

**External Evaluation of
GOJoven Youth Leadership in
Sexual and Reproductive Health Program**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

**by
J. Solomon Consulting, LLC**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASRHR	adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights
BO	bellwether organization
IS	Institutional Strengthening (used in the terms “IS Workshop” and “IS Project”)
KAS	knowledge, attitudes, and skills
KOL	key opinion leader
LAP	Leadership Action Plan
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NGO	non-governmental organization
PHI	Public Health Institute
MSC	Most Significant Change (qualitative evaluation technique)
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
SMART	specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-framed (used in the term “SMART objectives”)
TOT	Training of Trainers (GOJoven program component)

I. INTRODUCTION

In Mexico and Central America, adolescents face high risks of early pregnancy; sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV; intimate partner violence; unsafe abortions; and poor birth outcomes.¹ Since 2003, the Public Health Institute (PHI) in Oakland, California has responded to these challenges by implementing the GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program (hereafter GOJoven; <http://gojoven.org/>). Funded by the Summit Foundation since 2004, GOJoven supports the development of young leaders as catalysts for social change to improve and expand adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR) choices, programs, services, and policies in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Quintana Roo, Mexico. The program also seeks to strengthen the institutional enabling environment for the young leaders' work.

Specifically, GOJoven selects teams of five to six young leaders (Fellows²) from each participating country, on an annual basis. Each year, Fellows are recruited from a different geographical location in each country. Selection criteria include being between the ages of 18 and 30, having personal interest and commitment to promote change in ASRHR, and having commitment to and at least two years of professional experience in: sexual and reproductive health and rights; youth development; gender and women's empowerment; sustainable development, environment, and conservation; community mobilization and development; and/or media. The GOJoven Fellowship is a voluntary (i.e., not paid) leadership development experience. Fellows participate in a series of intensive training workshops during their Fellowship year and plan team projects called Leadership Action Plans (LAPs).³ Subsequent to the Fellowship year, they implement their LAPs and have opportunities to engage in additional national- and regional-level⁴ training and networking and access funds to support their formal education and further professional development. Through participation in GOJoven's network of emerging and established leaders in the region, Fellows support and strengthen their own and one another's capacity to create change in the area of ASRHR.

GOJoven also supports Institutional Strengthening (IS) Projects and Workshops that strengthen local organizations' ASRHR-related capacities and programming, so that they can contribute to positive ASRHR changes in their communities and countries. Together, Fellows, their organizations, and other organizations can effect positive change in ASRHR-related programs, policies, and services at the local, national, and regional levels.⁵

Since GOJoven's inception, PHI has conducted internal evaluation activities to track programmatic outputs and selected short-term outcomes. In 2011, the Summit Foundation commissioned a nine-month external evaluation of GOJoven to: (1) increase understanding of outcomes associated with GOJoven at multiple levels (individual, organizational, community, and national/regional); (2) inform the design and implementation of other multi-national ASRHR youth leadership development programs; and (3) support

¹ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Population Reference Bureau (PRB). (2010). *Country Profiles for Population and Reproductive Health: Policy Developments and Indicators 2009/2010*. NY and Washington, DC: [Authors]. Accessed August 22, 2012 at <http://www.unfpa.org/public/countries>.

² In this report, "Fellow" is used as a cover term that includes both: (a) young people who are in the Fellowship year ("current Fellows") and (b) those who have completed their Fellowship year and not dropped out of or been expelled from GOJoven ("alumni").

³ During their Fellowship year, each country's cohort of Fellows assesses ASRHR status in their country or local geographic area and designs and implements a LAP to improve ASRHR-related programs, services, or policies. Through the LAP, Fellows have the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills they have learned in GOJoven trainings, in areas such as community needs assessment, program planning, negotiation and conflict resolution, and building alliances and networks to advocate for change. A small amount of funding is made available to each LAP team to cover project expenses.

⁴ In this report, "regional" refers to the Mexico/Central America region as a whole.

⁵ For a more detailed description of GOJoven program components, see <http://www.goven.org>.

planning for GOJoven's next phase. Summit selected J. Solomon Consulting, LLC, an evaluation firm based in California, to conduct the evaluation.

After providing a brief overview of the evaluation design and methods, this document summarizes the key evaluation findings, with a focus on GOJoven's outcomes at multiple levels, promising practices for the field, and key challenges. The last section offers recommendations for Summit, PHI, and GOJoven that follow from the findings, with the understanding that planning for GOJoven's sustainability is in progress, and program structure and activities may change in the program's next phase.

II. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The external evaluation was carried out during the period late September 2011 to June 2012. It took a largely retrospective approach, focusing on the period 2004 to (February) 2012, and sought to reflect GOJoven's existing logic model, developed in 2010. The design employed a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and participatory data collection methods, including:

- **Systematic document review:** Review of 204 documents, including internal evaluation data (collected prospectively since GOJoven's inception), PHI annual and phase reports and newsletters, available media coverage, LAP and IS Project reports, and meeting minutes.
- **Survey of alumni Fellows:** A pen-and-paper version for alumni (2004-2010 cohorts) who attended GOJoven National Meetings in early 2012 and a web-based version for alumni who did not attend the meetings (N=88, 77.9% response rate).
- **Survey of GOJoven-linked organizations:** A web-based survey of organizations affiliated with GOJoven—i.e., organizations that: (a) 2004-2010 cohort alumni have worked or studied at and/or (b) have implemented IS Projects with 2006-2009 IS Project grants (N=53, 29.1% response rate).
- **Interviews and focus groups:** Interviews and focus groups in the four GOJoven countries with a total of five in-country GOJoven staff; four LAP teams; one to three beneficiaries of each of these LAPs; four organizational IS Project representatives; six GOJoven alumni Board members of the non-governmental organization (NGO) GOBelize, which has recently assumed management of GOJoven Belize; and 29 key opinion leaders (KOLs) from ASRHR bellwether organizations (BOs)⁶ in the GOJoven countries.
- **Collection of “Most Significant Change” (MSC) stories:** Fellows' written articulation (N=56) of the most significant changes they associated with GOJoven and facilitation of large-group discussions of these stories during the four GOJoven National Meetings in early 2012.

The director of the external evaluation spent over four weeks in GOJoven countries in early 2012, attending National Meetings and conducting interviews and focus groups. Four alumni Fellows (one per country) served as in-country consultants to the evaluation. They provided input on methods and instruments, assisted with survey collection, and facilitated MSC story discussions. The external evaluation team analyzed quantitative and qualitative data using Excel and NVivo, respectively. Multiple team members independently reviewed and analyzed the qualitative data to support validity.

The principal limitations of the evaluation design and methods include: (1) the largely retrospective design, which precluded comprehensive pre/post assessments; (2) lack of a comparison group, which precluded

⁶ An ASRHR bellwether organization leads or influences trends in ASRHR policy and/or programming. ASRHR bellwether organizations in the four GOJoven countries were identified through discussions among GOJoven's Summit Foundation Program Officer, the GOJoven Director at PHI, and the GOJoven Country Representatives.

systematic assessment of what changes might have occurred in the absence of GOJoven; and (3) convenience sampling for interviews and focus groups and the organizational survey’s relatively low response rate, which precluded generalization of findings to the larger samples from which participants were drawn. For both the alumni and organizational surveys, it is important to bear in mind that respondents may have differed systematically from non-respondents with respect to their perceptions of the effects of GOJoven.

In spite of these limitations, which are very common among “real world,” retrospective evaluation studies, the available data yielded multiple robust findings concerning outcomes, challenges, and promising practices. In particular, the opportunity to draw on diverse quantitative and qualitative data sources and triangulate findings was a strength of the methodology.

III. PRIMARY FINDINGS: OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

This section briefly summarizes GOJoven’s primary programmatic outputs—the major GOJoven activities implemented and immediate beneficiaries reached—since its inception. It then provides the primary findings concerning GOJoven’s outcomes at the individual (Fellow), organizational, community, and national/regional levels.⁷

A. Programming Outputs

The table below shows GOJoven’s main programming outputs from 2004 to 2011. Overall, the available data suggest that GOJoven has implemented a robust range of components that have, for the most part, reached or exceeded their targets with respect to number of people and entities reached.

Principal GOJoven Programming Outputs, 2004-2011

Output Type	Total Outputs as of Dec. 2011
a. One-year Fellow training (including workshops, personal development funds, and coaching)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 149 graduates, 2004-2011 cohorts^a • 142 non-expelled, living graduates still permanent residents of GOJoven countries
b. LAP implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 final reports submitted
c. National & Regional GOJoven Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 regional meetings • 4 national meetings^b
d. Training of Trainers (TOT) for alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 alumni completed introductory TOT • 25 of them completed advanced TOT
e. Alumni academic scholarships ^c	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 recipients^d
f. Alumni professional development funds ^e	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 recipients
g. Digital stories workshop (2010) ^f	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 alumni participants • 6 stories on GOJoven website
h. IS Project grant awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 grants to non-governmental & governmental organizations • 31 final grant reports submitted
i. IS Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56 workshops; over 1,100 participants from over 300 organizations

^a The 2011 cohorts from all four countries are included here, even though these Fellows graduated in spring 2012.

^b Four additional National Meetings were held in January-February 2012.

^c Alumni academic scholarships support fellows to pursue degree programs.

^d An additional four awards were made in the first quarter of 2012.

^e *Professional development funds* are available to alumni once they have been active in implementing their LAP.

^f In 2010 GOJoven collaborated with the Center for Digital Storytelling to offer a workshop for alumni on creation of digital (multimedia) stories.

⁷ The key (top-line) findings did not differ across GOJoven countries; thus country differences are not discussed in this executive summary.

B. Outcomes: Individual Level

1. GOJoven has had positive effects on Fellows' leadership- and ASRHR-related knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Multiple data sources indicate that GOJoven has had positive effects on Fellows' leadership- and ASRHR-related knowledge, attitudes, and skills (KAS). The data indicate particularly strong changes in Fellows with regard to:

- Self-awareness
- Acceptance of and respect for cultural and sexual diversity
- Recognition of the important roles of gender and sexual diversity in ASRHR
- Self-confidence in leadership skills
- Skills to communicate with others (particularly youth) about—and build their capacity in—leadership and ASRHR
- Technical knowledge of ASRHR (e.g., HIV, family planning)
- Teamwork skills
- Comfort with one's sexuality
- Commitment to ASRHR work

“The theme of right[s] in SRH has become a passion for me and I have committed myself much more to working on this theme.”

-Honduran alumni survey

In various data sources, trainings, IS Projects, LAPs, and TOTs all emerged as key activities through which these and other leadership- and ASRHR-related KAS have been acquired. Potential areas for further KAS development include working with the mass media, fundraising, national and international advocacy, and project management.

2. Fellows have successfully applied their new knowledge, attitudes, and skills to address sexual and reproductive health and rights-related issues among their families and friends.

Alumni survey data indicate that overall, alumni believe that the KAS that they have developed through GOJoven have led to more frequent and more fruitful discussions with family and friends about ASRHR. Women agreed significantly more strongly than men that GOJoven has positively impacted these discussions. MSC stories and group discussions included multiple examples of how Fellows have applied their learnings from GOJoven to provide ASRHR education/counseling to relatives and friends; promote less *machismo* and greater gender equity in their families; and assist lesbian, gay, or bisexual siblings to “come out” to their families. A few Fellows also reported acting to protect family members from abuse by going to authorities.

“For my part I would try to talk naturally about sexuality... and little by little, my parents, brothers, and sisters were asking me about topics related to sexual health that they never would have dared [to ask about] before.”

-Mexican MSC story

3. A large majority of alumni are currently engaged in and/or are looking for work in ASRHR.

Alumni survey data indicate that 96.6% of respondents and in turn at least three quarters of all living, non-expelled GOJoven alumni are currently engaged in and/or looking for work (either paid or volunteer) related to ASRHR. Moreover, the latest GOJoven Fellows directory suggests that some additional alumni are also working in ASRHR-related positions or in other positions in which ASRHR-related activities may be incorporated.

4. GOJoven Fellows have applied their acquired ASRHR- and leadership-related knowledge, attitudes, and skills to diverse professional activities and have achieved greater recognition in their workplaces.

A variety of data sources indicate that through LAPs, IS Projects, TOT activities, and other paid and volunteer work, Fellows have applied the KAS they acquired in GOJoven to diverse professional activities. Some examples include:

- Training organizational staff, new Fellows, and local youth in leadership skills and ASRHR
- Working toward greater focus on youth and on ASRHR in their organizations and communities; for example, 71.3% of alumni survey respondents agreeing that due to GOJoven, they had advocated for policies favorable to ASRHR at the local level
- Writing funding proposals for ASRHR-related work
- Participating in local networks or collaborations to promote ASRHR
- Participating in local and national ASRHR-related committees
- Promoting ASRHR in the mass media (e.g., newspaper, radio, television)
- Serving as GOJoven Country Representatives, GOJoven Sustainability Committee members, and/or GOBelize officers or Board members
- Founding new NGOs to address issues related to ASRHR

“The skills I develop through the program I use at work and I can see my success rate increase... thru the comments made by my director and supervisors. My clients...have strong confidence in me as a result of the confidence I gain in myself.”

-Belizean MSC story

In the organizational survey, many supervisors made positive observations concerning Fellows' application of new leadership- and ASRHR-related knowledge and abilities in the workplace. In several data sources, Fellows reported that supervisors, co-workers, and/or clients have expressed confidence in or appreciation for their leadership abilities and/or ASRHR expertise.

5. GOJoven Fellows have attained increasingly influential ASRHR-related leadership roles and responsibilities, and many attribute these advances (at least in part) to GOJoven.

Multiple data sources indicate that Fellows have experienced increased responsibilities in their existing jobs, promotions, and new ASRHR-related job opportunities. For example, one alumna became the Technical Secretary of the Observatorio en Salud Reproductiva (OSAR) in the Totonicapán Department⁸,

⁸ The terms “department” and “departmental” are used in this Executive Summary to refer to a territorial unit in Guatemala and Honduras, not to a unit within an organization.

Guatemala. In addition, a number of Fellows have served as representatives on local or national ASRHR-related advisory committees or boards. Several have attained high-level decision-making positions at the state or national level. For example, one alumnus is now Director of Northern Quintana Roo's Human Rights Unit, under the State Attorney General. Another serves as the Education and Youth Officer for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Guatemala.

Many alumni attribute their workplace and career advances, at least in part, to the KAS and networking opportunities they acquired through GOJoven. For example, 69.8% of alumni survey respondents reported agreeing ("a little" or "a lot") that as a benefit of their participation in GOJoven, they have ascended to positions with greater influence or responsibility within an organization.

C. Outcomes: Organizational Level

1. GOJoven has had positive effects on the capacity of GOJoven-linked organizations.

Multiple data sources indicate that GOJoven has improved the organizational capacity of GOJoven-linked organizations. Some of the key types of change reported include:

- A new or expanded youth and/or ASRHR focus in organizational missions, strategic plans, policies, and/or programming; for example, organizational survey respondents reported, on average, between "somewhat positive" and "very positive" effects of GOJoven Fellows, IS Workshops, and IS Projects on their organization's focus on adolescents/youth and support for youth leadership
- Increased representation of youth in organizational actions and/or programming
- Improved organizational knowledge and abilities concerning youth and ASRHR work
- Increased collaboration with other organizations
- Increased visibility of the organization among diverse constituents

"[Because of the GOJoven IS Project] we have a plan that is based on the need to strengthen institutionally our work in sexual and reproductive health with youth."
-Guatemalan IS Project report

Collectively, the data sources suggest that IS Workshops, IS Projects, and individual Fellow initiative have all contributed to these outcomes.

Overall, GOJoven-linked organizations' ability to raise funds to support their missions and programming was reported to be a common area of challenge.

D. Outcomes: Community Level

1. As a result of GOJoven, many new ASRHR-related activities and services have been implemented in local communities.

Fellows and GOJoven-linked organizations have implemented many ASRHR-related activities in their communities through LAP and IS Projects, as well as Fellows' additional initiatives. For example:

- Numerous LAP and IS Projects have trained groups of youth peer educators in ASRHR, with the goal of these youth transferring their new KAS to others.

- Many projects and Fellows have developed educational materials, made educational presentations to youth in schools, and/or conducted broader community education through activities like health fairs.
- In some instances, education and/or outreach have been conducted with parents, community leaders, and/or other community stakeholders.
- Some Fellows have used the mass media to disseminate ASRHR-related information (e.g., via newspaper articles or radio or television shows).

In at least one instance, a LAP has created a new “youth-friendly” space. Specifically, a Mexican LAP has created a space that provides ASRHR workshops, information, and counseling to local youth.

2. Largely anecdotal or impressionistic data link GOJoven with positive changes in community members.

Many data sources have reported that GOJoven programming has led to positive changes in community members’ KAS and/or behaviors, such as:

- Improved ASRHR-related KAS among youth reached through GOJoven-linked activities
- More young people sharing ASRHR information with other young people
- Increased interest or openness among parents and other adults in the community to talk about and address ASRHR
- Increased seeking of condoms or SRH services among Fellows’ friends, family members, students, or other youth in the community

“The youth I worked with gained knowledge on SRH and became more open-minded particularly to speaking about SRH.”

-Belizean alumni survey

In addition, when asked about the effects of GOJoven on their communities, a small number of Fellows and organizations reported reduced teen pregnancy, birth, or STI rates. For example, one school that received a 2011 IS Project Grant had previously experienced an average of five temporary or permanent female student drop-outs per semester due to pregnancy. The school’s Dean reported that there were no student pregnancies in 2011, based on drop-out records.

However, in relatively few instances have reported outcomes been based on *systematic or formal evaluation data sources*, such as outcome surveys, clinic or condom distribution records, community participation logs, or national or local health surveillance statistics. In most cases, reported outcomes appear to reflect: (a) *the reporting party’s impressions*, based on observations of or interactions with several or many program youth; (b) *informal comments* made to the reporting party by others (e.g., school principals, parents); or (c) *an implicit assumption* that if the target population participated in an activity, the intended outcomes had also been achieved. In some cases, project reports do not indicate the data source for the stated outcomes. Some LAPs and IS Projects have reported workshop outcomes based on pre/post participant surveys. However, these are a minority of the projects, and the time period over which outcomes were measured was always relatively short (e.g., from just before to the end of a workshop series).

In short, while there is considerable anecdotal and impressionistic evidence of community outcomes, and some systematic evidence of positive short-term changes in KAS among youth, there are very few instances among GOJoven-linked interventions of systematic outcome evaluation over an extended period

(i.e., at least several months beyond the end of the target population’s participation for brief interventions, such as workshops; or ongoing outcome tracking with youth or other community constituents who participate in longer-term interventions, such as multicomponent school-based interventions, community organizing, or advocacy efforts). GOJoven-linked outcomes pertaining to behaviors and health status at the community level remain largely unknown.

E. Outcomes: National⁹ and Regional Level

1. Some GOJoven Fellows have had roles in national- and international-level ASRHR-related committees, conferences, and programming and advocacy efforts.

Multiple data sources indicate that some Fellows have been involved—since becoming Fellows—in national or international ASRHR-related program or policy initiatives through job and project responsibilities, advisory roles, strategic planning groups, advocacy groups, and conferences. Examples of the specific types of involvement include:

- Delivering government-sponsored trainings in their own countries and “south-to-south” trainings in other Central American countries
- Participating in advocacy activities (such as marches, letter-writing, and other lobbying actions) targeting government officials or institutions (e.g., Minister of Health, Legislature)
- Serving on ASRHR-related national advisory committees (e.g., National AIDS Commission in Belize)
- Presenting at national, regional, and international conferences or meetings on ASRHR topics, including (but not limited to) GOJoven-related work

2. There is little evidence that GOJoven programming has achieved change in ASRHR-related policies, services, or health outcomes at the national or regional level.

As was indicated above, some GOJoven Fellows have held jobs and/or served on committees, working groups, or coalitions/networks that are seeking to influence policies, services, and health outcomes at the national and regional level. However, to date there is little evidence that GOJoven alumni or GOJoven-linked projects have—as a result of or through GOJoven—*achieved changes* in ASRHR-related policies, services, or health outcomes at the national or regional level.

IV. PROMISING PRACTICES

As indicated above, the strongest evidence of GOJoven’s outcomes is found at the Fellow and organizational levels. The data suggest that several promising practices have played a particularly key role in achieving change at these levels. These practices also strongly align with other recent research that suggests that such practices are linked to positive leadership and (A)SRHR outcomes.

⁹ For Mexico, state-level findings for Quintana Roo are included in this section.

1. A focus on Fellows' self-awareness and personal development

GOJoven focuses strongly on self-awareness and personal development. Fellows have reported that GOJoven's emphasis on the following aspects of personal development have been particularly beneficial to their personal development and professional growth:

- Understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, biases and stereotypes;
- Overcoming low self-esteem
- Setting personal goals and creating a plan to achieve them
- Applying effective interpersonal communication styles
- Respecting and appreciating diversity

"GOJoven has taught me to recognize my wrongs and fears and to face them in order to overcome them.... Leadership starts with knowing myself, my emotions, my abilities and skills, my weakness and strengths before I seek to help others."

-Belizean MSC story

Fellows describe these aspects of the program as highly transformative and as precursors to development of other aspects of their abilities. Similar findings have been discussed in the leadership development literature. The evaluation data also suggest that GOJoven's skilled and compassionate training facilitators provide a safe and enabling environment for Fellows' development of self-awareness and other personal qualities and skills.

2. Fostering a sense of community and peer support within GOJoven

GOJoven has applied multiple strategies that foster a sense of community and peer support within the program, both during and beyond the Fellowship year. For example, Fellows design and implement LAPs together, network with their peers through GOJoven National and Regional meetings, and have opportunities to collaborate in the selection, orientation, and training of new Fellows. The sense of peer support and trust engendered through these and other activities was evidenced by Fellows' willingness to share very personal and painful stories with each other through the evaluation's MSC written stories and large-group discussions. The sense of community and peer support, in turn, has helped energize Fellows to continue to work as youth leaders in ASRHR, even in the face of personal and professional obstacles and challenges. Research on leadership development programs suggests that developing a sense of community, as GOJoven does, can contribute positively to leadership development.

3. Use of a highly participatory, interactive training methodology

Many Fellows and KOL/BOs have lauded the participatory, dynamic, and interactive nature of GOJoven trainings and the inclusion of hands-on practice and feedback. Fellows who have applied these techniques as trainers have reported receiving positive feedback from trainees and requests to provide additional trainings. The literature in many fields, including leadership development and sex and HIV education, also identifies interactive methodologies as a promising practice.

4. Provision of ongoing opportunities for Fellows to apply newly acquired knowledge, attitudes, and skills

LAPs afford Fellows an opportunity to apply their new KAS to a specific project, and push them to work collaboratively with other Fellows, organizations, and community constituents to achieve organizational-

and/or community-level outcomes. GOJoven also offers alumni other opportunities to apply KAS, such as by helping to select and train new cohorts of Fellows, becoming TOTs who deliver workshops to a variety of organizational and community audiences, and making presentations at national and regional conferences and meetings. Together, these opportunities increase the employability of Fellows and in turn afford them a broader range of professional opportunities related to youth leadership and ASRHR. The leadership development research literature also supports this approach as a promising practice for furthering leadership development.

5. Institutional strengthening with Fellow involvement

The vast majority of IS Project grants have been awarded to organizations that had at least one Fellow at the time of the award. IS Projects afford benefits to organizations and their Fellows. Organizations receive resources for strategic planning, staff training, and other activities that strengthen their capacity and ASRHR-related programming. Fellows apply and showcase their growing KAS, acquire new roles and responsibilities within the institution, and build networks with other organizations and/or community constituents. An additional benefit of IS Projects with Fellow involvement appears to be mitigation of tensions related to time conflicts between Fellows' responsibilities within the institution and GOJoven activities (see also below). This in turn encourages organizations to further support Fellows' leadership- and ASRHR-related development and activities. The GOJoven findings are consistent with other studies of leadership development programs, which highlight the ability of small institutional strengthening grants to have positive individual- and organizational-level outcomes.

"Having the Institutional Strengthening fund allowed [us] to strengthen [our] youth program and foster our youth team. The success of the project was owed in large part to the work of the youth group and the direct participation of the Summit [GOJoven] Fellow in its implementation."

-Honduran IS Project report

V. PRINCIPAL CHALLENGES

Data sources suggest that GOJoven has experienced a number of challenges that have collectively limited the potential for achieving desired leadership- and ASRHR-related outcomes at multiple levels. The principal challenges that have emerged from the data are summarized below.

1. Some GOJoven Fellows have reported negative family and community reactions, particularly initially, to their ASRHR work.

Some Fellows have reported being viewed suspiciously or stigmatized within their families or communities for participating an ASRHR-focused program and/or working to address ASRHR topics. In many instances, Fellows have reported that these negative reactions have disappeared or diminished over time, with increased respect for and appreciation of Fellows' new skills and information. However, it is important to bear in mind that Fellows who have been most adversely affected by negative reactions may have ceased to be active in GOJoven, and thus were less likely to have their experiences documented in the external evaluation.

"Each day is a struggle with some people, since when you defend the sexual and reproductive rights we have, they think you're gay, that you're a pervert or that nobody taught you that one should not talk about these topics."

-Guatemalan MSC story

2. Some GOJoven Fellows and their supervisors have experienced workplace tensions or conflicts over GOJoven.

Some Fellows and supervisors of Fellows have reported workplace concerns or conflicts related to GOJoven. For example, some supervisors have reported:

- Lack of knowledge of GOJoven's goals, activities, and accomplishments
- Concern with time that Fellows spend on GOJoven activities versus job responsibilities
- Lack of awareness of what Fellows have learned in GOJoven, because Fellows do not share the information
- Fellows departing the organization shortly after being trained, resulting in no return on investment

"...[The Fellow] left and didn't leave anything with the organization, as a result of the [GOJoven] Fellowship, so what was learned only benefitted [him/her]."

-Mexican organizational survey

Some Fellows, for their part, have reported that supervisors do not appreciate the skills, empowerment, and new ideas they bring from GOJoven and/or feel threatened by Fellows' assertiveness. Several Fellows have reported being fired for participating in GOJoven activities or applying GOJoven learnings, or that they opted to leave their jobs because of tensions with supervisors.

Tensions between Fellows and supervisors have the potential to limit Fellows' participation in GOJoven-linked activities and the interest of organizations to support their young staff members to become future Fellows. In addition, if supervisors are not aware of what Fellows are learning, opportunities for further transmission of new leadership- and ASRHR-related KAS can be missed, limiting the potential reach and impact of GOJoven.

3. LAPs have commonly experienced implementation and evaluation challenges.

LAP reports and LAP team interviews have documented a number of common challenges across LAPs, such as lack of team member commitment and engagement, difficulty coordinating team members' schedules, poor team dynamics, limited ability or inability to monitor and evaluate outcomes, and difficulty producing high-quality deliverables within the established timeframes. LAP teams have reported varying degrees of success addressing these challenges. Local community factors, such as community resistance to addressing ASRHR, and broader political, social, and environmental factors have also presented challenges, but they have not been reported as commonly as team process issues.

Collectively, these challenges have frequently resulted in project delays, and sometimes in projects not being implemented completely. In addition, only a relatively small proportion of LAPs have been able to report systematic data demonstrating LAP effects on communities. Collectively, these challenges have limited the ability of LAPs to achieve and document community-level outcomes.

4. Some IS Projects have not led to sustained organizational change.

Although IS Projects involve one-time funding for finite implementation periods (typically 12 months), the expectation of project stakeholders is that there will be some type of longer-term sustainability—with respect to program or service implementation, use of educational materials, application of new skills and

behaviors among staff, and/or maintenance of environments that facilitate communication, programming, and other activities related to ASRHR. The sustainability of services and outcomes initiated through IS Projects appears to have varied greatly, and in a number of cases, sustainability beyond the time that the final project report was submitted is unknown. Lack of funding has been reported to be a key factor in services or outcomes not being sustained. In some cases, lack of political will and low prioritization of ASRHR at the local governmental level have been reported to be factors. In addition, some in-country GOJoven staff and KOLs/BOs commented in interviews that projects that are narrowly focused on training a small group of youth have less potential for sustained outcomes than projects that instead seek to work with local communities and authorities to change policies, programming, and social norms.

As noted above, several GOJoven alumni have founded organizations that deliver ASRHR-related activities or services. Some have shown considerable initial success to date in securing funding for their work. Longer-term sustainability (i.e., five years or more) is yet to be demonstrated for most of these organizations.

5. Many ASRHR organizations have limited awareness of GOJoven's goals, methods, Fellows, and accomplishments.

Some in-country GOJoven staff, the majority of KOLs/BOs, and some organizational survey respondents have reported limited awareness of GOJoven's goals, methods, Fellows, and accomplishments among ASRHR organizations (i.e., their own and/or others), particularly those operating at the national level. Factors contributing to this lack of awareness include:

- Limited outreach by GOJoven to ASRHR organizations
- Failure among many Fellows to identify themselves as affiliated with GOJoven outside of GOJoven meetings
- Limited resources to evaluate GOJoven and systematically document its achievements at the organizational, community, and national/regional levels
- Limited outreach to the media to promote and inform about GOJoven

"A lot of partners [i.e., ASRHR stakeholders nationwide] still aren't sure what GOJoven is up to, who is GOJoven, and because of that then you might be losing some opportunities for working together."
-Belizean key opinion leader interview

Limited awareness of GOJoven among ASRHR organizations makes it more difficult to establish alliances and collaborations to address ASRHR issues, particularly at the national and regional level.

6. There is little systematic evaluation data on community-level outcomes of GOJoven-linked efforts.

As was discussed above, most data on community-level outcomes of GOJoven-linked activities is anecdotal or impressionistic. Fellows and GOJoven-linked organizations have reported that LAPs and IS Projects have very little funding to devote to evaluation, and many organizations and communities have limited capacity (i.e., funding, personnel, systems) to carry out formal evaluation activities. The lack of systematic, community-level monitoring and evaluation data makes it difficult for the GOJoven community to know what has and has not been achieved, share successes with other ASRHR stakeholders, and make associated decisions about how to improve programming in the future.

7. Most Fellows are not in positions that make national- or regional-level policy, funding, and programming decisions on ASRHR issues.

Fellows are young (age 18-30) when they enter GOJoven, and usually in positions of very limited authority. Some Fellows/alumni have served temporarily or periodically on ASRHR-related advisory boards or commissions that advise departmental-, state-, national-, or international-level authorities. However, since GOJoven's inception, very few have attained longer-term, high-level positions of authority that permit them to make policy, funding, or programming decisions that *directly* impact national- or regional-level ASRHR services or health outcomes. This in turn has limited the ability of GOJoven to achieve ASRHR outcomes at the national or regional level.

"...[T]hose who are in the program are—also because of the stage of life they are younger—they are not in positions of power...."

-Mexican key opinion leader interview

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for Summit, PHI, and GOJoven to consider in the areas of programming and partnerships, communications, and evaluation respond to the challenges identified above and incorporate suggestions from Fellows, GOJoven-linked organizations, KOLs/BOs, and other stakeholders. In some cases, they address specific components of current GOJoven programming, which may or may not be sustained in GOJoven's next phase. In other cases, they address broader aspects of GOJoven's goals and strategies currently under discussion in GOJoven's ongoing sustainability planning process. Focusing resources on in-country GOJoven staff and/or consultants would be crucial to successful implementation of most of the recommendations. GOJoven alumni offer a rich source of potential personnel to carry out many of the activities referenced below.

Programming and Partnerships

1. Continue to support Fellows' personal development.

As was noted above, some Fellows have experienced negative reactions from their families and communities to application of the KAS they have learned in GOJoven. Study data suggest that in addition to building leadership skills, GOJoven's focus on personal development during the Fellowship year is crucial to helping Fellows to weather these and other challenges. Continuing to promote a sense of community within GOJoven can also provide both current Fellows and alumni with a sense of personal support that can help them to advance as ASRHR leaders.

2. Provide more in-country support for LAP teams.

LAPs afford Fellows an important opportunity to apply new KAS in real-world contexts. However, per above, LAP teams have reported various project implementation and evaluation challenges. LAP reports and interview data suggest that the following strategies might help to address these challenges:

- Providing (additional) training in practical project management skills and handling team dynamics
- Implementing closer monitoring of LAPs by GOJoven staff, and offer technical assistance from local GOJoven staff and/or other local experts

Several LAP team interviewees also suggested that GOJoven provide greater support for more extensive LAP evaluation. Moreover, although the principal purpose of LAPs is to afford Fellows an opportunity to apply their new leadership and ASRHR skills to a real-world project, additional technical assistance could help to encourage design of LAPs that have greater potential to achieve sustainable community-level outcomes, though strategies such as advocacy for local-level policy change (see also below). This would require up-front guidance and technical assistance from in-country GOJoven staff or consultants early in the Fellowship year.

“...I think that GOJoven should monitor all of the LAPs that are developed more closely.... I think that indeed things would have turned out a little differently [for our LAP] if there had been follow-up [from GOJoven] by... asking for updates, and not waiting until the group wants to give a sign that they are working or already finishing their LAP.”
-LAP team group interview

3. Apply additional strategies—beyond training in fundraising and grant-writing—to help Fellows and GOJoven-linked organizations address project and organizational sustainability challenges.

As was noted above, many organizations have experienced challenges sustaining IS Project-linked services and outcomes once the IS Project period has ended. Other GOJoven-linked organizations have also experienced a range of sustainability challenges. Improving sustainability is especially challenging in GOJoven countries' low-resource climates. Possible strategies to bolster sustainability that emerge from the external evaluation data (and more general best practices) include:

- Providing additional Fellow training and IS Workshops on sustainability—not only on fundraising and grant-writing, but also on how to define and plan for sustainability at the outset of a project
- Considering how to involve the private, for-profit sector in GOJoven countries to provide more support for ASRHR

“Business groups should take an active role [in addressing ASRHR].”
-Belizean key opinion leader interview

However, with respect to the second strategy, it should be noted that that some KOLs/BOs commented in interviews that political issues, conservative values concerning sex, and potential business ties to criminal activity present formidable challenges to successfully involving the private, for-profit sector in ASRHR in GOJoven countries.

4. Focus additional attention on linking alumni with municipal, state/departmental, national, and international platforms, committees, and networks addressing ASRHR.

As noted above, there is little evidence that GOJoven has made a direct contribution to engendering change in ASRHR-related policies, services, or health outcomes at the national or regional level. One key factor (also noted above) is that most GOJoven alumni are not (yet) in positions that permit them to make decisions that directly impact ASRHR outcomes at these levels. An inter-related factor is that many GOJoven alumni have dedicated considerable time and energy to training small groups of youth in ASRHR, but not to participating in larger-scale advocacy efforts to change policies, programs, or services.

Helping alumni to become more involved in municipal, state/departmental, national, and international platforms, committees, and networks addressing ASRHR promises to advance alumni's individual

leadership trajectories, so that they can move into positions of greater decision-making authority concerning ASRHR-related policies, programs, and funding. It would also increase the likelihood that—through leadership roles of greater authority and through collaborative action with others—alumni will have an impact on local, national, and regional ASRHR-related program, policy, and health outcomes.

“...I think it is worth it...for GOJoven to be more involved in the [Mexico City] Ministerial Declaration, which is the framework that is being supported now at the Central American level and in Mexico.”¹⁰

-Mexican key opinion leader interview

Communications

5. Communicate annually with new and alumni Fellows’ organizations and promote increased information-sharing.

The kinds of GOJoven-related workplace tensions reported by some Fellows and their supervisors, as well as lack of knowledge about GOJoven among the supervisors (see above), suggest that GOJoven should implement strategies such as the following:

- On an annual basis, provide organizations that host new Fellows and/or alumni with information about GOJoven’s mission, goals, activities, and results, along with information about expected time commitments from Fellows/alumni.¹¹
- Require that for Fellows to be accepted to GOJoven, they must agree (in writing) to make at least one presentation on their learnings to both their colleagues and supervisors after each GOJoven training or National or Regional Meeting they attend.
- Encourage and assist Fellows to share written and electronic GOJoven materials with their supervisors and colleagues.
- Consider collecting some (limited) data from Fellows and their organizations annually to monitor satisfaction and challenges (see also below).

6. Disseminate information about GOJoven more systematically and assertively to local, national, and international ASRHR organizations and the public.

As was noted above, many ASRHR organizations that have not worked with—or not worked continuously with—GOJoven have limited knowledge of the program. Multiple data sources suggest that the following strategies for marketing and disseminating information about GOJoven’s mission, goals, Fellows, IS Projects, activities, and outcomes could be useful:

“GOJoven does not tell me anything. For example, there is never information from organization to organization.... It could be short notes, such as a bulletin about their accomplishments...”

-Guatemalan key opinion leader interview

¹⁰ The Ministerial Declaration “Educating to Prevent,” signed in Mexico City in 2008, seeks to strengthen HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean by ensuring access to high-quality, comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services. It has been signed by 30 Ministers of Health and 26 Ministers of Education, including the Ministers of Health and Education in all four GOJoven countries (see http://www.unicef.org/spanish/media/media_50463.html).

¹¹ Currently, the supervisor/director of each new Fellow signs a commitment letter that lays out time expectations for the Fellow during the Fellowship year and LAP implementation. However, no such letter is provided to organizations concerning alumni time commitments.

- Sending annual reports or newsletters via email to ASRHR- and youth-focused organizations in the GOJoven countries
- Conducting more media outreach via newspaper, radio, and television
- Encouraging Fellows to identify themselves with both their home organization and GOJoven in relevant professional contexts
- Providing lists of Fellows (with contact information and interests and expertise) to ASRHR organizations in the GOJoven countries
- GOJoven's having a (greater) presence at events (such as health fairs) sponsored by governmental organizations
- Making GOJoven's training curriculum and tools widely available to Fellows, their organizations, and other organizations working in ASRHR¹²

Evaluation

7. Develop a logic model with specific and measurable outcome targets, a systematic monitoring and evaluation plan, and a budget for prospective evaluation of GOJoven's next phase, and work to build a culture of learning around evaluation.

Per above, GOJoven has experienced some evaluation-related challenges, particularly with respect to documenting community-level outcomes systematically and over mid- and long-term periods. GOJoven was initially a pilot project that focused on assessing process objectives and short-term, individual-level outcome objectives. With its growth and evolution have come additional outcome evaluation expectations from the Summit Foundation and other stakeholders. At the current juncture, multiple stakeholders are interested to document the program's impact on Fellows' longer-term leadership and career trajectories and ASRHR-related programs, policies, and funding streams at the local, state, national, and regional levels. To document such effects, it will be important to plan systematically and prospectively for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in GOJoven's next phase. This planning should include development of:

- A logic model that includes SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-framed) outcome objectives
- An M&E plan that identifies how each SMART objective will be systematically measured over time, including the methods and periodicity of data collection, analysis, and reporting back to stakeholders
- A set of strategies for furthering a culture of learning around M&E within GOJoven that can promote evaluation buy-in, participation, capacity-building, and use of findings
- A realistic evaluation budget that includes coverage for a local evaluation lead in each country who will be responsible for coordinating GOJoven M&E activities in that country

Collecting data on a periodic, ongoing basis can be resource-intensive, particularly if the data must be collected from indirect GOJoven beneficiaries. When feasible and appropriate, leveraging existing datasets (e.g., clinic logs, government or NGO surveillance data) can help to minimize costs, as can involving current Fellows and alumni as M&E consultants (see also below).

¹² As of the time this report was being written, this was already part of the draft plan for GOJoven's Phase IV.

8. Consider implementing brief annual online surveys that systematically assess outcomes and challenges among Fellows, GOJoven-linked organizations, and their communities.

Depending on the SMART objectives established for GOJoven's next phase, implementation of *brief* annual online surveys with new and alumni Fellows and GOJoven-linked organizations could be one (of several) viable evaluation strategies.¹³ Such surveys could facilitate: (1) systematic, ongoing assessment of Fellows' key behavioral outcomes and leadership trajectories, (2) monitoring of the sustainability of new organizational policies, programs, and practices put in place under GOJoven auspices, and (3) more systematic (if still impressionistic or anecdotal) collection of data on community-level outcomes. The surveys could also help to monitor GOJoven-related challenges that Fellows and organizations are facing in workplace, family, and/or community settings.

The external evaluation has shown that in-country consultants (alumni) can obtain high survey response rates from their peers. If GOJoven-linked organizations are sensitized *up front* to the importance of an annual survey, and know that the overall findings will be shared with them, they may also respond favorably to an annual survey request.

While implementing this recommendation would require devoting more funding to staff and/or consultant time, using GOJoven alumni as paid consultants to facilitate data collection and dissemination of findings, and retaining local but non-GOJoven-affiliated¹⁴ consultants to conduct data analysis, could keep annual survey costs relatively low.

9. Consider devoting additional GOJoven resources to strengthening local monitoring and evaluation systems.

Also depending on the SMART objectives established for GOJoven's next phase, it may be useful for GOJoven to devote resources to strengthening local M&E systems. As was noted above, organizations often lack the fiscal and human resources to engage in formal M&E. While a number of training sessions for Fellows and organizations have been devoted to evaluation methods, relatively few IS Project grants to date have focused on strengthening organizations' M&E systems. Greater investment in M&E systems in GOJoven-linked organizations would facilitate evaluation of GOJoven-related activities and monitoring of the trajectories of key community-level ASRHR indicators, help strengthen institutional learning and continuous program improvement, and permit dissemination of additional information about GOJoven's outcomes to diverse ASRHR stakeholders.

¹³ For organizations without Internet access, fax could be an option.

¹⁴ Contracting local consultants who are not affiliated with GOJoven to conduct data analysis would avoid confidentiality and bias concerns that would be associated with having otherwise qualified alumni conduct the analyses.