additionally, the programme ensured a safe and inclusive environment for young women by organising separate youth pre-conference sessions and identifying youth-friendly sessions during significant events. These spaces ensured inclusivity and representation of young women, supported by follow-ups with partner WROs and FBOs to ensure fair representation. Efforts to empower young women will persist in 2024, facilitating their participation in the programme and faith spaces through various opportunities, including workshops and conferences.

Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Processes: The YWRG is critical in outcome monitoring. Throughout the MTR process, YWRG members primarily served as respondents. Centring their experiences helped return the comprehensive review to YW4A's overarching objectives. They also participated in sensemaking workshops to ensure that the voices of young women engaged in YW4A were adequately represented and that their experiences and recommendations were captured. Moreover, these young women are part of the AOCA core team, which reflected on and assessed the organisation's capacity changes in the mid-term. Out of the total number of AOCA workshop participants (130), 78% were women, with almost half being young women (45%). The engagement of young women in the YWRG and AOCA core teams ensures their representation and active involvement in decision-making processes.



7. Working in Partnerships

7.1. Local and National Partnerships

Overall, the programme diligently monitors coalitions and partnerships to evaluate their effectiveness in achieving objectives, with the examples mentioned below indicating positive progress. This follow-up and strengthening of alliances will persist throughout the duration of the programme to ensure sustainability beyond its conclusion.

In **Egypt**, local partnerships were crucial in the programme's efforts to reach young women from diverse backgrounds. The collective efforts of 32 secondary WROs proved instrumental. These partnerships provided access to resources and expertise, creating a supportive network for 2,107 young women. This collaboration facilitated mentorship opportunities, enabling young women to embark on transformative journeys and contribute to a more inclusive society. Concrete evidence of their active engagement includes organising women's festivals, designing advocacy initiatives, and volunteering in WROs. In Egypt, IMC is establishing a coalition that ratifies the ILO Convention 190 on Workplace Sexual Harassment. Under the faith pathway, IMC collaborated predominantly with the Coptic Orthodox Church and Lutheran Evangelical Church in Egypt to implement the YW4A programme. They collaborated on developing SBCC messages, from the initial stages of the situation and stakeholder analysis to creating the SBCC plan.

In **Kenya**, coalitions have strengthened a diverse network of stakeholders, including county government officials, civil society organisations, and community leaders. Through targeted capacity-building workshops, coalition members have been equipped with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary for effective advocacy, networking, and leadership within their communities. This effort has facilitated referral services among WROs and provided opportunities for young women and WRO leaders to engage in community-based initiatives and meetings addressing SGBV. At the national level, YWCA Kenya participated in the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) Children's Committee meeting to validate rules under the Children Act and in a CSO meeting with UNICEF to review the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These engagements were important for their involvement in national-level policy discussions. Under the faith pathway, the programme collaborated with NICA, Evangelism One Accord, Kisii Interfaith Network, and Kisii SDA Church, in partnership with YWCA Meru, Inua Mama Mjane, Safe Engage Foundation, CECOME, and YWCA Kisii respectively. The teams delivered key SBCC messages through community dialogues and positive masculinities sessions in churches and schools and through FEMspaces.

In **Palestine**, the involvement of WROs as members of Al Muntadar proved highly impactful in facilitating the implementation of planned activities and achieving more significant outcomes. AlMuntada was pivotal in establishing a body of religious leaders within the programme and ensuring the sustainability of this body. Its ongoing engagement will support advocacy efforts, influence social norms, and drive change. Moreover, four young women from the programme were engaged in the AlMuntada youth committee, a platform to represent their peers in a national coalition, influencing plans and advocacy efforts and engaging in dialogue with decision-makers. The geographical reach of AlMuntada members allowed for implementing YW4A activities in remote areas such as Area C and reaching out to Gazan women and children trapped in the West Bank. Under the work with faith actors, the Gender Justice Ministry of ELCJHL strengthened partnerships with the YWCA of Palestine. It involved producing a documentary film featuring young women's voices and testimonies from organisations and other WROs. The Al-Hakimat Interfaith Council also established partnerships with the judicial sector to advocate for revisions of discriminatory provisions and promote women's participation in decision-making processes.

In **South Sudan**, WROs are members of several influential networks, including the Women Monthly Forum, the Rule of Law Technical Reference Group, and CCORPS+. These networks have significantly enhanced the capacity of WROs to collaborate effectively and have provided a broad platform to advocate for legal reforms. YW4A collaborates with CAPAD in the country, along with five other FBOs. These organisations are promoting gender equality within their institutions and disseminating faith-based messages, as well as positive masculinity approaches to transform social norms in patriarchal communities.

Quarterly roundtable dialogues with WROs and FBOs were conducted, increasing manpower and expertise, cost-sharing initiatives, and expanded networks and alliances. Despite this critical work, accountability challenges, primarily stemming from the Country Lead, had ripple effects on local WROs. These difficulties prompted discussions about discontinuing the involvement of YWCA South Sudan due to financial irregularities. World YWCA has been taking remedial actions; however, the issue had remained unresolved by the end of the year. Although WROs demonstrate a willingness to partner, they face several challenges. In 2024, with a programme realignment, the WROs will be supported in implementing their sustainability plans, which include training in partnership building and resource mobilisation.

Throughout 2023, World YWCA fulfilled the role of safeguarding and fiduciary agent within the programme. This responsibility involved closely monitoring, supporting, and supervising local and national partners through the Country Leads. The Consortium agreed to annual audits for all eight consortium and implementing partners to validate their annual financial reports. The consortium lead partner is committed to providing tailored support to address subgrant management and financial accountability challenges, strengthening oversight and monitoring mechanisms through regular financial checks and transparent reporting processes. However, the MFA must recognize that shifting towards leadership from the Global South requires substantial investment in capacity building for local partners. Therefore, this aspect must be considered in the next funding framework. Enhanced coordination meetings with technical partners are planned for 2024 to strengthen collaboration and joint work opportunities.

7.2. Partnership with Local Dutch Embassies

The YW4A programme is actively strengthening partnerships with Dutch embassies across its operational countries. IMC Management in Egypt has engaged in meetings with the embassy to explore future collaboration and areas of cooperation, aiming to showcase programme success. YWCA Kenya participated in the Vice Versa Global Festival organized by the Dutch Embassy, discussing climate change, GBV, and women's inclusion in innovation. Johnstone Kuya, the Senior Policy Advisor at the Embassy, also participated in critical

dialogue on internet safety in a YW4A Communications Working Group-hosted webinar, ***From Pixels to Power: Navigating Online Spaces Safely and Fearlessly***, on the International Day of the Girl. This resulted in developing a resource tool for young women to navigate the internet safely.

Similarly, in South Sudan, strong ties with the Dutch Embassy have led to workshop invitations and active contributions to shaping implementation strategies to empower women and transform communities. Efforts are being made in Palestine to improve communication and collaboration with the Dutch Embassy despite leadership changes, with plans for 2024 to enhance coordination and engagement.

7.3. Partnership as a Consortium

As the consortium's lead partner, World YWCA has been pivotal in ensuring effective partnerships and coordination among programme partners. This was achieved through various means, such as global semi-annual review meetings held in February and September, where partners convene to exchange updates, celebrate successes, address challenges, and strategize for the future. Additionally, specialized technical working groups such as the programme management committee, communications working group, finance working group, and MEL working group facilitated focused discussions and decision-making on specific programme aspects, enhancing implementation efficiency.

Moreover, as the Consortium Lead, in collaboration with technical partners, World YWCA has taken proactive steps to ensure coordination during major global events such as Women Deliver, Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, and the Interreligious Convention to ensure alignment with safeguarding protocols and prioritize participant safety.

Consortium partners collaborated to support young women's participation in critical advocacy and networking spaces, exemplified by joint efforts with Equality Now and Faith to Action Network to facilitate the engagement of young women in international conferences, amplifying their voices on global platforms (see section 5).

At the country level, World YWCA regional technical managers oversaw partner activities. They ensured programme quality through regular field visits while actively participating in in-country coordination meetings to align strategies and encourage stakeholder collaboration. World YWCA promotes connections with global development actors outside the consortium, participating in forums such as the Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), ACT Alliance, and the UN Multi-Faith Advisory Council. It dialogues with the MoFA, Global Youth Mobilisation Fund, and The RiseUp! Initiative in South East Asia and the Pacific, and coordinates with other Power of Women (PoW) alliances (e.g., Power Up!, AWESOME and FemPower consortiums, and Dutch-funded feminist movements/alliances).

Other consortium partners have also played an active role in the effective and efficient working of the partnership. YWCA Kenya and technical partners have streamlined joint planning processes through quarterly country coordination committee meetings, facilitating coordinated activities and maximising results.

Similarly, YWCA Palestine's coordination with consortium partners was crucial to adjusting activities and approaches in response to the changed context in Palestine.

Meanwhile, continuous efforts have been made to create linkages and collaborations between different pathways and partners (e.g., the creation of the SBCC plan together with partners in Egypt, Kenya, Palestine, and South Sudan and the Faith to Action Network). KIT's role in planning and executing the MTR and AOCA workshop enhanced coordination and stakeholder engagement in 2023. The MEL working group, led by KIT, has evolved into a community of practice, facilitating cross-country and cross-partner sharing to improve the YW4A programme.

7.4. Within the MFA's Strengthening Civil Society Partnerships

The Power of Women Buddies: The partnership with other alliances under the PoW continued through self-organisation as PoW buddies, yet it lacked the desired organic cohesion. However, the first face-to-face meeting of these alliances in The Hague on the side-lines of the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference proved highly valuable. This experience should be considered a recommended practice; in-person gatherings enable cross-learning and networking, enhancing collaboration and cohesion among partner organisations.

SCS Dialogues and Training: Representatives from the consortium and implementing partners participated in SCS webinars and a policy dialogue convened by the MFA focused on different topics. The MFA's IATI and MEL helpdesk proved an excellent go-to platform for solving technical issues. However, in some cases, conflicting information/priorities were shared by different MFA staff.



With the baseline and year 2 reporting in place, we expect future reporting to be less burdensome. The SCS dialogues on advocacy were particularly informative, offering guidance on better linking local, national, and global advocacy efforts and facilitating connections with other consortia operating. During these dialogues, the YW4A partners shared experiences on integrating local-level learnings into international advocacy efforts and translating global outcomes to the local context. The collaboration with the MFA has enriched the partners' comprehension of freedom of religion and belief matters and offered avenues for young women to elevate their voices on crucial programmatic issues within the faith domain. The World YWCA serves as the intermediary between the MFA and the YW4A partners, receiving communication about the events convened. Due to the MFA's restrictive selection criteria, the World YWCA consistently faces challenges in ensuring equal participation of different partners. The MFA typically limits participation to a maximum of two people per alliance, whereas YW4A has approximately 30 local, national, regional, and international partners.

Annual Policy Dialogue: During the reporting year, the MFA conducted its annual Policy Dialogue with the YW4A consortium. The agenda encompassed a range of topics, including introspections on the past year; future projections outlined in the Annual Plan for 2023/2024; strategic partnerships with the Ministry; mechanisms for MEL; effective communication strategies; addressing SEAH; and a discussion on the programme's future and collaboration with MFA. The dialogue facilitated constructive exchanges, set a strategic trajectory, and strengthened the MFA and the YW4A consortium partnership. However, discussions were somewhat constrained due to limited time and the need to incorporate input from all partners. More time should be allocated to these dialogues, especially for addressing challenges in the relationship with MFA. Furthermore, rather than solely a progress check exercise, discussing issues related to the strategic partnership with MFA and the programme's strategic direction would be more valuable.

Consultations at the Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference: The Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy Conference, held by the Netherlands Government in 2023, brought together various stakeholders to discuss critical issues and strategies related to feminist foreign policy.

While the conference aimed to provide a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration with the MFA, several setbacks and areas for improvement were identified, as discussed under activity AGTO.



On the sidelines of the conference, a feminist World Cafe event allowed Dutch MFA representatives and feminist civil society partners to exchange views and explore strategic priorities for the next civil society funding framework. This meeting highlighted the importance of ongoing engagement and consultation between the MFA and civil society partners. The MFA should prioritise more such meetings with Dutch Ministry representatives to ensure continuous dialogue. Additionally, there is a need for increased interaction beyond contact points on policy issues.

8. Conflict Sensitivity

YW4A employs a conflict-sensitive approach to tailor its strategies and activities, recognising its diverse contexts and cultures to minimise negative consequences and maximise positive impacts. An example is the meticulous translation process, particularly concerning sensitive topics such as LGBTIQ rights, ensuring inclusivity while respecting societal norms in the MENA region. The RiseUp! Leadership manual underwent strategic adjustments, excluding the LGBTIQ section from the Arabic translation due to regional sensitivities. Training contents were culturally and religiously adapted, with continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure effectiveness.

Careful consideration of local social, cultural, and religious contexts guided messaging, participant selection, and material use to prevent negative consequences.

In Egypt, advocacy efforts require careful navigation due to political sensitivities, with restricted dissemination of participation opportunities and cautious communication about activities (e.g., camps and safe spaces), as illustrated by the challenges faced during *'The Mother Guardianship Podcast'* broadcast. Four out of the eight episodes of the podcast were banned from publication due to their political content, reflecting the sensitivity of Egypt's political landscape. In the country, WROs and country leads proactively involved religious leaders from diverse backgrounds in events, including the Domestic Violence camp, nurturing deeper understanding, allyship, and stakeholder ownership, thereby reducing conflict risk and ensuring positive impact.

In response to escalating gender tensions involving state actors in **Kenya**, YW4A adopts a nuanced approach, recognizing the need to address social norms alongside empowering WROs and young women. Strategies included training WROs and ToTs on positive masculinity to engage men and boys and acknowledging the interconnectedness of factors affecting young women. Discussions on terminology and inclusivity continued, with sensitive navigation of topics, including women's leadership roles in settings such as the SDA Kisii Church. YW4A ensured the integration of all pathways, implementing gender and conflict-sensitive programming and addressing challenges such as the mix of different age cohorts within community FEMspaces and misinformation among ToTs. In Kisii County, WROs faced resistance when petitioning for support for a GBV and Rehabilitation Centre, highlighting government reluctance to accept criticism. Despite pushback, WROs persisted, contributing to gender policy development and ongoing engagement with government entities, collaborating to strategize on advocacy outcomes.

Conflict sensitivity is crucial for the programme's effectiveness and stakeholder well-being in navigating the complex context in **Palestine**. Partners adeptly managed movement restrictions, adjusting activities to prevent exacerbating tensions. For instance, during protests, events were relocated to minimize conflict risks. Israeli movement restrictions also posed challenges, such as obtaining permits for young women to attend workshops in Jordan or needing access to Amman airport. Despite uncertainties posed by Israeli restrictions, the programme's adaptive management approach provided flexibility, responsiveness, and continual learning throughout programme interventions.

In Bethlehem, strong community relations and prior coordination were crucial in overcoming obstacles to implementing leadership training for local young women. Although there were attempts from Hizb ut-Tahrir members to intimidate parents and deter participation, the village council head and the Psychosocial Counselling Centre for Women (PSCCW) provided accompaniment to ensure the participants' safety and the training's success.

In **South Sudan**, partners had to navigate a sensitive political environment, ensuring messaging focused on human rights-based action rather than political criticism to avoid government backlash. Advocacy efforts in 2023 highlighted human rights violations against young women, advocating for implementing the Maputo Protocol. The subsequent ratification of the Maputo Protocol during that year indicates that the authorities positively received this message despite concerns over delays in programme implementation, permanent communication via various channels maintained transparency and managed expectations among stakeholders, including WROs and young women, sustaining momentum despite setbacks.

The programme focuses on strengthening dialogue and understanding within the faith space, creating safe environments to discuss sensitive topics such as harmful norms and practices within faith institutions. Using methodologies such as the Chatham House rules during the Inter-religious Convention, religious leaders engaged in constructive conversations on contentious issues and reached a consensus on gender justice. Through partnerships with authoritative FBOs, partners actively challenge harmful norms and develop supportive religious texts to facilitate deeper conversations on gender justice.



For instance, Al Azhar University has developed a curriculum training for Muslim Faith Leaders, incorporating supportive yet sensitive religious texts to address biases and misinterpretations of scripture.

At the community level, discussions regarding women's participation in leadership and decision-making remain sensitive, as does the issue of faith communities speaking out against GBV. Despite sensitivities, the programme builds the capacity of champions to engage in healthy debates and meaningful dialogue on topics such as GBV, promoting respect and tolerance within communities.

Close collaboration with Country Leads and national KIT advisors has been pivotal in ensuring conflict sensitivity during the MTR, evident in tailored ToRs for sensemaking workshops, which were continuously tailored to fit each country's context. National advisors' facilitation skills guided the Amsterdam-based team in identifying power imbalances and mitigation strategies. Adherence to KIT's ethical principles ensured confidentiality, privacy (GDPR regulations), and participant safety. Appropriate locations for face-to-face consultations were identified with Country Leads or WRO offices, and participation was voluntary and anonymous using safeguards in Sprockler and Survey Monkey. Consent was obtained before data collection, and stories shared were anonymized to protect participant well-being.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

9.1. Internal mid-term review (MTR)

In 2023, YW4A's MEL activities were primarily centred around conducting the internal MTR. Led by KIT in close collaboration with consortium partners and the MEL working group*, the MTR assessed the first two and a half years of programme implementation, capturing YW4A's progress, achievements, and lessons learnt. Special attention was paid to the progress on MoFA's basket indicators, apart from identifying areas for improvement and solidifying the programme's gender transformative approach.

The review spanned from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2023, encompassing programme activities in Egypt, Kenya, Palestine, and South Sudan. To ensure inclusivity and adherence to feminist evaluation principles, it facilitated reflection among diverse stakeholders (consortium partners, representatives from WROs, FBOs, and the programme's YWRGs). It employed a mixed-method approach.



Electronic surveys were administered to WROs and FBOs, while 87 young women across the four countries shared their leadership stories through interviews. Additionally, 39 key informant interviews and four focus group discussions were conducted with YWRG. During country-level sensemaking workshops, participants identified lessons learnt and developed recommendations. These recommendations were consolidated into country-specific reports, informing the overall MTR recommendations. Notably, the MTR recommendations were collaboratively developed between YW4A stakeholders and the MTR team. In response to MTR recommendations related to MEL, the MEL working group has initiated revisions to harmonize output and outcome monitoring tools, including redesigning participant tracking tools and databases.

Reflection on MTR recommendations. The finalisation of the MTR report coincided with the development of YW4A's 2024 annual work plan and budget. Preliminary findings and recommendations were shared with all YW4A partners during the September 2023 semi-annual planning workshop to guide the drafting of actions and potential adjustments for the upcoming year. This workshop also facilitated discussions on target setting for specific indicators. However, due to time constraints, there was limited opportunity for in-depth reflection on the MTR recommendations and their prioritization among consortium partners.

*Consisting of a MEL representative per consortium partner. The group gathers virtually monthly to discuss, for example, the usability of a monitoring tool and potential need for adjustments, the MTR approach and process, any challenges/best practices encountered, concerns, etc.

Therefore, a dedicated reflection and discussion session was scheduled for the consortium's semi-annual planning and review meeting in February 2024. The outcomes of this reflection are presented in this year's annual report.

During the discussion, participants prioritised the eight recommendations. Six of the eight recommendations did not spark further debate among partners. However, suggestions concerning fidelity and quality assurance of capacity-building approaches, as well as simplification of training materials, prompted discussion. Notably, the recommendation on fidelity and quality assurance was the only one with which participants disagreed. Regarding simplifying training materials, the issues highlighted as most challenging were related to leveraging experience from ToTs in cohort 1. In prioritizing recommendations, participants identified three priorities: deepening young women's engagement after training, prioritizing cross-pathway collaboration and integration, and reviewing and reinforcing MEL activities. The recommendation regarding psychosocial care for survivors of SGBV ranked fourth, though some partners emphasized its significance and feasibility. Participants identified concrete actions to further the implementation of the MTR recommendations and sub-actions as part of their 2024 interventions.

10. Programme Learning Agenda

10.1. Programme Theory of Change Reflection

In 2023, the global learning agenda primarily focused on the review of YW4A's ToC at mid-term. The country-level MTR sensemaking workshops included a review of the programme's overall and country-specific ToCs, during which participants assessed strategies, targets, and assumptions to validate YW4A's approach and consider adjustments for the final two years. Insights from the ToC review informed country-specific MTR actions and recommendations, highlighting the need for adjustments to specific targets, particularly intermediate outcome 2a (strengthened individual leadership of 17,540 young women) and related strategies.

The outcomes will shape YW4A's global learning agenda for 2024 and 2025. The ToC exercise resulted in a ToC Reflection brief* to build upon the MTR findings, synthesising cross-programme and Pathway learnings and providing a forward-looking perspective for partner WROs, FBOs, and the YWRG to continue refining their programming and interventions. The brief aims to promote a shared understanding while accommodating diverse perspectives and contexts within the YW4A programme, promoting collaboration and harmonization.

Given the programme's scope across four countries, multiple communities, eight technical and country lead partners, and involvement with up to 45 WROs or FBOs, differences in understanding and implementation of the ToC are inevitable. While collaborative efforts towards common objectives and maintaining key messages are crucial, acknowledging these differences is equally important. Recognizing these disparities has cultivated understanding and facilitated harmonization within the YW4A programme.

11. Spotlight on Young Women's Leadership Journeys

Access [*Stories of Young Women's Leadership Journeys*](#) to read the women's individual and collective experiences.

12. Best practices

The best practices of YW4A partners from participation in the programme in 2023 are strong evidence of progress towards the achievement of the programme's intermediate objectives. Read more on [*YW4A Partners' Best Practices*](#).

*ToC brief will be finalized early 2024.

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