



# THE YOUTH ALIVE POWER OF VISION: A LASTING BRIDGE BETWEEN CURRENT REALITY AND DESIRED LIFESTYLES

## Background

Started by Sr. Dr. Miriam Duggan in 1993 as a positive peer support group for HIV infected and affected youth in Kamwokya a Kampala suburb, Youth Alive Uganda is a national youth focused NGO that implements integrated children and youth development programs across Uganda.

Youth Alive envisions young people living life to the full through implementing interventions that enhance their abilities and opportunities to live healthy and proactive lifestyles. Central in all these interventions is the power of vision that underpins the paradigm shift from current realities (usually living in self-pity and denial) to informed desired lifestyles. Youth Alive recognizes this training as a key component in development initiatives including starting and sustaining businesses, and living healthy life styles, (Youth Alive Uganda, 2015)

## Understanding the Youth Power of Vision signature training program

Although African countries are rapidly maturing demographically, low economic and political opportunities for the youth in the region remain a major concern. Of equal concern are reports indicating a significant number of young people who live in extreme or moderate poverty despite having a job. An



estimated 156 million (37.7%) of working youth are in extreme or moderate poverty compared to 26 per cent of working adults (International Labor Organization, 2017) UBOS (2015) therefore concluded that increasing high level of youth unemployment and underemployment, coupled with young working poor with limited education, is a serious challenge that jeopardizes social inclusion, cohesion and stability of African nations.

To avert the prevailing youth quandary, Youth Alive Uganda implements the power of vision, a motivational change approach as a more effective and

sustainable model to fostering socioeconomic behavior change among young people. Locke and Latham provide a goal-setting theory of motivation that emphasizes the relationship between vision (goals) and performance.

Based on hundreds of studies, the major findings of drawing personal and group visions is that individuals who have personal visions perform better than those who do not have. At the same time, however, individuals must have sufficient ability, accept the vision, and receive feedback related to performance (Latham, 2003).

### The visioning process

**Step 1: Knowing and accepting the current reality.** This involves telling a story of one's life, challenges, aspirations and environment. At the end of this one realizes that something different needs to be done in order for their lives to change

**Step II: Visualizing the dream:** This involves understanding the vision, characteristics of a good vision, brain storming on mental pictures of the vision and strategies to achieve it.

**Step III: Drawing the personal life plans:** After visualization, participants are tasked to put their mental pictures on paper by drawing. Emphasis is on drawing because humans are visual creatures.

**Step IV: Presentation & critiquing:** Each participant presents before his/her peers, indicating their current reality, dream, and strategies to achieve that dream. Positive criticism is provided to help the participant refine their vision. He/she takes it home and hangs it where they can see it to keep them focused.

**Step V: Support mechanisms:** The vision bearers identify a supportive social circle/network of likeminded individuals who will support, nurture and mentor them towards attaining the desired lifestyles.

**Step VI: Signing commitment cards:** These are signed as a sign of commitment that the visioning will guide one's behavior to achieve their dreams.

### Outcomes of visioning in Youth Alive

- Over 40,000 youth have developed life plans and signed commitment cards to fulfill their visions.
- 76% of the beneficiaries self-reported taking responsibility for their choices after visioning.
- 70% self-stated having a positive attitude towards money management after visioning.
- Youth Alive has observed significant increased access to & utilization of health services, saving & investment behaviors among followed up beneficiaries with visions.

### Limitations/challenges of visioning

Young persons can sometimes be over ambitious and draw unrealistic life plans that tend to overwhelm them.

### Lessons learned

- The Vision model forms the foundational positive beliefs upon which young people build their future businesses and life decisions.
- Visioning is a bridge between current reality and desired future as it helps create clear purpose and sense of direction in life upon which future decisions, actions and resources are based.
- Through this exercise, young people examine their current social, economic and health behaviors, determine what behavior is now safe and productive, and then commit to action leading to achieving their dream.