

Ekanem Itoro Effong

UNAIDS Youth Leader for West and Central Africa
Advocacy Working Group Lead, The PACT

NIGERIA



Ekanem implements and manages advocacy and high-impact and evidence-based programs around sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS prevention, and malaria and TB interventions. He has influenced policies and laws that facilitate and sustain social change in the areas of health, protection, and education geared toward achieving the SDGs. He developed a scorecard to monitor the implementation of the SDGs across 11 states of Nigeria, which young people rely on as evidence for their advocacy. Previously, he worked for the National Agency for the Control of AIDS on the diagnosis and treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis in HIV patients in Nigeria. He was involved in the collection of data on key selected parameters on HIV and TB from selected facilities across the country--the findings showed huge disparities in access to prompt diagnosis of treatment for HIV and TB. Currently, he is the UNAIDS Youth Leader for West and Central Africa and the Advocacy Working Group Lead for The PACT, a global coalition of youth-led and youth-serving organizations working within the sexual and reproductive health and HIV movement. Ekanem was recently nominated as CSO Representative to the UNAIDS Monitoring Technical Advisory Group (MTAG), a global expert body that coordinates and makes technical recommendations on indicator development, revisions, harmonization, and reviews of M&E data to guide program management and for impact assessment. MTAG has served UNAIDS as an independent global body of experts that leads the thinking and provides advice in matters related to the monitoring and evaluation of the global AIDS response. He is also the Advocacy Lead for the African Network of Adolescent and Young People Development.

Ekanem holds a bachelor of science in biochemistry from the University of Calabar (Nigeria). He earned certificates in Leadership and Management in Global Health and Project Management in Global Health from the University of Washington. He attended a short course on Improving the Health of Women, Children, and Adolescents: From Evidence to Action at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Francis Bichnord Komla Asong

Executive Director
Voice of People with Disability Ghana (VOICE Ghana)

GHANA

Francis Bichnord Komla Asong is one of the founding members of Voice of People with Disability Ghana (VOICE Ghana). Over the past 18 years, Francis has contributed to the organization's development into one of Ghana's leading organizations dedicated to persons with disabilities. Serving all regions of Ghana, with a particular focus on the Volta and Oti regions, VOICE Ghana has been forming and training grassroots cross-disability self-help groups and building a collective voice for persons with disabilities for greater representation and participation. The organization has also been advocating for the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and engaging local government officials, traditional authorities, and private enterprises on their statutory responsibilities to persons with disabilities in view of the United Nations - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Ghana's Disability Policy and Legislative Framework. Under Francis's leadership, VOICE Ghana is transforming into a disability research, rights, and advocacy think tank with a mission to advance inclusive development and social justice for persons with disabilities in Africa, particularly Ghana, through research, policy, advocacy, and public consultations.

Francis serves on the boards of several civil society organisations including the STAR Ghana Foundation, Ghana Integrity Initiatives, and AccessAid Ghana. He serves on the Finance Committee of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations.

Francis is currently working on a PhD in Management Studies at LIGS University. He holds an MBA from the Australian Institute of Business. He earned certificates through a number of short courses including Leadership Development, Inclusive Voluntary Services, Human Rights-Based Approach to Development, CSO's Transparency Mechanism, Partnerships and Project Management, and Fundraising.





Joy Pathaw

Executive Member
Grassroot
INDIA

Joy Pathaw is a Khasi woman from the State of Meghalaya in the North Eastern Region of India. Raised by her mother, Joy is the fifth of six children. She is an executive member of Grassroot, an indigenous people's rights organization working on issues related to gender, livelihood, and entrepreneurship.

Joy also works as Meghalaya State Programme Co-ordinator with the National Mental Health Programme. In this position, Joy is making mental health care accessible to indigenous communities in all 11 districts of the state.

She also serves as a member of the Board of Studies of the Social Work Department at Martin Luther Christian University in Meghalaya where she contributes to the development of the curriculum and field activities. She is a firm believer in being self-reliant and aims to be a voice for and with her community.

Renaë Green

Associate Director, Policy & Advocacy
TransWave Jamaica
JAMAICA

Renaë is the Associate Director of Policy and Advocacy at TransWave Jamaica. She is responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of the organization's advocacy strategies as they relate to key human rights, HIV, and development issues facing transgender and gender non-conforming people. TransWave Jamaica recently developed a five-year strategic plan. In accordance with the plan over the next five years, TransWave Jamaica will use social media, popular education, and training to promote visibility and the inclusion of trans persons; improve trans peoples' access to employment and essential public services (medical, public safety and education); reduce violations against trans persons by creating inclusive and affirming spaces and promoting acceptance in families, schools, and community institutions; develop an organizational infrastructure in alignment with its mission; and collaborate with stakeholders to develop legislative initiatives that support the self-determination of trans people.

Renaë serves as the civil society alternate representative on the Jamaica Country Coordinating Mechanism for the Global Fund as well as a member of the Civil Society Reference Group of Jamaica's Spotlight Initiative, which is EU-funded and UN-implemented. Renaë is working toward completing the bachelors of science in Gender Development Studies at the University of the West Indies.



Ruben Avila Reyna

Executive Director
Sin Control Parental
MEXICO



Ruben is the Executive Director of Sin Control Parental, a digital youth-led platform created to promote information and counseling for youth and adolescents on sexual and reproductive health.

He is a current member and the former Mexico Country Coordinator of the International Youth Alliance for Family Planning (IYAFP), a global network of youth committed to family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Ruben works to open spaces for youth and adolescents in Mexico to discuss and learn about SRHR and to advocate for changes to the laws and policies that affect their sexual and reproductive life, especially for young women and LGBTQI youth.

Ruben's advocacy portfolio also includes being the co-founder of Universitarios por la Equidad y una Sociedad Integra e Incluyente (UNESII), a student group working on prevention of discrimination and bullying against LGBTQI youth; participating as a speaker in local, regional, and international spaces related to youth participation and SRHR; and collaborating with the World Health Organization as a regional focal point on adolescent SRHR in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2019 Ruben was selected as one of the 25 youth champions on sexual and reproductive health for women and girls by the SheDecides global political movement.

Ruben earned a bachelor's degree in international relations from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León. He has also participated in short courses by the Institut of Drets Humans de Catalunya (Barcelona) and ONU Mujeres Colombia.

Tamar Ivaniadze

Co-founder and Chairperson
Initiative for Social Changes (ISC)
GEORGIA

Tamar is a co-founder and the chairperson of Initiative for Social Changes (ISC). ISC encourages the realization of social rights by advocating for better social services and policies for children, youth, and women. Recent projects have included raising awareness about violence against children, school-related gender-based violence, gender equality in schools, and the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls and young women. She is also actively involved in providing training and professional development activities for practitioners from the field of child protection and gender equality in Georgia.

Tamar gained valuable experience in child protection, youth work, and gender equality issues while working for various international and local NGOs. As a frontline social worker, she assisted children in state care, victims of domestic violence, and conflict-affected children and their families. She earned a master's degree in social work from Tbilisi State University.



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