WUSC EUMC

In partnership with mastercard foundation

A group photo of the Mastercard Foundation, WUSC staff and YAC

# More Than a Seat at the Table

## The Impact of the Youth Advisory Committee on the DREEM Project and the Importance of Such a Body.

Presented by Jonathan Adolin (Former DREEM-YAC Member)

# What is the DREEM Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)?

- A formally established body of diverse displaced and refugee youth.
- Our purpose: To embed youth voices at the center of the DREEM project's strategy, design, and implementation.

Our Guiding Principle: To bridge the project's goals and the community's real needs, ensuring that "Nothing About Us Without Us" was a reality.

A group photo of the DREEM project director, the Mastercard Foundation RDP program head, and the YAC.

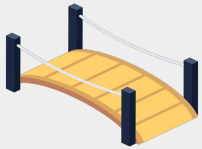
# Role of the YAC on the DREEM Project.

The Youth Advisory Committee provides **support** and **guidance** to WUSC and the Mastercard Foundation on the DREEM project, namely:

1. **Higher Education Inclusion:** The inclusion of refugee and displaced youth in the Mastercard Foundation's Scholars Program;
2. **Economic Inclusion:** Refugee and Displaced Persons' inclusion in economic opportunities that are dignified and fulfilling and Strengthening Economic Opportunities for Refugees.
3. **Thought Leadership:** Strategic research to advance policy objectives and systems change related to refugee and displaced youth education and employment– at national and sub-national levels.

As the Foundation implements its strategy for refugee and displaced young people, the DREEM project and Youth Advisory Committee ensure that the Foundation's work is informed by and continues to reflect the unique perspectives of displaced and refugee youth.

# Role of the YAC on the DREEM Project.



## The Bridge

Acted as the gateway and connectors to the RDP communities leveraging our lived experiences and expertise

## Co-Designers

creating and implementing ideas that truly resonated with displaced community needs.

## Reality Check

Giving honest feedback on what did (and did not) work.

## Amplifiers

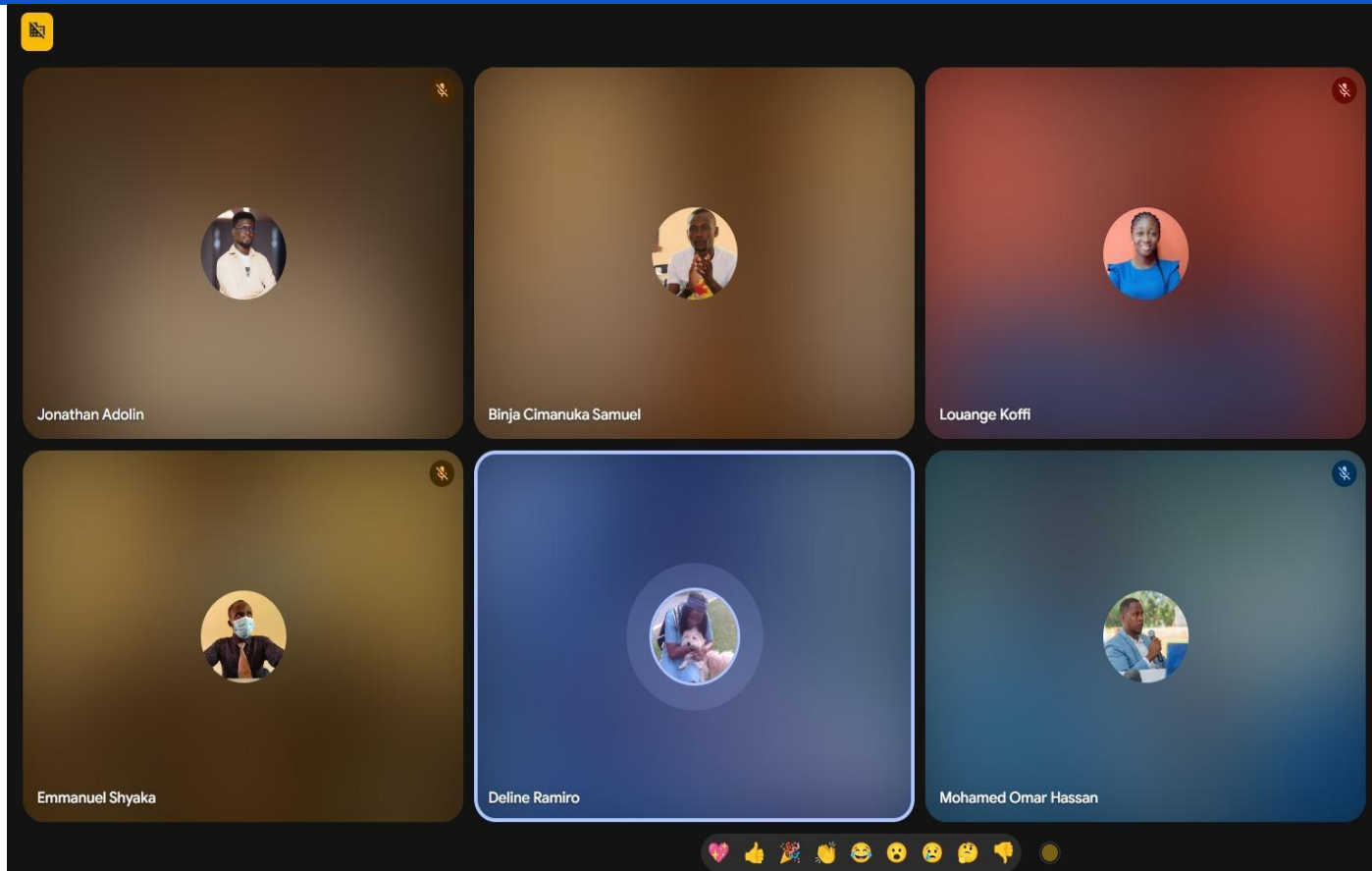
Ensuring diverse youth voices were heard by decision-makers.

# How did you envision the YAC working with the DREEM Team?

Our time on the YAC was not solely limited to online engagement.

As partners in co-creating and delivering impact.

As thought leaders lending our voice and advising on what works for the RDP community



# It was these and many more…

# The Impact of the YAC

### On Us (YAC Members)

- Gained leadership skills
- Built confidence & agency
- Formed a strong network

### On the Organisation

- Built community trust
- Gained invaluable insights
- Developed programs that truly reflect the RDP youth voices

### On the Community

- Inspired other youth
- Challenged stereotypes
- Fostered a sense of ownership

The impact went far beyond the the project

# Challenges & Lessons Learned

**The Challenge: Truly Being Heard**

It wasn't enough to just speak; we had to learn how to advocate effectively to ensure our ideas were implemented, not just listened to.

**The Challenge: Avoiding Burnout**

Balancing YAC commitments with our personal lives was demanding. Consistent support from project staff was essential.

**The Key Lesson**

Meaningful youth participation requires real investment—in training, resources, and fostering a culture where youth voices have genuine power to create change.

## Why bodies like the YAC is critical to the success of youth-focused programs and beyond?

- They eliminate **Gaps:** Well-intentioned ideas that don't match the youth's real needs. Planning and implementation are two different things.
- They can be the difference between **Tokenism and Meaningful Participation:** The danger of having youth present for show, but not giving them real influence.
- Bodies like the YAC serve as an enabling platform that benefits not only the programs they are designed for but also creates an environment that acts as a launchpad for the leaders of tomorrow.

# What Comes Next After The Conclusion DREEM 1.0?

**DREEM 1.0**
**YAC**

**DREEM 2.0**
Bigger and better mechanisms that build on the YAC members' feedback and input.

# Thank You

*"To the organizations and allies here today: Don't just design for us, design with us. Move from tokenism to true partnership. The results will speak for themselves."*

## Questions?

Please use the link below to learn more about the DREEM project and stories of former YAC members.

https://youtu.be/gHEDTyvNyJU?si=PjhAa_TrKy5EfFru
https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/111535
https://mastercardfdn.org/en/articles/youth-leading-the-way-lessons-from-the-2025-refugee-economic-summit/
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