



## **A Case Study of the GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program: Securing Sustainability**

On a foggy, northern Californian, mid-summer day in 2011, Esther Tahrir, the founder and director of the GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program (GOJoven) sat at her desk, concerned. In 2003, as part of her work at the Public Health Institute (PHI), she had helped to design GOJoven and since then had guided it to become a program that was regarded as both globally innovative and as addressing a critical need in Central America. When no-one else in the region would, GOJoven tackled sensitive sexual and reproductive health issues by training and equipping young local leaders to take action central to young people's lives and well-being.

Esther had just gotten off the phone with Kathy Hall, her Program Officer at The Summit Foundation (Summit). Summit was the GOJoven program's founding funder, and since then, almost its exclusive source of financial support. Kathy had just told Esther that Summit and its Board were looking for a fundamental shift in GOJoven's management and financing. They wanted GOJoven to develop a plan for becoming more financially and managerially sustainable. They also wanted leadership for this change to come from the region, with concrete steps taken toward transition to start in 2012.

Kathy's message was not completely unexpected for Esther. Esther and Kathy had been in close communication about GOJoven's future ever since Kathy had joined The Summit Foundation. Esther appreciated Kathy's high level of supportive engagement, as well as Summit's long and strong commitment to the GOJoven program. Nonetheless, Esther knew immediately that Kathy's request would require rapid and substantial work by PHI and its colleagues, especially by the young people who had been trained and supported by the program who were carrying out reproductive health advocacy in their communities, the GOJoven Fellows and Alumni. Everyone would have to switch gears and plan for a different future. Given the established commitment of PHI, Summit, and the GOJoven program to transparency and co-leadership with GOJoven Fellows and Alumni, this would be an involved process.

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Esther leaned back in her chair. She was not sure that some of the options she had discussed with Kathy were feasible. While she knew that the GOJoven program had worked to build program planning, fundraising, and evaluation capacity among Fellows – through the program’s training curriculum, as well as engagement in periodic evaluation efforts – she was keenly aware that these areas would require extensive reinforcement and supplementation if the program were to become more sustainable.

### **The Public Health Institute (PHI)**

Esther and the GOJoven program were based out of the [Public Health Institute](#) (PHI). Researchers and social entrepreneurs in the greater San Francisco Bay Area had set up PHI 50 years previously to manage their different California-based and global health projects through a single, nimble, lower-cost, administrative structure. The group within PHI leading GOJoven had extensive experience designing and running leadership programs related to sexual and reproductive health in Latin America. They had managed several multi-country leadership initiatives on sexual and reproductive health and family planning for the Packard and Gates Foundations over the past decade. They had also designed and run global health fellowship programs for USAID for over two decades contributing to a more highly trained global health workforce in the US and around the world.

Esther, like most of the other key PHI staff and consultants, had been with GOJoven from the start. As the Executive Director and Founder, she had first worked in Guatemala during the set-up stages, helping with creation of the GOJoven model, including curriculum development, identification of trainers and a Guatemalan partner implementing organization ([ASECSA](#)), and recruitment of the first cohort of 24 young local leaders as Fellows. Many trainers, such as Angel Martinez, GOJoven’s master trainer, also joined the program at its inception, and Fellows’ evaluations consistently pointed to his guidance as deeply significant to their lives and subsequent careers. Not only were PHI staff well steeped in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the region as well as globally, but they had the Spanish language and cultural competencies central to designing and running the program.

### **The Summit Foundation**

Established in 1991, [The Summit Foundation](#) is a small private family foundation based in Washington D.C. with nine Board members, all but two from the family of the founders, Victoria (Vicki) and Roger Sant. It has had three areas of focus for over 15 years: advancing gender equality (particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights) and protecting the earth’s biodiversity - both focused in Central America, and making cities livable. Summit’s special commitment to Central America grew from the founders’ concern about the environmental health of the Mesoamerican Reef and how that impacted the well-being of local populations. In 2011, Summit’s endowment totaled \$70 million, and the 106 grants made that year ranged in size from \$500 - \$709,000, with all but seven well below \$200,000.<sup>1</sup> The GOJoven Youth

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<sup>1</sup>Summit Charitable Foundation Inc, Form 990 for period ending December 2011. Available at: [https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display\\_990/521743817/2012\\_11\\_PF%2F52-1743817\\_990PF\\_201112](https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_990/521743817/2012_11_PF%2F52-1743817_990PF_201112)

Leadership program represented Summit’s largest grantmaking investment to-date, totaling almost \$6 million by the end of 2012 (see in Table 1 in the Annexes), and nearly \$8.5 million by 2019 (see Table 9).

The Summit Foundation stands out as having long and strong commitments to the organizations that it supports, often through multi-year support, giving much-needed breathing space to the recipients to focus on the work. Summit’s nine years of support for GOJoven, in the context of US foundation grantmaking patterns, are an anomaly and extend far beyond the normal timeline of support. A more typical pattern of foundation investment is to focus on an issue area for three to five years and then move on. One-year, project-specific grants are a common practice. Further, with a few notable exceptions, most US foundations, particularly small ones, focus their grantmaking inside the US.<sup>2</sup>

Under the leadership of Vicki Sant, Summit’s President and co-founder, the foundation staff and several Board members had engaged quite deeply and personally with the GOJoven program throughout the 2003-2012 period. In addition to taking a strong interest in the program’s design and early progress, Vicki was a warm and vivid presence at several of the GOJoven trainings in its early years. She felt a special attachment to Fellows and their successes, taking personal joy in the individual transformations she saw. She taught them the Sant Family Whistle, visited Fellows and Alumni in the region, attended Fellows’ presentations at conferences, and invited Fellows to present at a Summit Board meeting.

### The Central American Context

When Summit invited PHI to design a youth leadership development program in the region in 2003, they had both aimed to shake up the status quo for youth and for youth sexual and reproductive health and rights in the region (see Box 1 for background). Summit wanted to pilot a then-novel approach to address the needs of growing numbers of youth under 24 - almost 40% of humans on the planet - and the socially conservative norms, policies, and programs that are obstacles to doing so in so many countries.

Youth in Central America had a high unmet need for contraceptive and reproductive health services, but Central America was by no means an easy place for young changemakers in sexual and reproductive health and rights to work. While over the past decades,

#### **Box 1: Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, are fundamental human rights that are related to sexuality and reproduction. These rights allow people to make informed and meaningful decisions about their own sexual wellbeing, such as their sexual orientation, relationships, sexual activity, contraception or their bodies.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are in particular important to young people because their access to accurate information and services helps enable them to maintain their sexual health and plan for healthy futures.

*(Adapted from [Youth Do It.](#))*

<sup>2</sup> Foundation Center & the Council on Foundations (2018). *The State of Global Giving by US Foundations: 2011-2015*. Available at: <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/31306/31306.pdf>; Council on Foundations. *Foundation Basics*. Available at: <https://www.cof.org/content/foundation-basics>

Latin American countries on the whole have seen notable improvements in contraceptive use, teen pregnancy reduction, and advances in women’s rights, Central American countries have lagged (see Table 2).<sup>3</sup>

The region’s comparatively high levels of religious and cultural conservatism have not only discouraged public discussion or financing of contraception, but also attention to broader youth SRH needs. The settings, and at times the entering GOJoven Fellows themselves, were culturally conservative. The Catholic Church, and also the increasingly prominent Protestant evangelical churches, play central roles in social and political life, and hold substantial influence over political leaders. These institutions view the family as the appropriate place to address adolescent sexual and reproductive health – rather through public health or educational institutions or interventions. There remains strong resistance in the region to providing sex education, let alone services, to unmarried young people.

In Guatemala and Honduras, where evangelical Christians now rapidly approach half the population, evangelical leadership has increasingly taken political action to further its values.<sup>4</sup> For example, in 2009, the Youth Commission of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala (AEG) spoke out and mobilized to overturn the 2005 *National Law on Family Planning* that for the first time had authorized government facility provision of family planning services to married couples<sup>5</sup> - GOJoven Fellows had been active in the campaign to support this reform. The social conservatism of Central America, particularly as regards young people, sexuality, and reproduction, was in part what motivated the launch of GOJoven by Summit and PHI.

Economic and political instability in the region make work more challenging as well. Central America has some of the highest economic inequality in the globe, linked with government inattention to poorer and indigenous populations (see Table 2). Government health and other social services systems serving these populations often experience shortages of providers, supplies, and facilities. Further, recent histories of government violence targeting indigenous populations remain fresh and unresolved. The region, particularly Guatemala and Honduras, has also experienced significant political instability, including political and drug-related violence. Transnational organized crime in the region fuels the highest rate of homicide and some of the highest rates of femicide in the world, which disproportionately affect young people.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017). Healthcare Access and Conditions in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador: Central American Refugee Health Profile. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/profiles/central-american/healthcare-diet/index.html>; Caffè, S., Plesons, M., Camacho, A.V., Brumana, L., Abdool, S.N., Huaynoca, S., et al. (2017). *Looking back and moving forward: can we accelerate progress on adolescent pregnancy in the Americas?* Reproductive Health: 14(1):83; Guttmacher Institute (2018). Fact Sheet: Abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: [https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/ib\\_awn-latin-america.pdf](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/ib_awn-latin-america.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center. (2015). *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*. Available at: [https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/03/PF\\_15.04.02\\_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf](https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf); Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2007). *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2006/10/pentecostals-08.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Evangélicos guatemaltecos contra Ley de Planificación. FamiliarCerigua/ CIMAC| Guatemala. September 12, 2009. Available at: <https://cimacnoticias.com.mx/node/43577>; Evangelicos en Guatemala al borde de “legalisar la homofobia.” El Pulso Honduras. December 26, 2018. Available at: <https://elpulso.hn/evangelicos-en-guatemala-al-borde-de-legalizar-la-homofobia/>

<sup>6</sup> Essayag, S. (2017). *From Commitment to Action: Policies to End Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional Analysis Document*. UNDP and UN Women Panama. Available at:

## Origins and Development of the GOJoven Youth Leadership Program

Summit took to heart the aspirational commitments to adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights that governments agreed to at the 1994 United Nations [International Conference on Population and Development](#). After vetting several possible international NGOs to lead a leadership program in four Central American countries, Summit selected PHI. With GOJoven, PHI had aimed to find the most driven and passionate young leaders they could, and then to equip them to change attitudes, norms, and policies related to sexual and reproductive health.

Throughout the development and existence of GOJoven, PHI had had a broad commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQ) and indigenous people. Building on their experience with youth leadership, PHI recognized that youth leaders' interests and work often spread beyond the specific categories for which a donor provides support. Esther knew that Summit was focused on youth leadership and teen pregnancy prevention rather than on other health and development problems. But she also knew that empowering youth to address a myriad of issues, from the environment to broader social justice issues, was aligned with Summit's values.

Esther, her PHI colleagues and alumni from PHI's previous International Family Planning Leadership Program in the region felt that bringing young people's leadership to the field of sexual and reproductive health in the region was critical, both for eventually improving population level health outcomes, but also more broadly for deepening these young people's understandings of themselves and their societies, and thus their ability to make change. After all, Central America's population was young, with a median age of 28, and 25% under the age of 15, and youth voices were largely absent from the policy and programmatic discussions affecting them.<sup>7</sup>

## Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Youth Leadership

Donors' focus on leadership development in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) dates back to the 1960s - and even further, if one considers Christian missionary institutions. Leadership programs in LMICs typically aim to build the presence of skilled and committed leaders in a sector where they are limited or absent. The expectation is that leaders will then be equipped to go on to expand access to services and to strengthen policy. The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations have run programs of this type, as have more recently (on a smaller scale) the Packard and Gates Foundations in the field of family planning and reproductive health. More recently, a corporate donor (Johnson & Johnson) has supported the Women Deliver Young Leaders Program, focusing on maternal and reproductive health. However, few plan for population-level outcomes as a result of their interventions, and few have focused on youth and made

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<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rblac/docs/Research%20and%20Publications/Empoderamiento%20de%20la%20Mujer/UNDP-RBLAC-ReportVCMEnglish.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Worldometers (2019). Subregions in Latin America and the Caribbean by population. Available online at:

<https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-subregion/>; Statista (2019). Proportion of selected age groups of world population in 2019, by region. Available online at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/265759/world-population-by-age-and-region/>

long-term commitments.<sup>8</sup>

Globally, youth leadership programs are a more recent phenomenon. Over the past decade with more than half of the planet under 30, there has been increased global recognition that the world's largest generation of youth is coming of age, with unaddressed needs, including for sexual and reproductive health, and with serious social barriers to discussing these needs.<sup>9</sup> Youth leadership programs are variously seen as mechanisms for generating capacity in the sector, building policymaker or public support for the needs of young people, and/or for delivering services to this population. Youth leadership programs are viewed as having a greater potential to be transformative and have longer lasting impacts than are programs focused on adults because they take place at an early stage in participants' lives. They intervene at a stage when people are both more open to change, and have more years ahead in which to produce impact, than do training programs for midcareer professionals.

While a handful of youth leadership programs have focused on SRH, few models have explicitly put youth practical exercise of leadership at their center. In part this has been due to the particular challenges facing youth-led programs (see Table 3), which include 'aging out', high staff mobility, the need for frequent (re)training, and the expectation that youth will volunteer, among others. In Central America, before the GOJoven, only a handful provided education or reproductive health services to young people – such as those of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) national member associations. To the extent that IPPF national associations supported youth leadership, it has almost always been tightly tied to their delivery of services. Few programs in the region were explicitly designed to empower youth to voice their priorities and take on sector leadership. The Summit Foundation and PHI hoped GOJoven would help fill this gap in the region.

### **The GOJoven Youth Leadership Development Program in Sexual and Reproductive Health (2004-2012)**

PHI developed, and along with [ASECSA](#), its Mayan community health partner organization on the ground, deployed a fellowship model for youth leadership development in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and in one southern state of Mexico - Quintana Roo. The geographic focus stemmed from Summit's priorities and resource limitations, as well as PHI's expertise. The overarching goal has been to equip young leaders (ages 18-29) to improve the long-term SRHR of adolescents in their local and national communities. To do so, GOJoven's model has used three main strategies:

1. Building the knowledge and individual and collective leadership skills of new young leaders to advance adolescent SRHR;
2. Strengthening the capacity of key local SRHR institutions; and
3. Supporting and broadening the network of Alumni Fellows within and across GOJoven countries, in order to make collective change.

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<sup>8</sup> Saloma, A. & Price, S. (2019). *Empower, Change, Transform*. The Schusterman Family Foundation, The Rockwood Leadership Institute.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization (2018). *Engaging young people for health and sustainable development: strategic opportunities for the World Health Organization and partners*. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Fellows were recruited through outreach to GOJoven alumni/ae, educational institutions, and SRH and youth serving organizations. The recruitment and selection process was managed by GOJoven staff in Oakland and each country, with support from Alumni.

The GOJoven program's core components were designed not only to increase Fellows' own understanding of SRHR issues at the individual and community levels, but also to have them put their newly acquired leadership skills into immediate practice to make change. It aims to balance conceptual and experiential learning:

- Fellows have 144 hours of **in-person training** (1 week/quarter over a year) using a curriculum addressing adolescent SRHR; youth individual and collective leadership development; and program development, fundraising, and evaluation (see Table 4).
- Fellows' collaboratively develop 24-month **Leadership Action Plans** (LAPs) funded through seed grants, and collectively implement them in their communities post-training ('baking in' experience leading);
- Fellows can apply, individually or in teams, for **institutional strengthening grants** for their home institutions to improve capacity and commitment to support adolescent and youth SRHR;
- Fellows and Alumni, along with the director of their home organization, could participate in **institutional strengthening workshops**; and
- Fellows become members of **national and cross-country networks** of GOJoven Alumni, bolstering their capacity to collaborate and advance individually and collectively.

GOJoven Alumni were also eligible to apply for competitive professional and educational scholarships, equipping those selected to advance further in their careers and fields.

### **GOJoven and Youth Agency and Empowerment**

The program's motto is to "inspire youth leaders with the power of change." Fellows' agency and empowerment are built into the GOJoven model in multiple ways. Fellows' Leadership Action Plans have them back working in their communities to carry out SRHR training with young people or other educational activities – putting their new leadership skills into immediate practice (see Box 2).

## **Box 2: A GOJoven Fellow's Leadership Action Plan, Guatemala 2012**

### **Living Responsibly, Sololá**

#### **LAP Objective:**

- Educate 200 adolescents on pregnancy prevention through the implementation of an SRH media campaign with radio and TV programs, covering the 6 municipalities of the Sololá Department.
- Increase knowledge by 25% in 150 youth ages 12-17 about SRH topics to avoid unwanted pregnancies in the 6 municipalities of the Sololá Department.

#### **Achieved Outcomes:**

- Wrote and broadcasted 6 radio programs reaching the entire Sololá department in topics ranging from human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, national laws concerning SRH, and gender-based violence prevention.
- Successfully trained 195 youth in SRH topics in a series of workshops; 73% of participants had increased their knowledge by the end of the final workshop.

**Estimated number of youth reached:** 195 +

GOJoven's participatory methodologies play out not just in how learning takes place (the experiential GOJoven curriculum, the LAPs), but also in how the Fellowship has been run. GOJoven Alumni contribute to the design and writing of PHI's GOJoven proposals to Summit; participate in recruiting, selecting and training new cohorts of fellows; develop and implement the training curriculum; and assist with evaluation activities. The intention has been to make Fellows active agents in their Fellowship experience, and in the running of GOJoven. As can be seen in Table 5, GOJoven's design includes most of the components recommended for strong youth leadership programs that seek to empower rather than tokenize young people.<sup>10</sup>

For PHI, 'power-sharing' was not just a slogan to use to show how cutting edge GOJoven's leadership program was. It aimed to engage young people to participate in truly meaningful ways, as shown in the upper steps of Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation in Figure 1. Esther and her colleagues deeply felt that having Fellows take the reins whenever possible was not only good for Fellows and the program in its own right, but also was the core way that Fellows could exercise and grow their belief in their ability, and their actual ability, to lead.

Esther knew that, after their Fellowship experience, GOJoven Alumni would be going back into organizations and environments where there was often little to no expectation or room for young people to take on leadership roles. Table 6 shows examples of how GOJoven embodied the principles of co-leadership and co-design at the core of its program model.

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<sup>10</sup> Catino, J., Battistini, E., & Babcheck, E. (2018). *Young People Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health: Toward a New Normal*. Available at: <http://yieldproject.org/>



## Program Achievements

Both PHI and Summit were proud of the GOJoven model and its accomplishments during this first phase as outlined in Table 7. Between 2004 and 2012, GOJoven International supported nine cohorts, with 168 graduating Fellows that completed their 24-month action-learning youth leadership Fellowship (see Figure 2).

Success of the model went far beyond engaging the ‘usual suspects’ of leadership programs – elite, upper class, educated, ladino young people – most often cisgender men.<sup>11</sup> GOJoven deliberately recruited rural and indigenous youth, selected equal proportions of females and males, and included people with diverse sexual orientations and identities. The Fellowship had also organically opened conversations and reflections about sexism, racism and homophobia, often leading to fundamental transformation in how Fellows understood the world and their roles, and enabled them to influence not only the organizations within which they worked, but also at the community and regional/national levels.

Program results can be seen in the numbers of active GOJoven Alumni, the reach of the activities they carried out through their Leadership Action Plans and in the organizations where they have gone on to work, their increased representation and engagement in regional and international youth leadership and SRHR forums, and the work that they continue to carry out (see Box 3).

### **Box 3: Examples of GOJoven Alumni Engagement**

#### **Dunia Carola Orellana Guifarro (Fellow 2004, Honduras)**

Dunia became a GOJoven Fellow at age 21. She has worked as a human rights activist, filmmaker, journalist and as a multimedia editor for *La Prensa*, Honduras’s most widely read newspaper. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Journalism from the National Autonomous University of Honduras in 2010. As a Summit Scholar, she earned her Master’s degree in Documentary Filmmaking from the University of Superior Arts and Theatre in Madrid in 2012. Dunia is passionate about working in sexual and reproductive health and rights and human rights issues. She has served as a trainer, recruiter, mentor and communications consultant to GOJoven International, and provides expertise on communications, advocacy and the media to GOJoven as well as advocacy to NGOs in Honduras and the region.

#### **Marta Honoria Castillo (Fellow 2007, Guatemala)**

Marta’s professional experience includes working as a trainer in the Association of Garifuna Women of Guatemala. In this capacity, she advocated for the rights and health of Garifuna people throughout the Izabal District. Marta served for two years as President of the Youth and Children Parliament of Guatemala. She has training and experience in conflict resolution, teamwork, community development and HIV/AIDS. She completed two years of university studies in Business Administration and recently obtained a professional certificate in Political Leadership and Human Rights in Honduras. Currently, Marta serves as the Training Coordinator for GOJoven Guatemala. She hopes to become an international advocate for laws and policies that support women, strengthen organizations and empower youth.

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<sup>11</sup> Cisgender characterizes situations where individuals’ personal identity and gender correspond with their birth sex.

GOJoven Fellows had graduated from the GOJoven program and gone on to take on increasing leadership responsibilities in their communities and in organizations in the field of SRHR as documented by GOJoven's 2011 evaluation.<sup>12</sup> Some had even run for political office. Saúl Paaú had run a vigorous campaign for mayor of his municipality in Guatemala's Peten Department, putting issues of concern to young people at the center of his campaign, including options to prevent teen pregnancy. Marco Antonio Toh, later won office as State Commissioner for Human Rights in Quintana Roo, Mexico.

The program was also beginning to show influence at country levels. The 2011-12 external evaluation showed that Alumni were increasingly called on by government and UN agencies and NGO coalitions to contribute to discussions and design of youth-related policy and programs. Further, several Alumni were invited to participate in global meetings on youth SRHR.

GOJoven Alumni's newfound leadership also exacted costs on them, however. GOJoven operated in many communities that were and are characterized by generalized violence. A GOJoven Alumna from Honduras described how the program operated in a context where violence had become endemic, permeating day-to-day life. She felt that anyone who becomes a leader, who stands out and tries to make changes, also becomes a target, either because she threatens to interrupt existing patterns and power, or because she may be perceived to be a source of money. Several GOJoven Alumni in Belize, Honduras, and Guatemala had received death threats during the course of their work. However, most remained undeterred, seeing this as an unavoidable part of life and work in their countries.

At a fundamental level, GOJoven staff knew that some conflict, including the risk of being exposed to targeted violence, was a potential result of any successful leadership program aimed at generating change. From their work in the region, the GOJoven Resource Team realized that, unfortunately, death threats could be a reality that Fellows would face. Esther was grateful that they had experienced as little violence as they had. Despite the risks, GOJoven nonetheless conducted its regional trainings locally, with trainers from the region, including GOJoven Alumni trained by PHI as Trainers of Trainers, and partnered with local organizations, hiring country representatives in each country to support program implementation and evaluation.

Esther and her staff also worked hard to have GOJoven take steps to keep the Fellows safe by discussing with them how to deal with opposition, violence, and backlash, as well as by being careful in how personal information of the Fellows was shared publicly. Discussing the safety risks and how to deal with religious, political and social opposition to SRHR work was key to the GOJoven Fellowship program. In contrast, many other leadership programs pluck participants from their local contexts to take part in trainings in the global north or use northern consulting firms to design and run one-off leadership trainings. GOJoven's in-country design increased the likelihood that Fellows would stay and contribute to improving the SRH context in their countries while maintaining their safety as much as possible.

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<sup>12</sup> Solomon, J., Bard, K., Berman, J., & Smith, G. (2012). *External Evaluation of GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program. Final Report*. J. Solomon Consulting, LLC. Available at: <https://gojoven.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GOJoven-External-Eval-Full-Report-9-4-12.pdf>

## Alumni and Fellows' Perspectives on GOJoven

GOJoven Alumni have almost uniformly reported a transformative fellowship experience that has equipped them to pursue further leadership in the SRHR field (See Box 4). For them, GOJoven had succeeded in creating a visible cohort of young, diverse, and inspired leaders in the SRHR field. Fellows have had a range of professional profiles and responsibilities, and the overwhelming majority were still actively carrying out SRHR activities, years after training completion, as also documented by the 2011 external evaluation commissioned by Summit.<sup>13</sup>

Alumni and Fellows consistently highlight GOJoven's radical deepening of their understandings of themselves, and their relationships to peers, family and community. This understanding increased their ability to seize new life opportunities and to effect change. The young women and men who have gone through the GOJoven program also describe coming to fundamentally different understandings about sexual diversity and about how their societies' expectations about gender and women's roles shape opportunity for women. GOJoven Fellows also highlight appreciatively the novelty and the meaningfulness of the program's participatory learning strategies, which required them to take active responsibility for their learning.

Marta, a 2009 Fellow from Guatemala who had gone on to be a trainer herself, spoke with humor and resolute pride about how GOJoven was so much more than the 'genital education' that she saw offered by other well-meaning organizations in Guatemala:

*"Many organizations work with youth in Guatemala on SRH, but few focus on youth leadership, and still fewer have an integrated, holistic approach to leadership development, or emphasize the personal development and change (internalization of lessons, practice, and a bridge to action) that GOJoven does. Other organizations typically conduct more narrowly focused, topic-specific trainings on SRH."*

Despite the program's achievements, both Kathy and Esther, as well as the entire youth SRHR field, were still grappling with how best to measure the value and impacts of youth leadership development programs. Kathy wished that PHI had been able to do more at the start of the program in communicating Summit's aim that the young people trained by GOJoven would directly address issues like adolescent pregnancy, whether by reaching their peers, training providers/policy makers or working to change policies themselves. She wished that the program had developed a framework to measure progress in achieving these aims early in program.

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<sup>13</sup> Solomon, J., Bard, K., Berman, J. & Smith, G. (2012). *External Evaluation of GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program. Final Report*. J. Solomon Consulting, LLC. Available at: <https://gojoven.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GOJoven-External-Eval-Full-Report-9-4-12.pdf>

#### **Box 4: Alumni reflections on how GOJoven impacted them**

“GOJoven changed my life. The experience taught me that there were options and enabled me to visualize myself taking advantage of them. I learned to dialogue, to persuade, to confront, to come to consensus with others. Fundamentally, GOJoven gave me the tools to evaluate myself and to overcome fears.” -- Jacinta Chan Pech, *GOJoven Mexico 2008, Mayan leader*

“Despite feeling stagnant or facing obstacles along the way to success, it is important to remember that you are the agents of change who will not repeat the story of your parents, simply because you have the power to change the future of your entire generation. ... GOJoven marked me. It sensitized me, helped me to better address sexual and reproductive health, and funded my Master’s studies. It is a period that marks a before and after in my life. With what I learned through GOJoven, I now help to influence the youth of my community.” -- Ivonne Miranda, *GOJoven Honduras 2009, Garifuna leader*

“The GOJoven program, through all the personal and professional training, allowed me to make the decision to emerge as a leader, and to found an organization dedicated to improving the well-being of young people (*Association of Young People in Movement (AJEM)*). The program definitely changed my life and helped me to focus on work to improve the quality of life of the young people for whom we work through AJEM. ... GOJoven also gave me the skills to talk openly about my sexual orientation within the family, and to gain their acceptance of me by strengthening family ties through dialogue, mutual support and respect.” -- Alex Sorto, *GOJoven Honduras 2007, LGBTQ youth leader*

“GOJoven’s moral support motivated me to found an NGO, *Action For A Healthy Life*. ... We promote alliances with the education sector, specifically in secondary schools in the Sayaxché and San Luis area; we have identified motivated young leaders to train to share knowledge and condoms with young people... ... We have also been selected as the organization to coordinate the HIV network in the Peten.” -- Saúl Paau, *GOJoven Guatemala 2006, Mayan leader*

One of Kathy’s central requests to Esther had been that Esther organize PHI for an external evaluation of GOJoven. As soon as she had joined Summit in 2010, Kathy knew that she and Summit’s Board needed more evidence of program impact. She wanted to share evaluation results both to shore up board commitment, as well as to help PHI and GOJoven Alumni plan for the future. She had asked that Esther and her team develop a formalized version of GOJoven’s [theory of change](#), an explanation of why and how the program would produce a specific set of outcomes (See Figure 3). Kathy also wanted to have GOJoven meet the (emerging) standards of measurement and accountability in the philanthropy sector.

#### **Financing for GOJoven**

Diversifying GOJoven’s financial support beyond The Summit Foundation had been a continuing challenge. At roughly the time of GOJoven’s transition, both Kathy and Esther had shared results with other donors, including an affinity group of reproductive health funders, as well as through overtures to other funders in the region. Although they had found a few donors who had made one-time, project-specific grants, they did not have success in attracting funding for the GOJoven program over the longer term. The entire Latin American region faced a bleak funding picture, particularly for the often-contentious area of youth SRHR. Over the past two decades, most foreign government donors—notably the US Agency for

International Development (USAID)—and increasingly foundation donors, had either stopped or sharply reduced the funding they provide to governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Latin America. They had shifted support to other regions (southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa) that they saw as having greater economic need and reproductive and sexual health challenges.

After her call with Kathy, Esther again thought through the options they had discussed for how GOJoven might be configured in the region in the future. She was glad that she and Kathy agreed about needing to have Alumni play a central role in designing whatever form the GOJoven model took moving forward. Their hope was that the Fellows would be equipped to take up fundraising and access funding that was available locally (but not to US-based PHI). Both she and Kathy strongly felt that GOJoven Alumni leadership and buy-in were central not only to have the GOJoven Model survive and thrive in the region, but also to uphold the values that the GOJoven Fellowship, and PHI and Summit, had staked out from the start: respect for young people's agency. However, Esther remained concerned about emerging from the transition with a workable approach that would realistically incorporate youth leadership and attract sufficient additional financial support.

### **Planning for the Future – GOJoven Sustainability Advisory Committee Meeting #1 (September 2011)**

In June of 2011, soon after her call with Kathy, Esther and the PHI team in the region geared up for sustainability planning and for the external evaluation to which Kathy had asked her to contribute. She met with PHI staff, trainers and GOJoven Country Representatives to identify Alumni engaged with, and committed to, GOJoven, and working at an influential level in the field of sexual and reproductive health. The GOJoven Country Representatives in each of the four countries nominated four active Alumni (two men and two women) and PHI selected the final two per country to join a Sustainability Advisory Committee that would identify priorities and options for a next phase of the GOJoven program. These planning exercises took place over the course of nine months through two Sustainability Advisory Committee meetings.

The first meeting took place in Copan Ruinas, Honduras in September of 2011. Eight GOJoven Alumni, PHI staff and trainers, and Kathy Hall, attended. At the meeting, Kathy and Esther presented six possible scenarios for GOJoven's future, and invited discussion of them and any other scenarios that Alumni proposed (see Table 8).

Alumni then met on their own to review further the six sustainability options presented by Kathy and Esther. In their discussions, the eight Alumni kept returning to their desire to continue the GOJoven model, to train new cohorts of GOJoven Fellows and to make sure that youth remained central to the leadership and management of organizations. They recognized that the success and shape of GOJoven moving forward was in their hands. PHI, and Summit, had made it clear that if the program were to continue, their active leadership was required. GOJoven Alumni also were extremely invested in the GOJoven model that they had experienced, and doubtful of the commitment and ability of other existing organizations to fulfill GOJoven's mission of leadership by and for youth.

GOJoven Alumni participants ranked their first and second sustainability scenario preferences – but then came up with a new option. At the end of their discussions, they coalesced around a new design: **new and independent GOJoven NGOs in each country, ready to adapt the GOJoven model to their particular contexts.**

Both Esther and Kathy were surprised by this outcome, perhaps most of all Esther. Esther had a keen sense from her own experience of what it took to start up a program or an organization, let alone as a young person. When they had structured this opportunity for Alumni and Fellows to give their input into the future of GOJoven, neither PHI nor Summit thought that Fellows would land on creating new stand-alone organizations as their preferred approach for continuing the GOJoven model and objectives. As Kathy and Esther mulled over the meetings' outcomes, they both knew that moving ahead with a plan for GOJoven, predicated on Alumni founding new organizations in each country, signaled considerable work ahead for everyone. They were also both aware of the high risk of failure due to the already saturated landscape of SRH organizations and the limited funding opportunities in each country. However, both were also committed to the exercise of youth leadership that this decision represented.

Alumni returned to their countries with significant responsibilities to carry out over the next six months before the second Sustainability Committee meeting. First, they had to reach out to their GOJoven country networks and hold national meetings to inform them about options and the outcomes of the Sustainability Meeting. Then they had to survey Alumni about their priorities and goals for any version of GOJoven moving forward. In addition, they had to explore possible specific organizational models and resource mobilization strategies and identify administrative and regulatory requirements and steps. The two GOJoven Alumni from each country on the Sustainability Committee became catalysts for the new independent GOJoven organizations. They provided the in-country impetus for bringing other Alumni on board to build national GOJoven organizations.

### **Planning for the Future – GOJoven Sustainability Advisory Committee Meeting #2 (March 2012)**

At their second sustainability planning meeting in Belize, the eight Alumni returned and shared the results of the discussions they had had with the GOJoven Alumni networks in their countries. They presented the organizational models and the financing strategies that they investigated. The group then dove into a discussion to agree on the essential elements of the GOJoven program that they wanted to maintain - prioritizing GOJoven's transformational impact on Fellows. One Alumni's statement encapsulated their focus: *"What impacted me most about the program was its process of personal development – knowing oneself, one's abilities, and the abilities that one wants to develop."*

They then distilled five guiding principles about how GOJoven should operate and what should be the priorities for GOJoven:

1. Training and creating groups with marginalized or forgotten populations in the SRHR field.
2. Integrating SRHR into other programs or communities in a sustainable manner

3. Fellows capitalizing on mass media to have an impact (radio programs, blogging, etc.)
4. Forming or furthering other forms of leadership both in and outside of GOJoven
5. Succeeding by reaching the point where Fellows could be leaders in the next phase of the program.

The GOJoven Alumni who founded GOBelize in 2011 also presented and conveyed a concrete sense of what it took to set up a new organization. In 2009 they had proposed an English-language GOJoven leadership program to PHI for Belize. Belize was English-speaking and the original GOJoven model was purely in Spanish. Summit and PHI had encouraged them and intensely supported them in embarking on their own program. The GOBelize founders had spent many challenging months exploring different organizational configurations— for example, operating within a government ministry or as part of another NGO – before they had landed on setting up their own NGO. They had received extensive technical assistance and support from PHI trainers and advisers in the region, but they had shouldered the unfamiliar and challenging work of formally establishing a new non-profit organization. This included developing organizational vision and objectives, fiscal and administrative policies, strategic and annual operating plans, job descriptions, and operational and human resource systems. In addition, they had to secure office space; and navigate the cumbersome processes of legally registering their organization.

Working with Esther, Kathy made a concerted effort to communicate transparently about Summit’s view of the decision-making process and responsibilities involved in planning for GOJoven’s future. A Summit Board member participating in the sustainability meeting diagrammed the actors and the stages involved in planning GOJoven’s next steps up through the Summit Board’s review of a proposal for a next phase of GOJoven. Throughout, Esther and Kathy made it clear that GOJoven Alumni’s vision, action, and contribution to the proposal were critical.

Alumni remained committed to pursuing the model of independent GOJoven organizations in their countries, but at the same time expressed concern about their ability to persuade other Alumni in country to participate in creating new organizations. A Sustainability Committee member from Guatemala lamented these new and unexpected challenges of organizational development and planning, including working in teams with other Fellows who had never had positions in NGOs or in offices. In the midst of discussions of how hard it was to bring the many different Alumni to common understandings and agreement, one Alumna remarked “Just when you are at the point of giving up in frustration, you remember why you are doing this and carry on.”

For some GOJoven Alumni, the program’s transition to sustainability was important, and something they cared about, but not their highest priority as they had many other competing demands on their time. Marco Toh, GOJoven Alumni (2005), from Quintana Roo, felt recruited to lead GOJoven in Mexico, but had to pass up that leadership role. He expressed the tension this way: “I love the GOJoven program, but I had the opportunity to pursue my studies and my career that I could not pass up.”

## **The Summit Foundation Board Meeting – Deciding on next steps for GOJoven (May 2012)**

In May of 2012, Kathy Hall sat in The Summit Foundation Board meeting listening to Board members debate the future and shape of GOJoven. Nine years previously, the foundation had had the vision of a program with multiple aims – reducing teen pregnancy in the socially conservative region, and also creating a critical mass of individual youth leaders in the field of sexual and reproductive health to be voices for their own interests. Almost as soon as she joined the foundation in 2010, Kathy had recognized that her Board wanted to have the GOJoven program evolve to a more locally run, autonomous, and sustainable model, although Board members were willing to fund a transition process and contemplate continued funding at reduced levels. Her talks with GOJoven Alumni and review of best practices, led her to feel that nine years of a program run by an outside international NGO (PHI) was sufficient. The concept note she had invited, and received, from PHI – developed by PHI in tandem with GOJoven Alumni – offered a solid base for Board discussion. It proposed work in two chief arenas (decreasing adolescent pregnancy, and organizational development for the four nascent GOJoven Alumni Associations), and requested funding over an initial two-year transition period to assess progress - rather than the three-year increments previously provided to PHI.

Kathy's conversations with Esther in early and mid-2011 had been motivated by the need to shift to an approach that would respond to the persistent questions from some of her Board members. All Board members were quite proud of the GOJoven program and were passionate supporters of its transformational impact on young people's lives as well as the successes of their leadership action projects. Nonetheless, several Board members had emphasized that they wanted to have the foundation's multi-year investments demonstrate effort to 'move the needle' on population level outcomes - teen pregnancy; policy related to contraceptive access, particularly for young people; wider coverage of youth sexuality education. More specifically, they wanted to see the connection between GOJoven's leadership development efforts and these broader SRH outcomes. The 2002 financial crisis, when Summit had seen its endowment shrink, had sharpened Board member commitment to having remaining resources used effectively. At the same time, Summit had begun to devote resources to new priorities related to empowering girls and young women. This meant that the Summit's grants budget, which had remained largely the same, was now being stretched to resource other innovative models, in addition to GOJoven.

When the external evaluator, Julie Solomon, presented her findings at the Board meeting, she showed significant evidence of impact at the individual and organizational levels, weak to moderate evidence of impact at community levels, but less impact at national or regional levels.<sup>14</sup> In response, a Board member made clear his concern about the lack of match between his population-level objectives for GOJoven, and the results presented. Another Board member, drawing on her experience with social movement building, lauded GOJoven's transformational experience both personally for individual Fellows as well as for how it equipped them to advance a broader understanding of youth sexual and reproductive rights in their communities, and the field of SRH in their countries. There was Board consensus that in order to harness

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<sup>14</sup> Solomon, J., Bard, K., Berman, J. & Smith, G.. (2012). *External Evaluation of GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program. Final Report*. J. Solomon Consulting, LLC. Available at: <https://gojoven.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/GOJoven-External-Eval-Full-Report-9-4-12.pdf>



GOJoven's success, including supporting the Alumni's interest in founding local NGOs, and to try to for national-level impacts, continued foundation investment in a next phase of the GOJoven model was appropriate.

Summit's Board, PHI, and GOJoven Alumni all faced the question of what the best approach would be for sustaining and expanding the reach of the GOJoven Youth Leadership Development program for the longer term.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Youth leadership development programs and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights

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### US philanthropic sector: Foundations making grants internationally

1. Foundation Center & the Council on Foundations (2018). *The State of Global Giving by US Foundations: 2011-2015*. Available at: <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/31306/31306.pdf>
2. Council on Foundations. *Foundation Basics*. Available at: <https://www.cof.org/content/foundation-basics>

### Political context in Central America

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## **EPILOGUE: 2013-2018**

### **A Case Study of the GOJoven Youth Leadership in Sexual and Reproductive Health Program: Securing Sustainability**

Esther marveled when she looked back at the transition between the first phase of GOJoven (2004-2012), and what had become four autonomous GOJoven non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Quintana Roo, Mexico. In this second phase of GOJoven, PHI had successfully supported program Alumni in each country who had gone on to establish and operate their own locally-run, youth-led and youth-serving associations in 2013: Asociación GOJoven Guatemala, Asociación GOJoven Honduras, and México y Caribe Jóvenes (GOJoven Mexico) – joining the GOBelize Alumni Association established in 2011. The executive directors and key staff, the board members, and the legal representatives, of the Associations have all almost exclusively been GOJoven Alumni. Alumni created and are running the Associations and are responsible for the success to date. See founding Alumni of GOJoven Mexico in Figure 4.

In an effort to build the foundations for organizational sustainability, PHI had facilitated or funded the facilitation of strategic planning, annual operations planning, fundraising, and systems development for the associations, as well as continued learning and exchange across the associations. Furthermore, Summit and PHI had also invested substantial financial and human resources toward strengthening the GOJoven Alumni Associations' capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities on a routine basis. The aim was not only to enable the Associations to assess their own progress, but also to equip them to demonstrate their impact to other potential donors. However, this last area has been more of a challenge to maintain given staff turnover and the other demands on the staff's time (e.g., program implementation, fundraising, solidifying internal controls and policies, etc.).

Having spent the past five years backstopping and supporting Alumni as they went through the labor pains of developing legal documents, leases, organizational policies, and eventually 'birthing' three new organizations, Esther thought ruefully about what PHI could have done differently had she known that the desired outcome was the creation of autonomous local NGOs. For their part, Alumni and Fellows also regretted the ending of the scholarships and the institutional strengthening grants after 2012.

Nonetheless, both PHI and The Summit Foundation are impressed by the exciting accomplishments represented by the establishment and ongoing programmatic activities of four nascent organizations carrying on the GOJoven mission and model, more than five years after the transition to national ownership began in 2012 and 2013. These new institutions have aimed to sustain and scale up the GOJoven model in each country and to increase its impact. From 2011 to 2018, the GOJoven Alumni Associations have trained an additional 13 cohorts at the national level (5 Belize, 3 Guatemala, 1 Mexico, 4 Honduras) totaling an additional 230 graduated and active Fellows across the four countries. A 2015 Alumni Survey showed that:

- Fellow and Alumni participation in GOJoven activities during scale-up through local GOJoven Associations was robust;
- Fellow and Alumni involvement in work to address adolescent/youth sexual and reproductive health and rights was extremely robust;
- A sizable proportion of respondents were currently in positions of authority from which they were addressing adolescent/youth sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) knowledge and skills increased during the scale-up phase.<sup>15</sup>

Another external evaluation of GOJoven, commissioned by Summit in 2017, showed that key government and UN agencies recognize the GOJoven associations as the ‘go-to’ institutions on youth SRHR in their countries. Further examples of GOJoven’s importance to stakeholders are in Box 5 below.

**Box 5: External Country-based Stakeholder Perspectives on GOJoven (2016)**

“GOJoven [is] one of those groups that spearheaded the advocacy and communication campaign in Honduras that led the Honduran government to actually [...] endorse the rights of women to sexual and reproductive care.” - External stakeholder in Honduras

“The energy that [GOJoven Guatemala] transmits, the commitment they have, it’s something that is truly admirable, and it’s contagious, too.” – External stakeholder in Guatemala

“[GOJoven] basically see[s] where the needs are and tr[ies] to fill the gaps... A lot of that comes from them having that awareness of what the challenges are, what it is for them as young people growing up in an environment like this.” - External stakeholder in Belize

“[O]ne of the strengths they have is an important expertise in working with young people. They know how to frame it, handle the groups well, they set out interesting information, and I think that really helps to keep [participant] attention.” – External stakeholder in Mexico

Kathy, Esther, and GOJoven leaders in the region have also been pleased to see GOJoven’s work and model being recognized globally. In 2015, GOJoven was selected as a Model Youth Leadership Program through a global survey coordinated by [USAID’s](#) Leadership, Management and Governance (LMG) project.<sup>16</sup> Further, GOJoven was highlighted in a prominent 2018 review of youth leadership programs, the [Young People Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health: Toward a New Normal](#) report.<sup>17</sup> GOJoven Alumni have also been increasingly active in national policy and advocacy bodies, at global SRH conferences, as well as recognized through global leadership awards in the SRH field, such as the “120 under 40” leaders in the SRH field supported by the Gates Institute – including [Ivonne Miranda](#) of GOJoven Honduras and Eva Burgos of GOBelize.

<sup>15</sup> Solomon, J. (2015). *GOJoven 2015 Alumni Survey: Summary of Alumni Reported Results*. J. Solomon Consulting, LLC. Available at: <https://gojoven.org/results/>

<sup>16</sup> The LMG Project (2016). *Developing the Next Generational of Health Leaders*. Available online at: <https://lmgforhealth.exposure.co/developing-the-next-generation-of-health-leaders>

<sup>17</sup> Catino, J., Battistini, E., & Babcheck, A. (2018). *Young People Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health: Toward a New Normal*. Available at: [http://www.summitfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Yield\\_full-report\\_June-2019\\_final.pdf](http://www.summitfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Yield_full-report_June-2019_final.pdf)

After over a decade of investment in the development and strengthening of new youth leaders, particularly through GOJoven, The Summit Board was shifting to providing project-related support for work by leaders and organizations to improve SRHR and girls' empowerment outcomes in its focus countries, with less specific emphasis on youth leadership development. This transition in 2013 had required a swift pivot by PHI. PHI had rapidly reoriented its technical assistance to provide support to Alumni in each country as they established their own GOJoven organizations. Due to funding restrictions and strong GOJoven Alumni leadership capacity, by 2018, PHI had largely tapered off its technical assistance to the four GOJoven organizations. The goal was to end PHI's intermediary role and have the local associations begin a direct relationship with The Summit Foundation wherever feasible. This shift is now nearly complete, but it has been challenging for the local GOJoven associations to meet the legal requirements of a US foundation, even with significant flexibility and support from Summit staff.

### **The Work of the Four National GOJoven Alumni Associations**

The four GOJoven Associations have all been active in leadership development, training and education related to adolescent SRH, and in advocacy and policy work. Alumni continue to contribute by serving as trainers for subsequent cohorts of GOJoven Fellows in each country since 2012, and the vast majority also pursue active leadership roles in the sector of youth sexual and reproductive health and rights in their countries. PHI's 2015 GOJoven Alumni Survey found continued strong participation (almost 90%) by Alumni in both the work of the GOJoven Alumni associations, but also in the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health overall, often in positions of increasing responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

GOJoven Guatemala devotes significant energies to adapting and continuing the GOJoven model. It deepened its emphasis on diversity in leadership, and, to this end, aims for each leadership cohort to be made up of 60% indigenous women, 35% men and 5% from the LGBTBIQ community (in contrast to the original recruitment approach aiming at gender balance, with targeted outreach to indigenous and LGBTQ communities without quotas). Since 2013, GOJoven Guatemala has trained three new cohorts totaling 60 Fellows, and has transformed their attitudes and actions related to sexuality and equipped them to influence their communities. GOJoven Guatemala also decided to increase advocacy for government provision of education on sexual and reproductive health for young people. They were motivated by the fact that one-in-five Guatemalan females give birth before age 19<sup>19</sup>, as well as by the chance to bring active youth participation to a national coalition of groups that was working in this area. Further, the need was made all the more apparent by the organized and growing religious political opposition to government provision of SRH services and education.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Solomon, J. (2015). *GOJoven 2015 Alumni Survey: Summary of Alumni Reported Results*. J. Solomon Consulting LLC. Available at: <https://gojoven.org/results/>

<sup>19</sup> Gamazo, C. (2017, June 26). *Cómo las (visiones) religiosas impiden la educación sexual en Guatemala*. *Nómada*. Available at: <https://nomada.gt/pais/como-las-visiones-religiosas-impiden-la-educacion-sexual-en-guatemala/>

<sup>20</sup> In 2018, legislators from a range of parties introduced legislation prohibiting education on sexual and reproductive health for young people, with the aim of protecting life and the family. Dictamen de Comisión, June 2018. Available at: [https://www.congreso.gob.gt/wp-content/plugins/paso-estado-incidencias/includes/uploads/docs/1528753491\\_Dictamen%205272.pdf](https://www.congreso.gob.gt/wp-content/plugins/paso-estado-incidencias/includes/uploads/docs/1528753491_Dictamen%205272.pdf)

GOJoven Honduras has developed a strong organizational structure and accounting systems, enabling it to gain support for direct grants from Summit. They have trained four new fellowship cohorts resulting in 95 new youth leaders. Two major areas of advocacy they have undertaken are on comprehensive sexuality education and emergency contraception, by serving as the lead in an NGO coalition, and by participating in government working groups. GOJoven Honduras has also reached over 20,000 youth and adolescents throughout Honduras on prevention of adolescent pregnancy, HIV transmission and sexually transmitted infections. They have also developed radio and television programming to inform thousands of youth of their SRHR. However, they have had to cope with security issues - and have moved their offices twice -, as well as with a conservative and unstable government.

GOBelize has maintained a strong and successful commitment to empowering new youth leaders. They have supported five additional English language fellowship cohorts resulting in 47 new youth leaders, including many community service providers working to improve ASRHR and to advocate for youth friendly services and comprehensive sexuality education. They have also bolstered their National Alumni Network, which now has 42 youth leaders actively contributing to advance ASRHR in their communities and country. They continue to provide pro-bono training and capacity building for the Belizean government and some NGO programs seeking to work with youth. GOBelize operates in a very under-resourced environment, and while it regularly is invited to conduct youth trainings, it has struggled more than the other associations to secure core support for key staff salaries.

GOJoven Mexico is operating on a more geographically limited basis within the state of Quintana Roo, and its leadership development work has taken the form of community-based trainings. It also has taken on a lead role in state-focused advocacy to address adolescent pregnancy. While GOJoven Mexico has trained an additional cohort of twelve fellows, whose Leadership Action Plans resulted in trainings of over 3,000 young people, it has struggled to find financial support other than through Summit-supported international NGOs.

There is some wistfulness among Alumni and PHI about the changes post-transition. Alumni generally lamented the end of the Summit academic scholarship fund in 2016, closing off an important aid to fellows advancing further in their fields. In addition, due to financial constraints, Summit and PHI no longer supported in-person regional gatherings of Alumni, as opposed to at country levels. However, in 2017, the four country-based GOJoven associations launched the regional network of GOJoven Alumni Associations. There is openness from Summit and possibly other donors to support this, but it has been challenging for the GOJoven leaders to prioritize this amidst the many competing responsibilities of each local association.

Both GOJoven Alumni leaders, as well as Kathy and Esther, describe internal organizational struggles as having at times hampered the effectiveness of the Alumni Associations – either among Board members, or at the annual assemblies where Board members are elected. Further, with the exception of Belize, the executive director transitions have not been smooth. Finally, particularly in Guatemala and Honduras, the omnipresence of violence has posed serious problems to the Associations, causing them to relocate offices on numerous occasions.

GOJoven Alumni association leadership also struggles to secure sufficient funding to cover core functions, and their adaptations of the GOJoven Fellowship model. While GOBelize, GOJoven Guatemala and GOJoven Honduras have been funded by the Central America and Mexico Youth Fund (CAMY Fund), and other foundations, and UN and government agencies have channeled some support to the GOJoven association in each country, all identify fundraising as a challenge.

When Marta, the training director at GOJoven Guatemala, voices concerns about financial sustainability, she speaks for the leadership of many of the GOJoven organizations:

*“Finances are one of the greatest threats to GOJoven’s sustainability and survival, since there is limited financial autonomy and great dependence on international bodies that provide economic resources”.*

In spite of, or perhaps because of, all these challenges, Marta and her colleagues in Guatemala epitomize the spirit of GOJoven Alumni associations moving forward. GOJoven Guatemala is charging ahead with the training of new cohorts of Fellows, and they plan to tackle the following activities in order to strengthen and better adapt the GOJoven program to the country context, including:

- Work with new Fellows to develop personal "resilience plans" to help them surmount the inevitable setbacks that they encounter,
- Design and implement a clear strategy to maintain and build continuous engagement with the GOJoven Leadership Program by GOJoven Alumni active in SRHR, particularly in the social support and political arenas,
- Systematically evaluate the impacts of the GOJoven model in Guatemala over time, and
- Secure adequate funding for the GOJoven model in the face of the withdrawal of donors from the region.

While Kathy and Esther and the leadership of the GOJoven Alumni Associations were enthusiastic about the Associations’ progress to-date, they knew that securing their future would require careful navigation. All were well aware of the challenges that the GOJoven Alumni associations face, and looked to the skills and commitments of GOJoven alumni and their evolving partnerships to continue to bring change to their region.

## Appendix: List of Tables and Figures

**Table 1: Summit Foundation funding for GOJoven (USD), 2004-2012**

Fellowship Cohort	Summit Grant	Project Period
GOJoven 1	\$1,544,505	2004-2006 (3 years)
GOJoven 2	\$1,890,000	2007-2009 (3 years)
GOJoven 3	\$2,079,711	2010-2012 (3 years)
<b>Summit Fellows Scholarship Fund</b>	\$433,045	2006 – 2016 (10.5 years)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,947,261</b>	

**Table 2: GOJoven country contexts**

	Honduras	Guatemala	Belize	Q. Roo (MX)	US	Canada
Population in 2018 (millions)	9.3	17	0.4	1.5	325	37
Indigenous population (%)	10%	41%	-	20%	1.6%	4.3%
Ages 10-24 (%)	31%	32%	30%	24%	20%	17%
Adolescent birth rate (per 1,000, 1999-2012)	99	92	93	85	19	14
Teens who are mothers (%)	24%	21%	n.a.	18%	n.a.	n.a.
Using modern contraception (married women 15-49, %)	64%	49%	49%	65%	74%	72%
Believe contraception is morally wrong (%)	47%	50%	n.a.	21%	4%	n.a.
Believe homosexual behavior is morally wrong (%)	88%	91%	n.a.	57%	35%	n.a.
Protestant/Evangelical (%)	41%	41%	19%	9%	50%	29%
Income held by top 10% (%)	38%	38%	42%	35%	31%	25%
Corruption Perception Index, 1-10 (2011)	2.6	2.7	n.a.	3	7.1	8.7
Homicide rate (per 100,000, 2016)	57	27	38	19	5	2

(UNFPA Dashboard; Pew Charitable Trust 2014; World Bank 2016; Transparency International, 2011)



**Table 3: Special features and challenges of youth leadership and youth-led organizations**

<b>"Aging out"</b>	Members and staff transition out of the organization when they reach a certain age, creating a constant state of transition, with risk of losing organizational history, skills, contacts
<b>High staff mobility</b>	Young people's life situations make them more mobile (education, work, relationships)
<b>Need for frequent (re)training</b>	Constant need to orient, train and retrain members and staff due to aging out, mobility
<b>Youth leaders as tokens</b>	Invitations to events, work, input provision, because of desire for appearance of engaging young people rather than actually delegating authority to them.
<b>Field focus on same small number of youth leaders</b>	Others often invite the 'usual suspects' to participate in their events and work, limiting growth of capacity in a broader range of young people.
<b>Expectations that youth will always volunteer</b>	Others in field expect young people to volunteer just for the chance to participate. Without compensation, young people cannot stay in field, and are less able to remain involved.
<b>Limited core funding</b>	Youth-led organizations face extreme difficulty in obtaining financing for core operating costs, exacerbated by short organizational track-records and staff turnover.

Adapted from *Youth Leadership: Recommendations for Sustainability*. Available online at: [http://www.youthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/youth\\_sustainability\\_web.pdf](http://www.youthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/youth_sustainability_web.pdf)

**Table 4: GOJoven Youth Leadership Development Fellowship: Program structure and curriculum content**

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Personal Leadership Development  
 Adolescent Reproductive Health and Rights  
 Gender and Sexuality  
 Strategic Thinking and Planning  
 Program Management and Evaluation  
 Policy Advocacy  
 Media and Strategic Communications  
 Conflict Resolution  
 Community and Political Mobilization  
 Population and Environment  
 Information Technology  
 Facilitation and Training  
 Financial Management and Fundraising

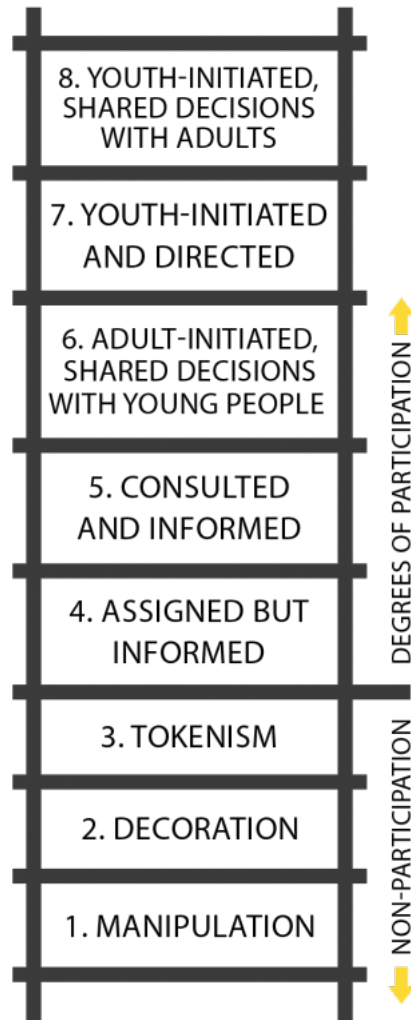
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**Table 5: GOJoven alignment with recommended features of youth leadership programs**

<b>Characteristics of Strong Youth Leadership Programs</b>	<b>GOJoven Youth Leadership Development Program</b>
Purposeful recruitment of diverse youth (sex, race, class, etc.) to create a cross-section of youth leaders	Diversity focus (gender, ethnicity, sexual identity, income, education, profession)
Building of youth capabilities and assets	Didactic training coupled with Leadership Action Plans implemented by teams of fellows
Creation of a supportive and equitable environment to enable young people to make effective and impactful contributions <sup>[1]</sup> <sub>[SEP]</sub>	Institutional Strengthening workshops engaged adult-youth pairs to create space for youth leadership
Connection between youth participants and adult decisionmakers	Country and regional alumni networks
Financial support to carry out own related individual or group projects (practice skills; develop own solutions)	Leadership Action Plans - created and implemented by teams of fellows in their communities, funded by seed grants
Funding for institutional strengthening (sector and/or leaders' home institutions)	Institutional Strengthening grants (alumni can attend with leadership of their home institutions)

*(Catino et al., 2018)*

**Figure 1: Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation**



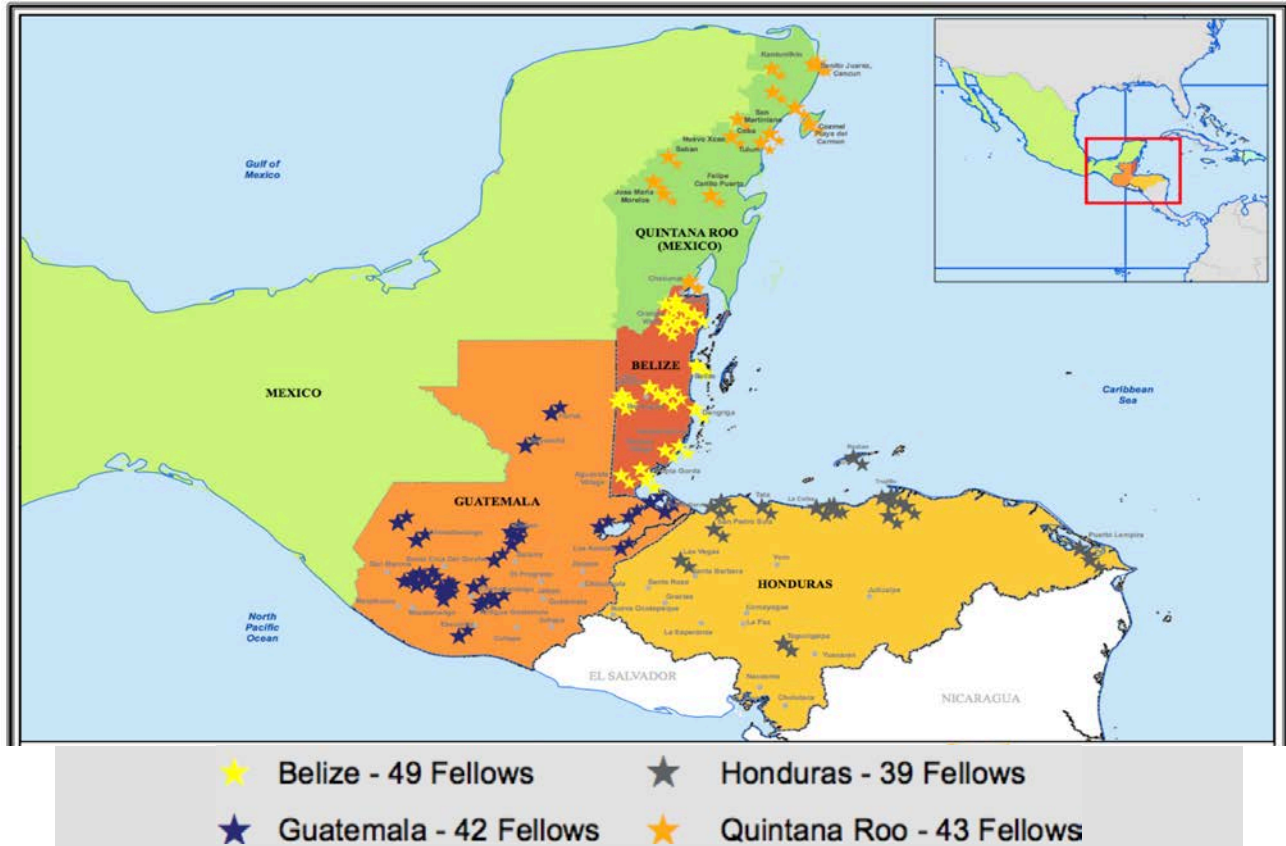
**Table 6: GOJoven Youth Leadership Development Program: Examples of co-leadership and co-design by Fellows and Alumni**

Co-leadership	Co-design
Alumni recruited and interviewed new fellows	Fellows and alumni helped revise GOJoven curriculum, model (e.g., added focus on interculturalism)
Alumni led sessions at GOJoven fellowship trainings	Aided in preparation of GOJoven proposals to The Summit Foundation
Alumni delivered technical assistance to GOJoven groups in country	Alumni helped plan next phase of GOJoven through Sustainability Committee participation
Alumni served as country representatives	
Alumni facilitated sessions in the Trainings of Trainers	
Alumni facilitated sessions in the Institutional Strengthening workshops	
Alumni prepared institutional strengthening proposals for their home organizations	
Alumni hired to aid with external evaluation of GOJoven	
Alumni provided technical assistance to the fellowship (fund-raising, communications)	

**Table 7: GOJoven Youth Leadership Development in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Fellowship: 2012 Evaluation Results**

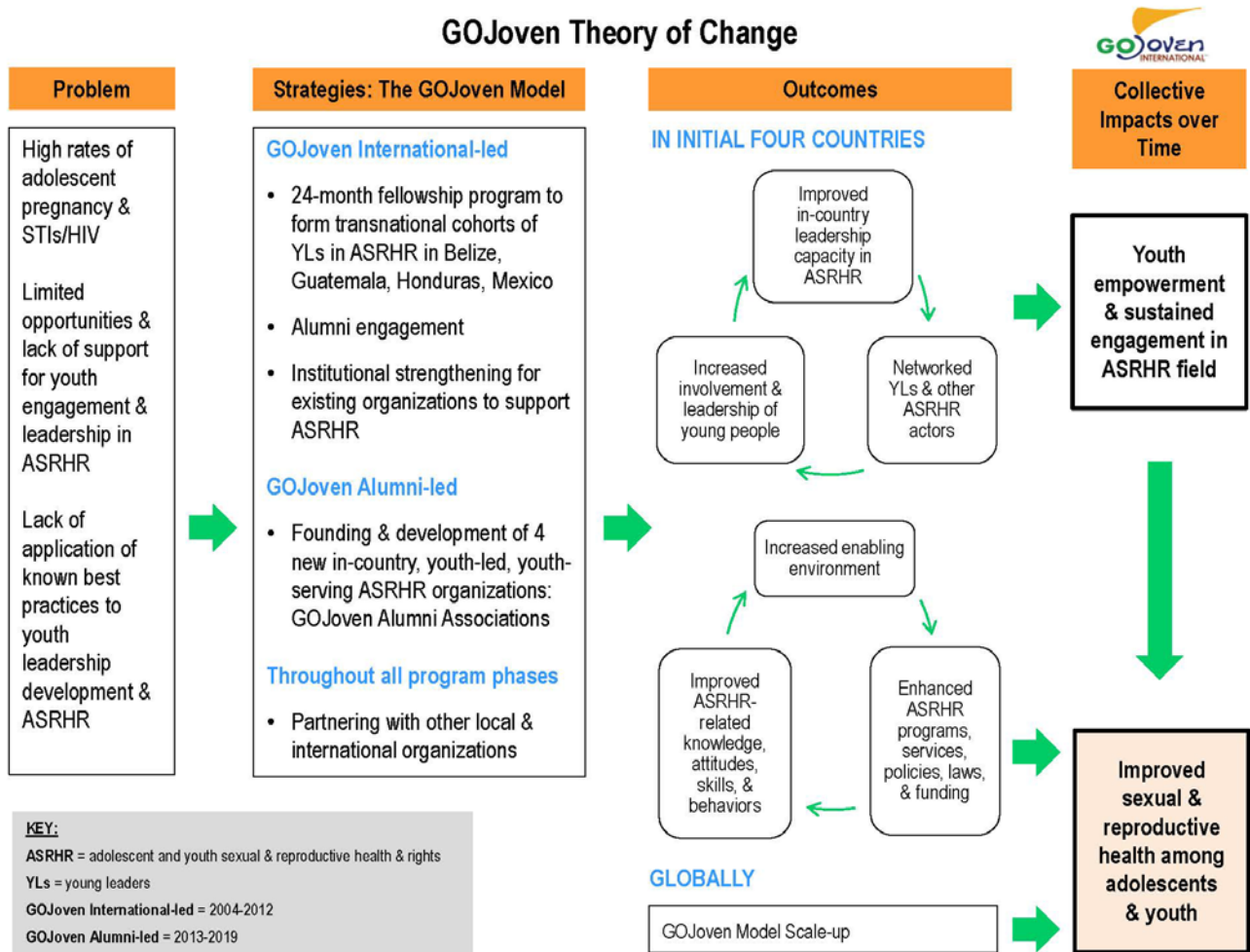
Individual level	Organizational Level	National/ Regional level
<b><i>Fellows reported increased:</i></b>	<b><i>Country organizations had:</i></b>	
Self-awareness & self-confidence in leadership skills	New or expanded youth and/or ASRHR focus in organizational missions, strategic plans, policies, and/or programming	
Comfort with own sexuality	Increased representation of youth and/or diverse gender & cultural groups in organizational actions and/or programming	
Acceptance of & respect for cultural & sexual diversity	Improved cohesion & collaboration among staff	
Supportive attitudes toward gender & sexual diversity	Improved staff knowledge, attitudes, & skills concerning youth work, SRHR, & project planning and/or evaluation	
Skills to build leadership & SRHR capacity among others (particularly youth)	Increased collaboration with other organizations	Increased collaboration with other organizations
Technical knowledge of SRHR (e.g., HIV, family planning)	Increased visibility & recognition of the organization	Increased visibility & recognition of the organization
Commitment to ASRHR work		

**Figure 2: GOJoven Program Fellows 2004-2012: Distribution by country**



Of the Fellows listed on this map, 168 graduated and became GOJoven Alumni. This includes only those Fellows trained directly by GOJoven International, not those trained by the GOBelize Alumni Association in partnership with GOJoven International in 2011-2012.

Figure 3: GOJoven Theory of Change



**Table 8: Possible scenarios for the future of GOJoven after 2012: Sustainability Committee discussions**

Scenario	Alumni Votes (#)
1 PHI continues to coordinate GOJoven with country representatives in each country (status quo)	0
2 An existing local organization in each country takes on responsibility for GOJoven in that country	0
3 A new organization in each country, founded by Alumni, leads and runs a program based strictly on GOJoven’s original design	7 chose as their second choice
4 A new or existing regional organization, with offices in each country, runs a program based on the GOJoven model	1 chose as their second choice
5 Four separate organizations are established (one in each country), adapting the GOJoven model to the country context	7 chose as their first choice
6 Other: A regional organization manages funding for 4 independent NGOs, one in each country	1 chose as their first choice

**Table 9: GOJoven Alumni Association Funding (USD), 2013-2019\***

<b>Summit Foundation support to GOJoven Alumni</b>		
<b>Associations through PHI Sub-granting</b>		<b>Project Period</b>
GOJoven 4	\$427,755	Jan. 2013-May 2015 (29 months)
GOJoven 5	\$192,000	Jan. 2015-April 2016 (16 months)
GOJoven 6	\$190,000	Jan. 2016-June 2017 (18 months)
GOJoven 7	\$166,500	June 2016-June 2019 (23 months)
<b>GOJoven Honduras Alumni</b>		
<b>Summit grants (2)</b>	\$104,000	2016-2018 (28 months); 2017-2019 (17 months)
<b>Other donors:</b> USAID, UNFPA, UN Women, IWHC, Creative Associates, CARE International, PAHO, CAMY Fund, Plan International, Youth LEAD, CIPRODEH, HIVOS, Global Fund for Children, World Bank through ETR	\$782,500	Amount 2014-2018
<b>GOJoven Belize</b>		
<b>Summit grants (2)</b>	\$26,000	2017-2018 (6 months); 2018-2019 (6 months)
<b>Other donors:</b> UNDP, WestWind Foundation through PHI, CAMY Fund, IWHC, PEPFAR	\$246,000	Amount 2013-2018
<b>GOJoven Guatemala Alumni Association</b>		
<b>Other donors:</b> Vincent Coates Foundation through PHI, IWHC, USAD, OSAR, CAMY Fund, UNFPA, Planned Parenthood Global, CARE Guatemala, Every Mother Counts, The Pulsera Project, Global Fund for Children	\$455,000	Amount 2014-2018
<b>GOJoven Mexico</b>		
<b>Other donors:</b> IMJUVE, CDI, SEDSOL, CAMY Fund, Global Fund for Children, Promundo, MEXFAM	\$123,500	Amount 2014-2018
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,963,219</b>	

\*GOJoven Alumni Association fundraising totals listed as “Other donors” are approximate based on their reporting to PHI.



*Figure 4: The General Assembly for GOJoven Mexico 2013*

