terre des hommes
Help for Children in Need

Status Quo of Youth Participation at tdh in 2024

Evaluation report for the tdh International Youth Network

Report prepared by

Ann-Christin Hayk & Sonja Ende

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List of Content

Abbreviations

DC	tdh Delegates Conference
ECR	Environmental Child Rights
GAM	Global Action Month
HO	tdh Head Office
IYN	International Youth Network
YET	Youth Editorial Team
MPMR	My Planet My Rights
tdh	terre des hommes Germany

Introduction

For terre des hommes Germany (tdh) as children's rights organisation, children and youth, their needs and challenges are the central point of departure for any activities worldwide. Together with partner organisation tdh aims at creating and providing safe and empowering spaces for young people who want to become active citizens and agents of change. Thereby, tdh and its partner organisations worldwide act as encouraging supporters of these young agents of change.

Against this background, the International Youth Network (IYN) was founded in 2011 as a space for young people to participate, engage, and become active. More precisely, back in the days, the aims of starting such network activities on an international level were the following:

- A response to Article 12 of the UN CRC, which demands children's views and voices to be heard and considered.
- Strengthen intercultural dialogue and Global Citizenship in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7.
- Enable youth to participate in the tdh internal co-decision processes about the political and strategical direction of the organisation's work, concretely the Delegates Conference (DC).
- Strengthen youth's advocacy and lobbying on international level (e.g. at the UN).
- Create a platform for young people to exchange ideas and experiences.
- Enable global learning in form of a peer2peer approach.
- Enable young people to create new and joint ideas for activities and campaigns.

A lot has happened since the foundation in 2011 and the IYN appears as an intrinsic part of tdh as organisation. The network has emerged as one component of a broader concept of youth networks: there are youth networks linked to tdh on community, national, regional, and international level. Altogether, these networks form a space for youth empowerment and for young people to become active agents of change. A key example is the so-called Global Action Month (GAM), which was established in 2014 and covers a variety of environmental protection activities by networks members worldwide.

Rather lately, two institutional structures have evolved within the IYN. First, the Youth Editorial Team (YET) that started working in 2021. The YET consists of IYN members who were selected based on a call for interest within the network to handle the IYN Social Media accounts. The members are selected for a period of one year; at the time of the evaluation, the YET is in its second phase. Second, the Youth Board, which has been formed following the DC 2023, establishing a constant structure for the 2023 Youth Delegates to continue their involvement. The Youth Board consists of the six Youth Delegates and their respective subsidiaries.

These developments indicate a certain level of institutionalisation and strategy; neither is actually available regarding the IYN. Much rather, the IYN seems to lack a clear definition and understanding as well as a specified position and role within tdh as organisation. These uncertainties raise questions and demand a closer look at the idea and the actual appearance of the IYN. Therefore, this internal evaluation of the IYN was conducted in winter 2023/2024. Aiming at the provision of a holistic yet preliminary overview of the IYN, the evaluation looks at the variety of definitions and understandings of the IYN and at the achievements and challenges since the network's foundation in 2011.

Methodology

Numerous respondents with diverse backgrounds and distinct perspectives on the IYN participated in the evaluation. Different methods of data collection were applied to accommodate the needs of different respondents and groups of respondents. Data collection consisted of a standardised and anonymous online survey for IYN members, online interviews, and online group discussions. The table below specifies who participated in the investigation as respondent.

Data collection format	Respondents
Standardised online survey, available in English, Spanish & Portuguese	35 IYN members
Online interviews	Programmes Officer for IYN at Head Office (HO) = Anna
	Communication Officer at HO = Miye
	Public Relations Officer at HO = Stephan
	Head of Programmes = Lena
	Board Member Programmes Department = Tuto
	Board Member Communications Department = Joshua
	IYN Focal Point Latin America = Lorena
Online group discussions	IYN Youth Board
	IYN YET
	IYN Focal Points Southeast Asia & South Asia = Chandan, Gemi & Snehal

During most interviews and group discussions automated transcription technologies were applied to record the conversations. Subsequently, the transcripts were corrected for recording errors. During interviews and group sessions for which no automated recording was available, handwritten notes were taken and transcribed later for analysis purposes.

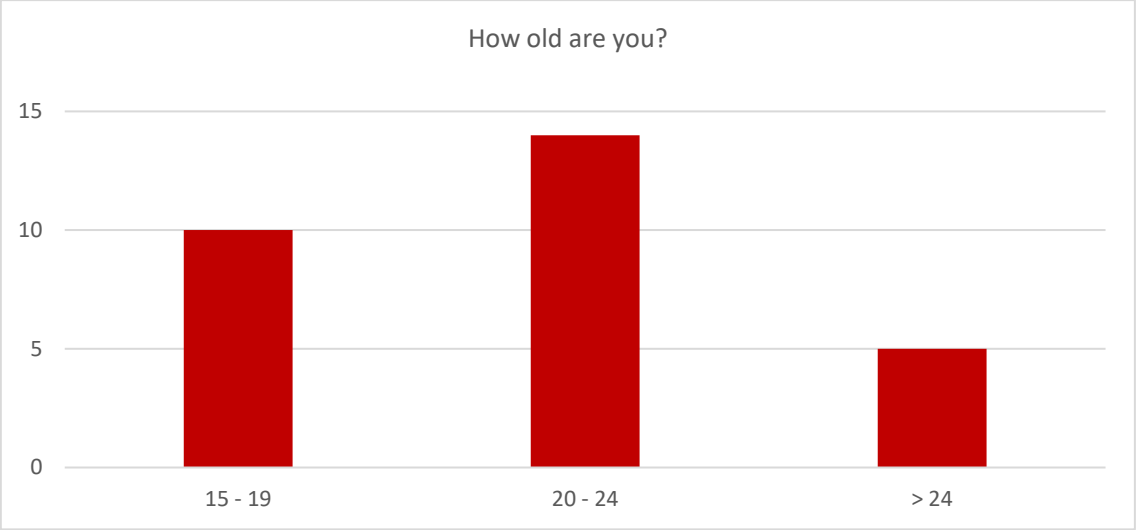
Analysing the information provided by the respondents, six core themes emerged, which resemble the six chapters of this evaluation report. Most of the information described in the following chapters is based on aggregated notions and perceptions of the respondents. Wherever relevant, it is noted that information is disaggregated, i. e. based on notions specifically indicated by one respondent or a certain respondents' group.

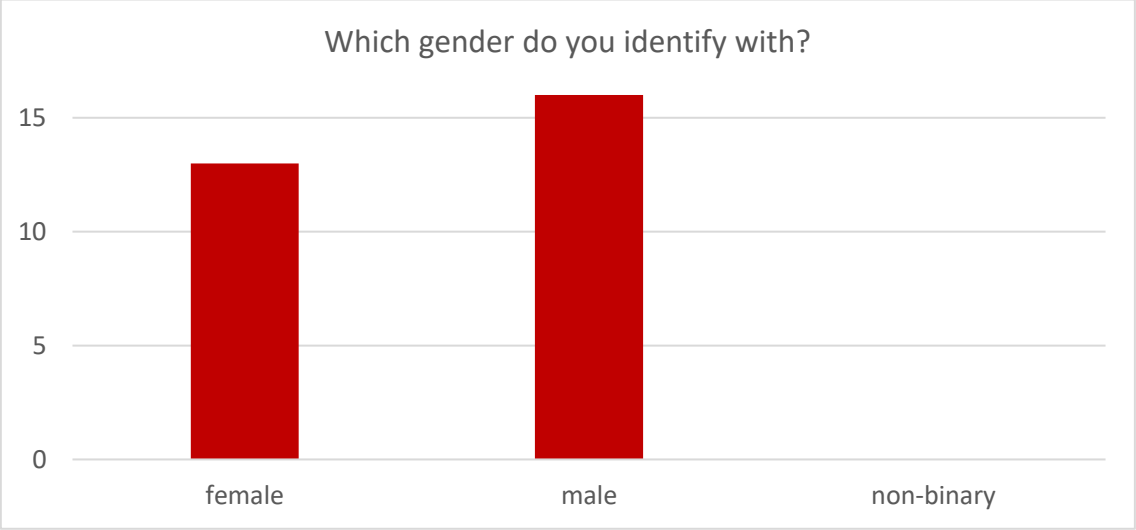
Chapter 1: tdh & the IYN or the IYN & tdh

This first chapter sets out to fill the void of a lacking definition of the IYN.

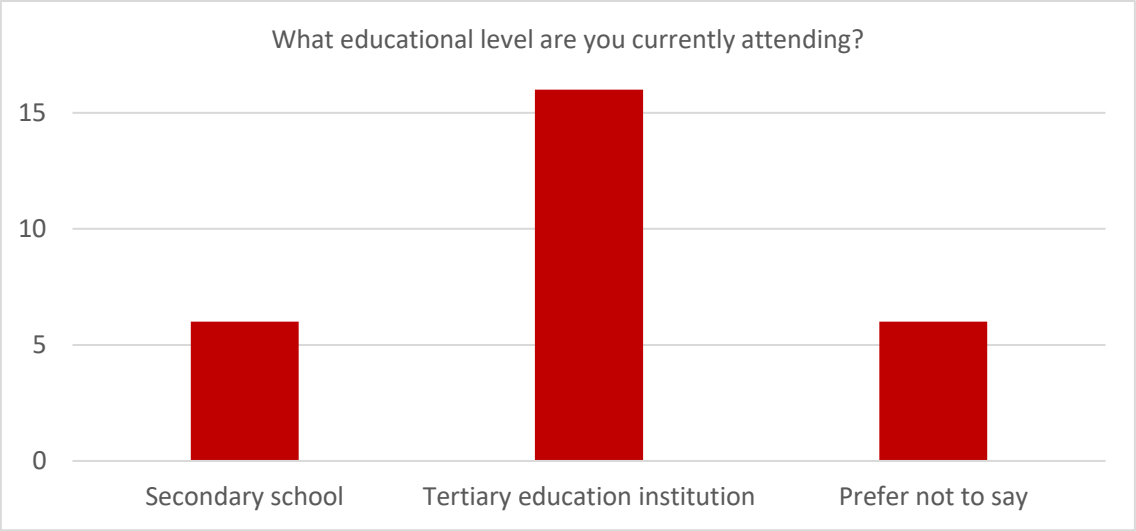
WHO is the IYN?

Listening to the respondents, it seems that the IYN basically is whatever young people create jointly. Therefore, it is important to shed light on who these young people are that form the IYN and its activities. The information provided by IYN members in the standardised survey provide some insights that are displayed in the following graphs. These facts and data may not be fully representative of the IYN as whole but allow a good glimpse.



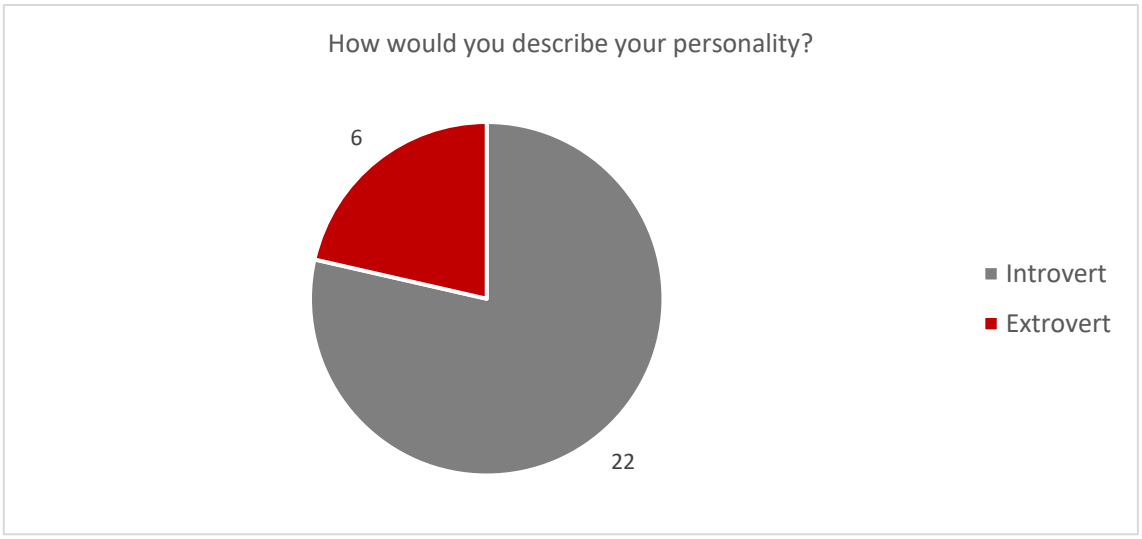


The information indicates that the typical IYN member is between 15 and 24 years old. This falls in line with common definitions, among others by the UN for 'youth.' The data set does not show any signs of a gender bias, suggesting that female and male adolescents alike are attracted to become IYN members. Against the background of tdh's Gender Justice policy and Strategic Goal, this distribution of gender identification is promising, yet, it may also be considered as a hint to room for improvement with regard to attracting non-binary youth, strengthening the network's diversity.



Further data provided by IYN members shows that the majority attends tertiary educational facilities and considers their families to belong to the lower- or middle-income classes. Given the comparably high number of respondents who chose middle-class, questions may be raised about who is anticipated to participate in the IYN and benefit from the offers provided. While the typical project context targets children and youth with limited access to resources and education opportunities, the IYN members seem to have such access to resources. This controversy should be considered in future considerations concerning the IYN.

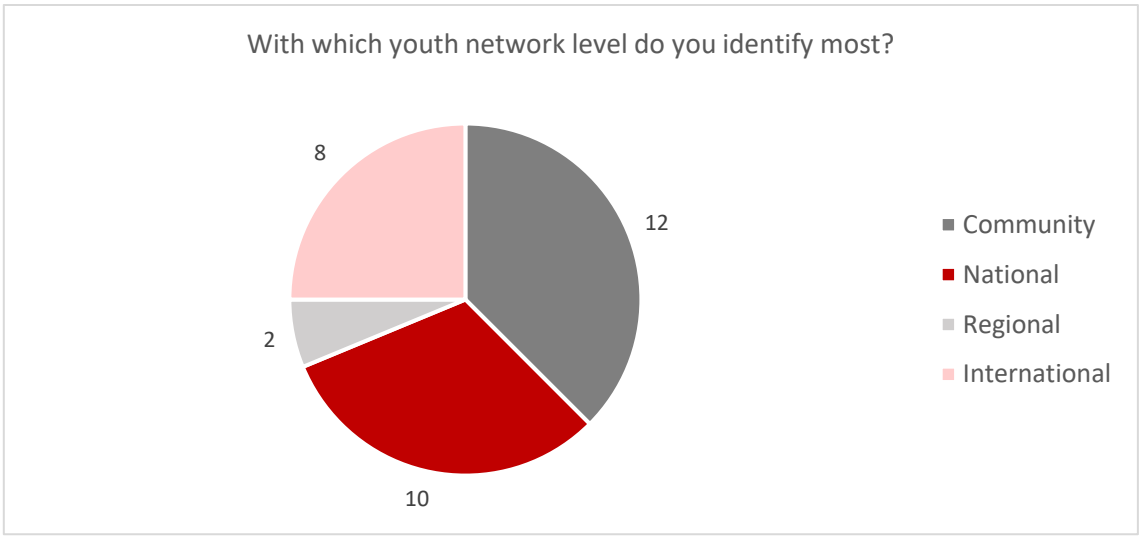
The respondents also provide insights into how they define their personality: rather introverted or extroverted. A clear majority describes their personalities as introverted. This notion contradicts the observations made during interactions with different IYN committees such as the YET and the Youth Board. Both groups' members, particularly though the Youth Board members, appear as very open and outgoing personalities. While it is relatable that such personalities can act as ambassadors for the network, it seems advisable to bear in mind that the majority bears other character traits, which may benefit the committees and networks. Therefore, reflections of selections processes of committees within the IYN are advised.

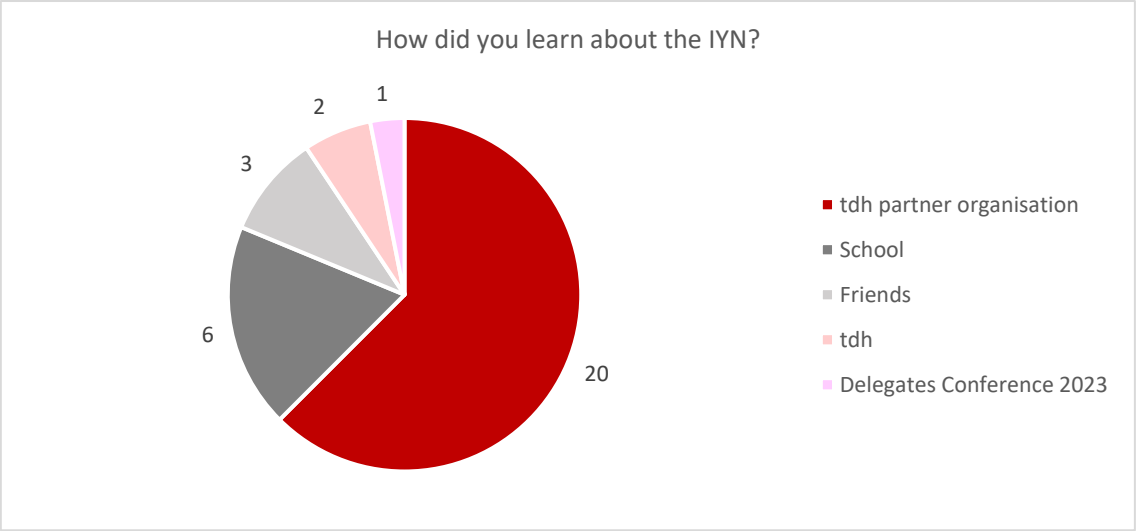


WHICH STRUCTURES surround (and support) the IYN?

Following the respondents' notions, understanding the IYN requires acknowledging its linkages to various levels of child and youth network activities. tdh and its partners provide networks on community, national, and regional level besides the IYN. While respondents consider the IYN an important institution on international level, many of them highlight the significance of networks on regional, national, and specifically community level.

IYN members' information about their relations to these different levels support the latter notion. They express foremost an affiliation with community networks and identify strongly with the local partner organisations rather than with tdh. Further, the partners are the ones who introduce young people to the concept of child and youth networks.





This identification with community (based) networks is a notable aspect of youth participation, because problem identification as well as the definition and implementation of solutions typically appear on local level in their respective communities. Thereby, the young people create change – primarily on local scale. The decentralised networking structures on different levels support this local level change by enabling the youth as agents of change to exchange and share their change stories with likeminded others who have similar experiences, ideally inducing replication and reproduction of positive experiences.

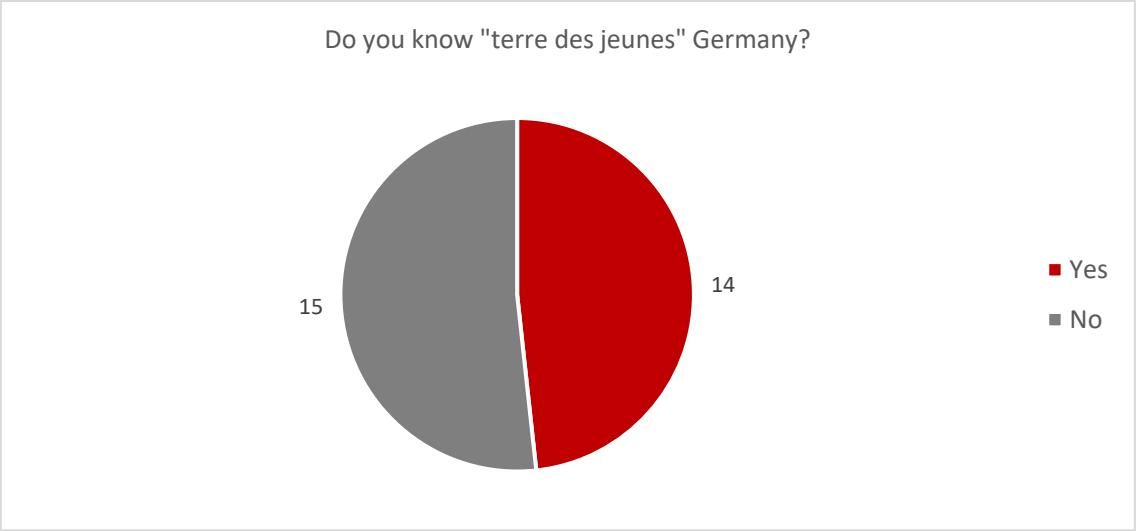
HOW TO DEFINE the IYN and its purpose?

The key question remains unanswered. The respondents do not agree on one precise definition of tdh's IYN. Or in other words: *"Right now it's still like floating. I mean, when we ask what is the purpose of the IYN, it's different things for different people," (Gemi)*.

Instead of a common understanding, the respondents seem to agree that clarity is lacking regarding the IYN's concrete spot and role within tdh as organization. According to their statements, this lack of clarity is mirrored, for instance, in the facts that

- there is no written document, for instance a concept paper, defining a clear goal for the IYN or pointing out the roles and responsibilities of the IYN and its members,
- there is no clear mandate for staff or departments to handle youth participation in general and the IYN in particular, including uncertainties about budget available for IYN activities,
- the IYN is barely present in tdh communications, neither are members' voices and positions displayed nor are much information provided about the IYN and its activities.

Zooming in on tdh organisational structures, most respondents understand the IYN, so far, as a programme department endeavour, which hosts the Programmes Officer for IYN at the HO and the regional offices coordinating the youth networks through the regional Focal Points. What seems to be lacking is a link between the IYN and other tdh institutions and departments. For example, there are limited linkages so far to the advocacy team or to terre des jeunes, the youth group of tdh members in Germany. Half of the respondents to the standardised survey indicate that they are not even aware of terre de jeunes.



Despite the multiplicity of definitions and understandings, the insights provided by the respondents show some similarities, revealing three key purposes of the IYN:

- **A manifestation of tdh's youth participatory approach**

Some respondents describe the IYN as key instrument that mirrors the participatory tdh approach, and the significance of children and youth in anything done. Given the role of young people at the core of tdh activities, they require representations, or in the words: *"nothing for young people without young people,"* (YET member) or, in slightly other words once more *"nothing about us without us," (tuto)* as coined by partner organisations in Latin America, which was then transferred to the youth, too. Summed up: *"I believe that only if we take the Youth Network seriously will we actually stand behind what we are committed to with integrity," (Lena)*. Following these notions, the IYN can be considered as tdh-internal form of institutional participation, particularly strongly mirrored in youth joining in the co-decision model of the DC.

- **A safe space for young activists**

Some respondents describe the IYN as platform for young people to become active, have their voices heard beyond the projects and partner organisations they are affiliated with – and potentially even beyond tdh. For this purpose, the IYN shall be a supporting structure that enables young people to gain access to decision-makers and duty-bearers and act as actors of change rather than consumers of information and services. Importantly: tdh provides this safe space but should never instrumentalise the youth engaging and benefitting from this space.

- **A space for exchange and joint learning**

Some respondents describe the IYN as open exchange platform for young people worldwide, who are interested in typical tdh themes and topics. To date, the IYN's thematic focus is closely linked to tdh's Strategic Goal on Environmental Child Rights (ECR), because *"ecological child rights or climate change is something that is hampering the entire world, so maybe this is the reason why this topic for international Youth network has come up as ecological child rights," (Snehal).* An example of a highly successful ECR-related IYN exchange in the past years was the sharing of experiences from the

Trash4Cash project[1] in Zambia with youth from India who are aiming at replicating the successful recycling and waste management project.

Both the second and the third aspect mentioned above include trainings and capacity building offered to the young people organised in the IYN.

[1] The Trash4Cash project combines environmental protection with an income generating social enterprise led and organised by Youth. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1uPdgOBqGQ

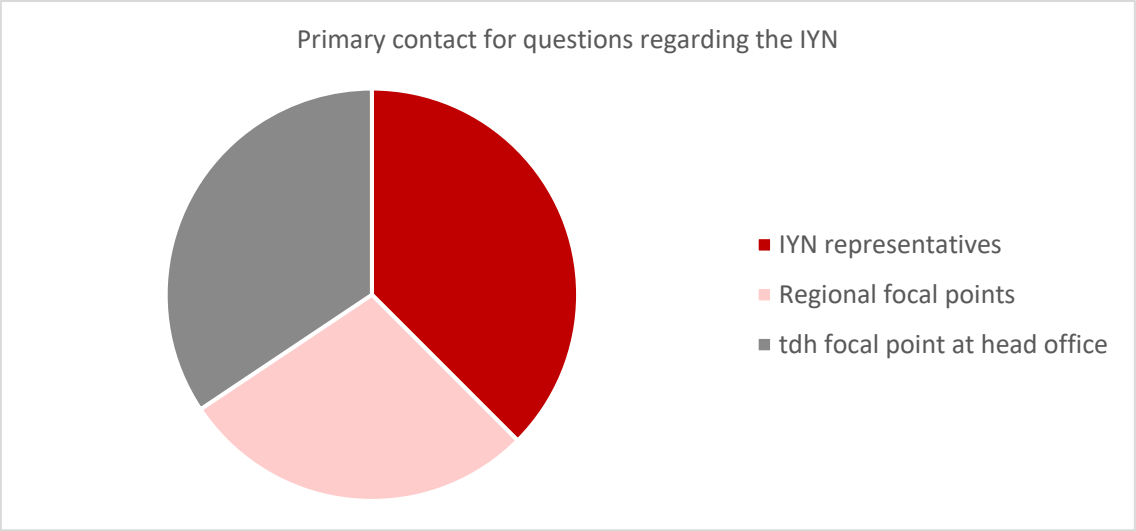
Chapter 2: Responsibilities for & within the IYN

This second chapter sheds light on stakeholders and institutions within tdh and the IYN and which roles and responsibilities the respondents ascribe to themselves and / or others. In this regard, the respondents mostly agree on stakeholders' responsibilities for the IYN. The table below summarises these responsibilities mentioned and described.

	Who has	which responsibilities?
Youth	**Youth Board**	• Encourage active participation among young people • Close gap between IYN & youth networks on regional, national & community level • Monitor implementation of tdh Strategic Goals
	YET	• Give a voice to young people • Handle IYN Social Media accounts in response to growing popularity of Social Media worldwide & the respective outreach • Make IYN activities accessible to interested public
tdh	**Programmes Officer for IYN**	• Important contact person for IYN members & topics • Collecting needs & interests of young people in order to provide respective trainings & workshops • Ensuring meaningful inclusion & participation
	Regional Focal Points	• Ambassadors for youth participation within tdh • Organising exchange on regional level • Primary contact persons for regional & national youth networks • Connection between regional & international youth networks • Link between young people & tdh, e. g. transferring information into both directions • Provision of capacity building opportunities for young people • Ensuring network members' safety • Coordination of participation • Coordination of child & youth advocacy • Monitoring of activities & participation • Support for regional youth representatives in YET, Youth Board and Youth Delegates
	Regional offices	• Further develop networks and coordination

The data highlights the important roles of tdh staff, more precisely the Programmes Officer for IYN and the regional Focal Points. They are important contact personas for IYN members, and young people interested in becoming members. This notion is supported by data from IYN members provided in the standardised survey.

What seems important is to ensure that no duplications of tasks and responsibilities appear. For instance, both the Programmes Officer for IYN and the regional Focal Points claim to be contact persons for IYN members and interested youth. Overlapping may appear and could be avoided by establishing clear mandates and descriptions of roles for different tdh staff. Similarly, parallel structures appear between tdh staff and IYN members or committees. E.g. both the regional Focal Points and the Youth Board describe themselves as link between different levels of networks. While it may be beneficial to task both groups with this matter, effectiveness could be ensured by defining clear responsibilities.



Not only is it important to look at mandates, i. e. who is responsible for what, but also at the efficiency and effectiveness of stakeholders and groups responding to their assigned tasks. The information provided indicate that certain groups have different perceptions regarding the fulfilment of tasks and responsibilities. An example is the YET. In this case, the committee's members themselves seem satisfied and highlight that they are representing and visualising the voices of children and youth worldwide through the IYN Social Media accounts. Contrarily, the Programmes Officer for IYN and the responsible Communications Officer explain that the IYN channels are copying tdh content rather than displaying young voices, thereby not inducing any additional or different kind of information and digital exchange. Much rather, the YET requires close guidance, e. g. in form of suggestions for themes and postings.

One critical notion displayed in many respondents' statements and information is the close link of IYN responsibilities to individuals and personal relations between IYN members and committees and specific tdh staff, more precisely the Programmes Officer for IYN and the regional Focal Points. The IYN members describe Anna as Programmes Officer for IYN as highly supportive and the one person holding together the IYN, while Lorena as Focal Point in Latin America is referred to as *"aunt"* by network members. Or in other words: *"Anna plays a significant role in why I feel empowered within this organisation. I recall a conversation where she emphasized that tdh needs more committed youth, and I echoed the need for more individuals like Anna to foster the growth of IYN. Indeed, I agree with Anna because IYN needs more young and fresh perspectives. However, to achieve that, we require a space where individuals like Anna fully support us," (IYN member).*

Importantly, the regional Focal Points rightly highlight that they are the frontline staff, engaging with the young people, being responsible for their safety and wellbeing as young activists. They wish for this role to be acknowledged by HO staff and management, ensuring that youth network members are foremost contacted through country or regional tdh staff for security reasons, even if the request may appear to be a small one.

Overall, the respondents agree that the IYN should evolve as maker space in the mid- to long-term, i. e. IYN activities and coordination should ideally be a youth-led with as little involvement as possible from tdh concerning (day-to-day) decision-making. This aligns with the tdh vision of establishing a safe space for young people as agents of change, which has been ratified by the 2023 Delegates Conference, sanctioning the Preamble to the Strategic Goals "Children and Young People: Agents of Change." Or in other words: *"We want to get the young people into the front row, so we should actually be able to withdraw more and more and they design their own programme and manage it and gain additional skills from it," (Anna).*

Chapter 3: Youth mobilisation, because there is no network without youth

This third chapter investigates one of the core issues of the IYN: the mobilisation of young people to engage, participate, and become active citizens.

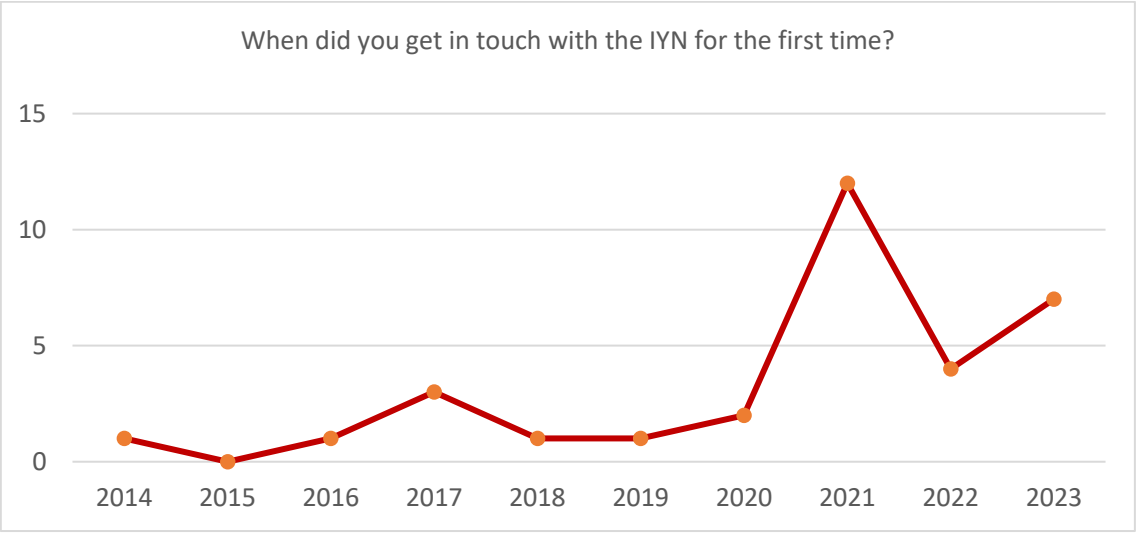
Let's look at the **NUMBERS**

By the end of 2023, roughly 80 more or less active IYN members were registered in a WhatsApp group that is used to communicate and coordinate on international level. This group is managed by the Programmes Officer for IYN. Out of these 80, 20 to 30 persons regularly participate in IYN activities, such as meetings, trainings, or workshops, indicating a rather loose connection between young people. It seems notable that all of them contribute their time and knowledge voluntarily. They do so because *"they like the idea. They find it innovative that tdh really values the voices of children and youth through their representation in those important spaces," (Gemi)*.

Altogether the youth networks on community, national, and regional level register approximately 30.000 members worldwide. In the regions, messenger services such as WhatsApp are important tools for communication and mobilisation, too. The Youth Board members suggest that other Social Media formats could be used better than today for the purpose of youth mobilisation.

When comparing the numbers it becomes obvious that mobilisation is significantly lower on international level compared to community and national level networks. This, once again, emphasizes the importance of youth networks on these lower levels. A critical factor in this regard are tdh's partner organisations who cover the major load of mobilising young people and organising networks (c. f. chapter 1). As youth mobilisation become much more difficult without partners in the communities, it is highly advisable to review concepts of involve youth beyond tdh's engagement and collaboration with the partner organisations: *"Once the partnership with one particular partner of tdh is concluded, then we really find it difficult to get those youth involved in the youth network activities," (Snehal)*.

Other key challenges of mobilisation are continuous intrinsic motivation on the one hand, and youth's availability for network activities on the other hand. The older the members get, the more duties and pressure they experience, e. g. to contribute to the family income. Accordingly, most IYN member indicate in the standardised survey that they joined the network since 2020; it is likely that members who joined the IYN earlier are no longer active due to other responsibilities and duties.



While dropouts from the IYN may causes challenges of consistency and sustainability of activities and knowledge management within the network, it seems advisable to recognise the members' individual developments. The IYN should be considered as an incubator for young activists who will not remain young activists but ideally become adult activists, or influential decision-makers themselves. To mitigate the dropouts from IYN perspective, it may help to recruit former IYN members who are still willing to support the network and the younger members to act as mentors and as role models.

A special case of youth mobilisation: the YET

At the time of the evaluation, the YET is in its second phase, i. e. the second group is active, while the first group operated from October 2021 to October 2022. tdh received 138 responses to the first call for applications in 2021, underlining the major interest in the Social Media topic, which seems to support youth mobilisation and participation.

For the first phase, each YET member received 500 € plus internet credit. The reflections on this payment are distinct within tdh. While some respondents consider it to have created too much pressure on and too high expectations among YET members, other respondents consider the payment as hiring cheap junior staff for tdh tasks. In conclusion, the payment was discontinued in the second phase, the current YET members received only internet credits in order to be able to access the IYN Social Media accounts.

Another challenge concerning mobilisation and participation within the YET is the division of the workload among the members. Particularly female YET members seem to cover higher workloads and fulfill coordinating and supporting tasks, for instance taking care of meeting minutes. Given tdh's Strategic Goal on Gender Justice, within any group organized and / or coordinated by tdh such gender-based division and allocation of work should be avoided.

Chapter 4: Benefits and successes

This fourth chapter focuses on important positive achievements of the IYN. In doing so, it covers two perspectives: 1. The IYN members' perspective, and 2. tdh's perspective.

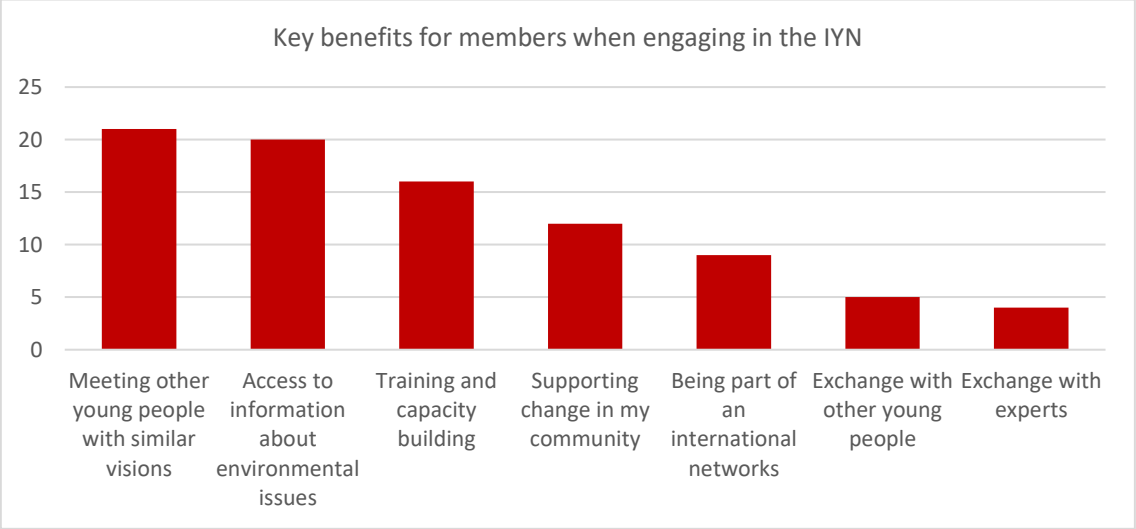
Why do young people join the IYN?

The two most important benefits that IYN members see for themselves thanks to participating in the IYN are

1. the possibility of meeting like-minded youth and
2. the access to information about environmental issues.

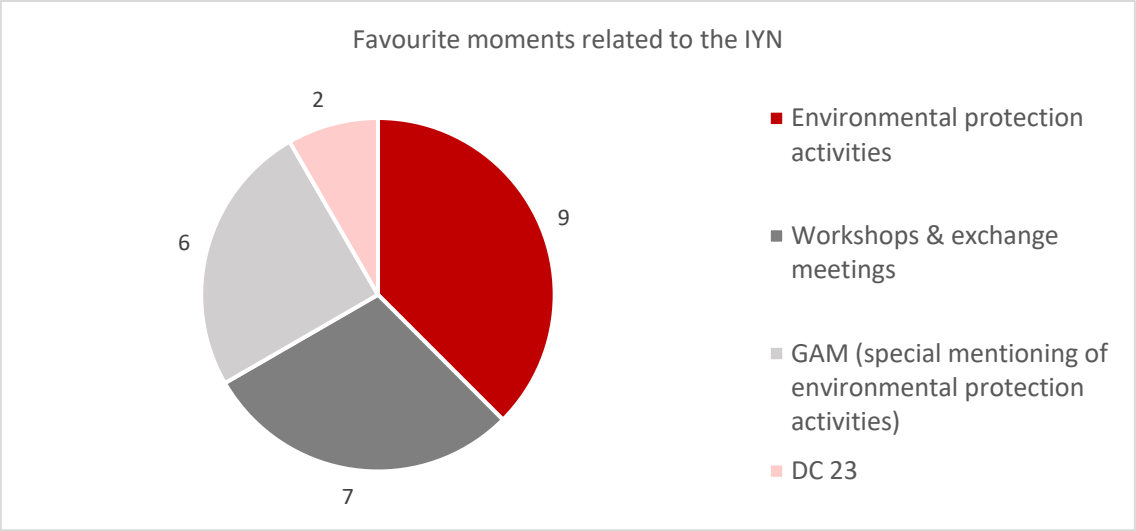
One YET member combines exactly these two aspects, exchange and ECR, by explaining that as a member of the IYN - considered as a broader platform - she is in contact with other young and like-minded people worldwide, who are open for exchange and learning from each other about environmental problems as well as about skill development such as Social Media usage.

Overall, the members mention different aspects of networking as benefits. Further considerations are learning and training related and concerned with support for their respective communities.



Given this focus on benefits related to networking, combined with the members (21 out of 30) stating that they do not know any other networks like the IYN, indicates that tdh was able to fill a void. Therefore, the provision of youth networks, regardless of the level of engagement, by tdh and partners appears highly supportive from the youth's perspective.

A similar impression arises from the favourite moments related to the IYN mentioned by the network members. These moments particularly environmental protection activities, including the GAM, and supporting the IYN focus topic ECR, environmental problems, and climate crisis. The respondents describe cases of IYN exchange on environmental and climate issues, providing insights from other countries into potential solutions to similar problems.



Special mentioning of environmental protection activities: the GAM

The Global Action Month (GAM) is celebrated every November since 2014. Each November, tdh partners and youth network members embark on numerous environmental and climate protection activities. Dring the GAM, youth mobilisation and participation is particularly strong. An important tool supporting the youth's GAM activities is the webpage that displays all activities happening each year in November. In 2023, 96 partners and 37.144 children and youth participated in 17 countries. Together they implemented 484 activities, which reached 159.005 people globally. Overall, the GAM can be considered as a central milestone of the IYN.

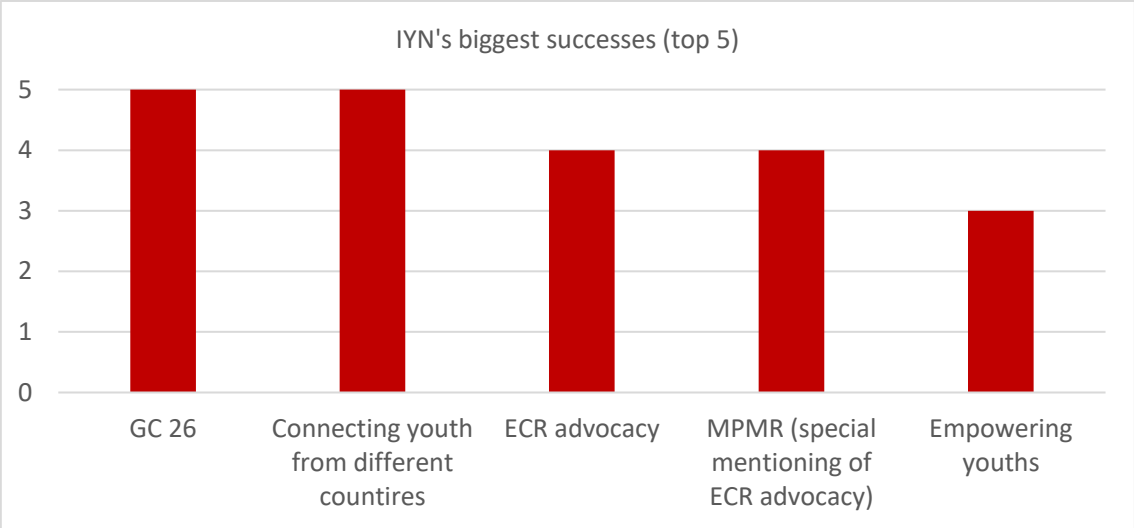
The IYN members praise the GAM as a collective movement that enables children and youth to voice their concerns about environmental issues and the climate crisis. It induces a sense of belonging as thousands of young people engage and share their experiences: *"When we share our GAM activities from all different places of the world. Every year making impact and it's all about us," (IYN member).*

While all respondents consider the GAM mainly as a success and annual moment of youth empowerment, some respondents claim that it still misses a truly global call to action. Additionally, GAM activities remain underreported because some children, youth, and partners lack the technical capacities or language skills to report their activities through the centralised system.

While the IYN members and committees put the spotlight foremost on concrete activities to mitigate the negative effects of environmental destruction and climate change in their communities and sharing experiences related to these activities with like-minded youth, tdh staff highlight advocacy and political lobbying based on IYN support. It seems advisable to clarify synchronise youth and staff expectations and aims of the IYN. However, there are individual examples of IYN members who point out political lobbying as one of their favourite IYN moments: *"IYN has opened doors to greater opportunities for me. During my visit to Germany, IYN connected us with other organizations, and now I become one of the International Climate Protection Ambassadors of KlimaGesichter by the German Climate Foundation. Additionally, I had the honor to speak at one of the side events of COP28," (IYN member).*

Asked about major successes achieved by the IYN, the network members mention aspects closely related to the key benefits and highlights discussed above. Once again, the ECR topic is displayed.

Focusing on successes – as compared to their individual benefits – the members do mention advocacy for ECR, particularly in form of the UNCRC General Comment 26 and the global tdh campaign My Planet My Rights (MPMR). Or in other words: *"My favourite moment is when I heard a song from Nepal about my planet my rights. I was amazed it still rings in my head," (IYN member).* Other successes ascribed to the IYN are the networks contribution to connecting young people worldwide and providing a space for their empowerment. Zooming in on the MPMR campaign, youth participation played a critical role form the very beginning: this campaign was based on a respective youth resolution at the tdh DC 2018.



What is in it for tdh?

From tdh perspective, the IYN is primarily the manifestation and proof of the organisation's promise of meaningful youth participation. Or in other words: *"The importance is to ensure the internal coherence of the discourse," (tuto)*. This is also a highly relevant consideration in the organisation's communications: *"Great, of course, to keep to our approach, because children have their say," (Stephan)*. Additionally, the IYN represents tdh's approach of thinking and acting in networks. Yet, one major chance in this context remains underused; seldomly, exchange meetings are held between the IYN and terre des jeunes. Such exchange provides direct insights from tdh projects from a youth perspective to terre des jeunes members, which seems to have a motivating effect. Yet, this exchange is not as common and happening as regular as envisioned.

Secondly, IYN members have a direct impact on tdh's overall impact. They contribute to improving tdh and partners' activities by providing a youth perspective and insights into the needs and challenges that children and youth face. Further, GAM activities as well as other activities by IYN members, e. g. Trash4Cash, directly contribute to tdh impact in regard to the organisation's Strategic Goal 3.

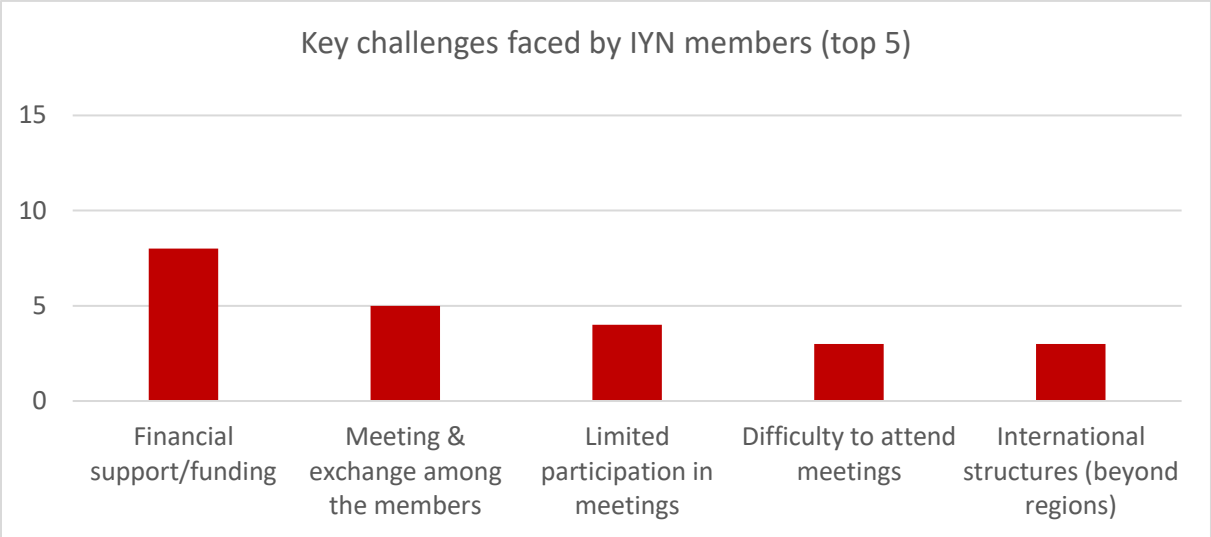
Finally, tdh staff in Germany benefits from receiving information quickly and easily from IYN members who display their own activities and partners' projects. Not only do IYN members deliver such information rather quickly; they also provide good visuals such as photos. This is beneficial for tdh public relations and communications in Germany – not least because the German members are greatly interested in information by and about the IYN. However, this handling contradicts the regional Focal Points' wish for structured communication formats and ways, reaching out to network members.

Chapter 5: Challenges

Contrary to chapter 4, this fifth chapter covers the challenges that respondents mention. Again, the chapter displays the two perspectives, the one of the IYN and that of tdh.

Which challenges are IYN members facing?

Among the IYN members and committees the availability of funding is a key challenge. They explain that without funding they will not be able to implement any ideas and projects that may otherwise result from their participation in network activities.



More broadly, the challenges faced by IYN members can be assigned to three categories: practical, organisational, and ideological.

The practical challenges cover

- **Language barriers**, particularly on the international level but also on regional level, where for instance in Southeast Asia network members speak various languages. Therefore, interpretation services beyond English and Spanish would be required to provide a truly participatory and open platform for young people from all tdh partners and projects.
- The **digital divide** that prevents potentially interested youth from participating in IYN activities due to lacking access to online activities. Individual financial resources play a major role in this regard.
- Different **time zones**, aggravating access to IYN activities for some potentially interested youth.
- **Time constraints** caused for instance by family or professional duties that limit some youth's availability for IYN activities.

The organisational challenges cover

- Lacking (financial) **resources** made available by tdh. Young people realising and implementing projects, workshops, and campaigns – particularly in face-to-face formats – require funding e. g. to cover for compensation payments for network members such as refreshments, transport, etc.
- Limited **autonomy** from adult-led decision-making. So far, only in few cases are IYN members themselves responsible for the whole project management of activities and events. They rely on adult staff from tdh or partner organisations. Increasing youth autonomy will likely require strengthening the networks and committees' capacities in a first step, particularly the bonds

and exchange between members who will feel responsible. Increased autonomy would further require special attention being paid to safe child and youth engagement in shrinking spaces.

- Lacking **clarity** concerning the existing network structures and committees. While many of the IYN members (ten out of 25) are aware of the Youth Board's role as a representative committee for the IYN, the YET's role remains unclear. Regarding the YET, five respondents consider the group as responsible for publications of IYN activities on the network's Social Media channels; six respondents say they do not know anything about the YET. While the Programmes Officer for IYN explains that the YET, its functions and roles have been communicated within the network repeatedly, it seems as if structures and roles within the network require further explanation, which may support young peoples' identification with and involvement in the network.

Two sides of a coin: The challenge with the resources

Many respondents mention (financial) resources or the lack thereof as major challenge during the evaluation. An interesting notion is a comparison between the funding spent on the German volunteer groups and the IYN, particularly against the strong background of the ideological significance of the IYN. Another approach is looking at how closely IYN and regional networks are intertwined in order to create synergies. It seems that there is room for improvement in this regard, which should be filled before claiming additional funding and budget for the IYN. For instance, in Latin America, a certain budget is provided every year for platform and networking activities, divided between the partners platform and the youth network.

The ideological challenges cover

- **Tokenism** vs. meaningful participation. Youth Board members claim that the IYN and their own group, which has not yet been institutionalised at the time of this evaluation, appear as token of tdh's promise of youth participation (c. f. the IYN's first key purpose mentioned in chapter 1 "An idealistic purpose for tdh"). Given this perception, it seems advisable to regularly assess how meaningful youth participation within tdh actually is, on national and regional level, potentially assisted by HO staff.

Which challenges is tdh facing?

While chapter 3 already covered key challenges concerning youth mobilisation, other challenges from tdh perspective were uncovered by this evaluation. For instance, many IYN activities and structures seem to follow a trial-and-error system based on needs that have been communicated by network members. One example is the YET, which was established based on the request for increased Social Media skills. The new committee within the IYN caused a variety of challenges for tdh and its staff:

- During the first phase, the YET required much support from tdh staff members, precisely the Programmes Officer for IYN and a Communications Officer. Yet, these capacities were not available at tdh and a request for a paid assistant has been denied.
- During the first phase, the YET members showed limited intrinsic motivation.
- During the first phase, the output was not as aspired, the number of posts anticipated has most times not been achieved.
- The YET members tend to copy the official tdh Social Media channels rather than creating own content:
- Undesired group dynamics within the YET, partly based on gender stereotypes, resulting in the need for a problem-solving meeting between tdh staff and a YET member.
- There is no mid- to long-term strategy for the YET (or the IYN Social Media accounts).

Critically, the involved tdh Communication Officer explains during the interview: *"Of course, we want the youth channels to show the youth perspective, and that simply wasn't the case and still isn't the case," (Miye).* However, the case of the YET, its members, and their engagement in the IYN Social Media channels must be reflected from the varying perspectives that exactly the YET members and tdh staff had and have. As in almost all areas of life, when it comes to Social Media accounts and postings, the expectations differ among those people involved. The YET members come from different countries and continents, where youth channels may have different meanings to the young people, while the understanding and expectations of German-based Social Media experts at tdh may again differ. As mentioned above, it seems that here and there alignment of expectations between IYN members and tdh staff may be advisable.

In sum, the case of the YET suggests that such international level structures do require support and guidance from tdh, despite all wishes for autonomy. Additionally, embarking on adventures such as creating the YET requires sincere safeguarding and equity measures for all group members. Also, the case of the YET indicates that between IYN and tdh donor-recipient relations may persist, potentially hindering the members to openly express their positions on IYN channels.

Another key challenge for tdh with regard to the IYN is the communication of tdh topics and information relevant for young people, which is highly relevant for mobilisation purposes. The global presence of tdh communications and PR needs to be flexible enough to adjust to different formats, focus areas, and trends in the different regions. The other way around, IYN information and content seem highly relevant for the tdh communications department, particularly in communications to tdh members, who seem intrigued by the IYN; yet there is no systematic engagement of the IYN, its members and their activities in tdh communications in Germany. *Or in other words: "I think we could get a lot more out of it," (Stephan).*

One more challenge: there seems to be a lack of coordination between youth network approaches in the HO – within the HO discrepancies exist between the programmes and the communications department – and the regions. Improved coordination, creating synergies and increasing efficiency seems advisable. Such coordination efforts indeed increase the risk of centralised coordination at the HO, which should be prevented under any circumstances. In this context it is critical to consider the differences between the national and regional youth networks under the tdh umbrella, feeding into the IYN. The distinct networks are organized differently and experience different levels of success, mobilisation, and youth participation. In Latin America, the different levels of youth networks are well established and well known among young people. In India, the national youth network is very strong, and typically linked to specific (high volume) projects, for example funded by DACHSER or BMZ. In Southeast Asia, the IYN is considered to have its key purpose in advocacy activities. In the context of coordination, it may also be advisable to consider further and / or deepened cooperation between the IYN and terre des jeunes, which is rather weak at the time of the evaluation as discussed in chapter 1.

And finally, some respondents raised the question to what extend IYN members and committees such as the Youth Board should be concerned with tdh internal institutional matters of participation rather than the creation of a common and safe space for young activists, addressing issues and problems external to tdh. At the time of this evaluation, the Youth Delegates' motion at the DC 2023 is very present and binds capacities at tdh and among the members of the Youth Board. The motion demands a significant restructuring of the composition of the DC, increasing the representation of young people. Such internal aspirations may lessen the IYN's aim of (locally) active young people who voice their concerns and demands in front of decision-makers and duty bearers. Or in other words: *"it is precisely about internal institutional strengthening and is not primarily directed outwards," (tuto)*. Following some respondents' notions, any focus on international level, may it be the institutionalisation of youth

participation within tdh, or may it be the transfer and translation of global topics such as the General Comment 26, may lessen the focus on local activities and actions in the young people's communities.

Chapter 6: Thinking beyond the box a.k.a. a wish list

Closing data collection for this evaluation, all respondents were asked to elaborate on how they would like to improve the IYN or specific components of it. They delivered a broad variety of suggestions as displayed below:

- Strengthen the usage of WhatApp as communication tool. So far, WhatsApp is used mainly for organisational purposes and logistics, in future it could be a platform for IYN members to share ideas for activities or background information such as articles.
- Increase IYN members' involvement in tdh communications. Ask them to bring in their ideas for communications. Furthermore, increase coverage (incl. press releases) on IYN activities such as the GAM. This will require providing more space for the voices of the youth in tdh publications. Or in other words: *"This is actually another fundamental positioning question: what is the IYN for us and how do we present it? That's what I would like to see, a place for the IYN," (Stephan)*. Communication of the young peoples' topics could be covered in modern formats such as podcasts, videos, etc.
- Overcome tokenism by allocating an annual budget to the IYN and its committees, which will in turn deliver annual reports about the IYN's activities and about the status of the incorporation and consideration of youth's views and voices in tdh decision-making.
- Create an exchange platform shared among the IYN and terre des jeunes. Such platform would allow for constant interaction between the two institutions, covering topics related to community, national, and international level networking activities.
- Find another tdh staff member to cooperate with Anna concerning the support of the IYN from tdh HO. Despite Anna's important role and good relationship with IYN members and committees, the young people whish for a younger person at the HO to feel better represented. A young staff member knowledgeable of Social Media could also support a committee like the YET in its efforts for the IYN Social Media accounts.
- Slowly but steadily increase the autonomy of the IYN in support of fully youth-led structures. Or in other words: *"It would be best if they didn't need me [Anna] at all, i.e. if the young people were so well organised that they could organise what interests them on their own within the youth network," (Anna)*. Such autonomy would ideally increase the ownership of the young people. They would constitute committees such as the YET themselves – the Youth Board consists of previous and elected Youth Delegates. Members of these committees would still require relevant skills and high intrinsic motivation to serve the IYN (for a prior defined amount of time). A youth-led IYN approach would further enable the young people to be involved in the full project cycle, participating in planning, implementation and further stages, rather than only talking about participation.
- Establish an IYN academy, offering workshops and trainings that cover topics resembling tdh's Strategic Goals or language classes. The trainings should ideally focus on hands-on approaches, enabling the IYN members to translate the newly gained knowledge into youth-led projects and actions in their communities and countries. As part of the IYN academy – but also detached from it – more face-to-face interactions could be realised. Further, as part of the IYN academy – but also detached from it – tdh should provide more support, including funding, for youth led activities with clear ownership of the IYN, for instance by providing incentives to IYN members in form of fellowships programmes.
- Establish a regular format for capacity building and exchange for the regional focal points.

Recommendations and concluding remarks

The findings discussed in chapters one through five allow for a comparison of the aims defined for the IYN in 2011 and the reality at the time of the evaluation.

Aim in 2011	Success or failure	Remarks
tdh response to Article 12 UN CRC	Success	Youth's critique of tokenism
tdh response to SDG 4.7	Success	Youth's critique of tokenism
Youth participation in DC	Big success	Risk of focus on internal rather than external matters
Youth advocacy on international level	Success	Overshadowed by more practical & community-based activities & not major benefit from youth perspective
Exchange platform	Big success	Highly valued by youth
Global learning	Success	Capacity building appreciated by youth, yet not primary focus & rather dependent on experts than peer2peer
Joint development of activities & campaigns	Big success	Highly valued by youth

Overall, the outcome of the IYN evaluation is positive; all respondents foremost praise the existence of the network. However, the results also suggest reviewing and adjustments the future. Aligning the wishes beyond the existing boxes of tdh and the IYN presented in chapter 6 with the general impressions that informed this evaluation leads to a list of recommendations for future handling of the IYN. This list of recommendations claims no completeness. Importantly, the evaluation results indicate that considerate discussions within tdh as organisation and between tdh and the IYN seem necessary in order to agree on future pathways for the IYN. Therefore, the following recommendations do not suggest mere activities but mostly hints for discourses and review processes, which may subsequently lead to the formulation of such activities.

Discourse 1: Clarification and common understanding of the IYN

It seems advisable to define a clear objective and the purpose of the IYN and a future strategic approach for the network. This should include roles and rights as well as duties of everyone and every group engaged with the IYN. The strategic approach should take into account the different conditions and challenges faced by young people in the various regions. Further, a sub-discourse may be required to shed light on the IYN's target group. The evaluation results give an overview of typical character traits of current members, leading to the questions if these are the youth that the IYN wants to attract. Clarifying these matters may further support embedding the IYN and particularly its activities in tdh's overall impact logic. Ideally, the result of such discourse would be a written and accessible concept; this could be embedded in the tdh participation concept that is currently being drafted. However, a written concept and clarification would only be the starting point. Whichever definition and role is provided for the IYN will have to be communicated within tdh and IYN.

Discourse 2: Coordination and efficiency of managing the IYN

Uncertainties regarding mandates and responsibilities between tdh departments, between staff members on different positions, and between tdh staff and IYN representatives may cause parallel structures and overlapping. Youth participation appears as a crosscutting theme at tdh, therefore, many staff and offices are frequently concerned with the topic. Looking at the IYN and looking at how to best establish the IYN as benefit for everyone involved, it seems advisable to establish at least some extent

of standardisation and fixed responsibilities. While doing so attention is required to not increase coordination only in a centralised way from the HO.

This discourse is further related to human resources concerned with the IYN. Suggestions from chapter 6 seem feasible in this context: establishing a second, supporting Programmes Officer for IYN who would be close to the age group of the Youth and possible knowledgeable about topics of concern for IYN members such as Social Media. Additionally, regular capacity building and exchange among the regional Focal Points seems advisable in order to reinsure their abilities to provide safe spaces for young activists.

Discourse 3: Meaningful participation

While the evaluation results mainly point to successful youth participation, some notions still indicate the need for a closer look. For instance, there are slight mismatches between youth and staff when it comes to the significance of global advocacy. These discrepancies are no major risk, however, both sides should be aware of them to induce negotiations about priorities and interests. Regarding the risk of tokenism, it seems also advisable to regularly assess the IYN members' experience of participation. As regular assessments are planned for partner organisations, shedding light on the relationship between tdh and partners, a similar survey format could be developed for youth. The IYN has to provide space for "real" participation including youth-led decision-making processes to ensure ownership. Global advocacy processes become more tangible when they are at the same time combined with activities at the local level and concrete measures that immediately benefit young people and their communities.

Discourse 4: An autonomous maker space

The evaluation findings support the wish to steadily increase the autonomy of the IYN, establishing and living youth-led approaches. Given the fact that the IYN exists for more than ten years and has not achieved such autonomy underlines the challenges that have to be overcome on the pathway to a fully youth-led network. As major challenge appears the continuity and perpetuation without adult interference. Overcoming this challenge will require adequate measures that prevent network drop-outs due to ending cooperations with partners. This, in turn, requires strengthening community-based networks as access points for young people. Such autonomy in support of community level young activists will likely help overcome risks of tokenism and of instrumentalising young people as tdh affiliates. The concept of the maker space also raises the question of funding. tdh has experience with different funding formats for youth-led projects, e. g. in Latin America or the so-called Megafond in Europe. The idea of self-managed funds for youth-led projects and activities needs to be further developed.

Discourse 5: Mobilisation

A major challenge became obvious in this evaluation: the mobilisation of youth beyond tdh's engagement with partners. It seems necessary to establish concepts and measures that will support such mobilisation beyond project contexts. One potential measure may be better usage of IYN Social Media channels for mobilisation purposes. A clear objective or vision will make it easier to mobilise young people if the personal and social benefits become clearer.

Discourse 6: IYN committees and groups

Even in a loose network like the IYN, it seems advisable to clarify what kind of structures exist, how they can be accesses, and what their responsibilities are. Before institutionalising committees such as the YET or the Youth Board, brief descriptions of their respective purposes and roles may help. Defining a goal and how to reach this goal may help to prevent challenges and difficulties that appeared for

instance in the context of the YET. A committee that could be added, following the evaluation findings, may a group of mentors, consisting of older IYN members that support younger members as mentees. In the long term, an alumni network affiliated with the IYN could be established as platform for former members who want to keep in touch and continue the exchange. Alumni may also be considered as mentors.

Discourse 7: IYN and tdh communications

The evaluation results suggest that both sides, tdh and the IYN (activities) could benefit from closer cooperation when it comes to communications issues – always bearing in mind the safety and well-being of the IYN members. Stories by IYN members, about their communities, activities, successes, and challenges can provide a new and young perspective on tdh work and, therefore, attract new interested parties such as donors. The young people, in turn, have access to communication platforms. In this context, it seems critical to truly listen to the IYN members and present their positions adequately. Further, new formats could be introduced in tdh communication to fit the young voices; for instance podcast formats.

Within the IYN, the use of Social Media Channels could be adapted and improved, including the WhatsApp group that could be an actual exchange platform for content and ideas rather than only for logistics and organisational issues.

Discourse 8: Capacity building

The evaluation points to further suggestions that may benefit the IYN in future. One example is establishing a (global) IYN Academy, offering needs-oriented capacity building that leads to increased numbers of youth-led projects. This could cover practical technical knowledge about environmental protection and climate crisis as well as project management, social media skills (incl. cyber security, uncovering fake news) and language classes, but also basic knowledge courses on democratisation and civil society engagement. An annual competition may be accessible to Academy participants, helping the selection of potential project that may receive tdh funding.