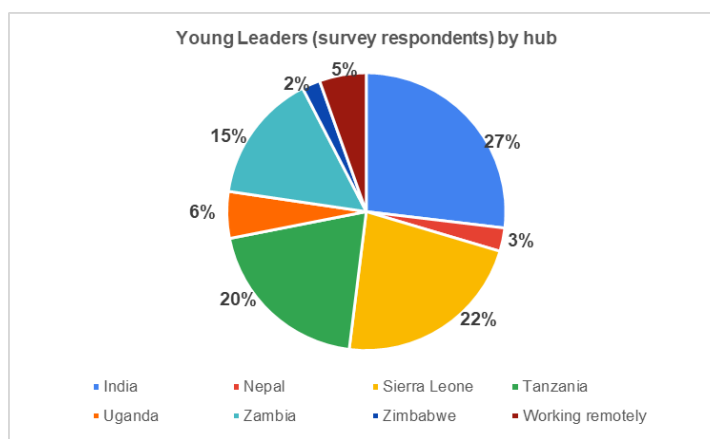


Annual Young Leaders Survey, 2023: What are young people saying?

Executive Summary

Restless Development's Annual Young Leaders Survey is conducted every year to gain feedback from our young leaders on their experience with us. The Annual Young Leaders survey 2023 had 331 responses from both current and alumni volunteers engaged through our hubs and remotely through global projects. It was completed by all types of young leaders, from peer educators delivering activities in communities to advocates, researchers, campaigners, mobilisers, monitors and communicators. This report is intended to provide an overview of how young leaders across the agency have experienced working with Restless Development and outlines some actionable suggestions and recommendations to improve their engagement in the future.

Who are the young people leading our work?



- A vast majority of our survey respondents¹ are in their 20s, with 49% being in the age group of 20-24 years (compared to 50% from 2022).
- India, Sierra Leone and Zambia belong to the age group of below 19 years which is in line with their school based interventions; whereas Tanzania and Uganda have a greater proportion in the age group of 25-29 years.
- 54% of the respondents identified themselves as females and 45% were males. 6% of the total identified themselves as persons with disability.

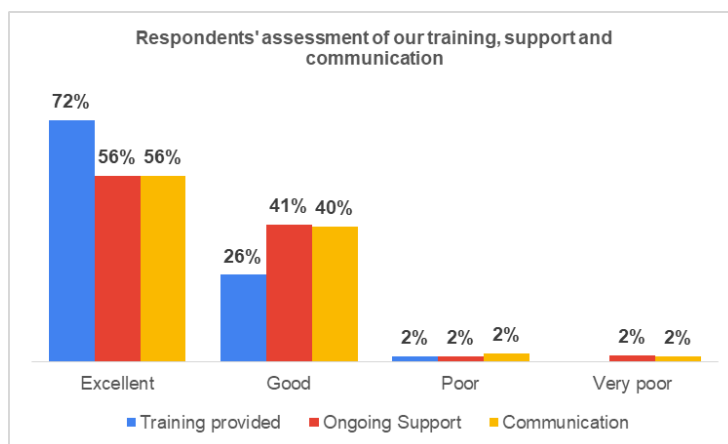
Young People's motivation for volunteering:

- There are a range of motivations that have led young people to engage with Restless Development. The most popular reason being is to gain new skills (88% compared to 78% in the 2022 survey) and develop as a leader (86% compared to 65%) and to lead change and have an impact (81% as compared to 85%).
- Similar to last year, young people were motivated to volunteer because they thought it would help them secure a job (65% compared to 56%). This may be indicative of the challenging economic climate young people are facing.

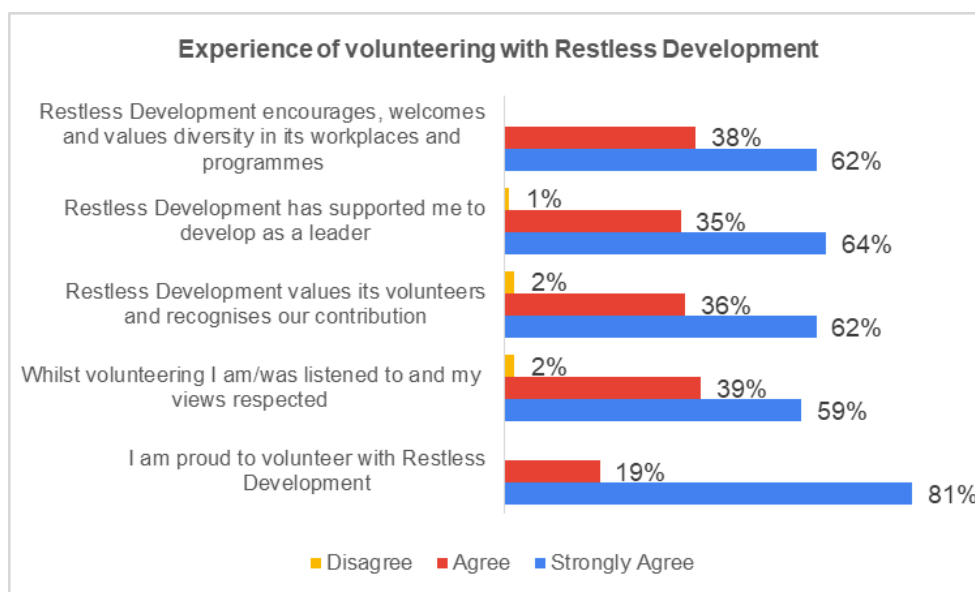
Support received whilst volunteering with Restless Development

¹ The terms 'respondents' and 'young people' have been used interchangeably throughout the report to denote the young leaders who responded to the survey.

- Young people have appreciated the quality of our training and ongoing support as excellent or good; however, there has been a slight reduction in the proportion of those who feel the same about our communication (a 2 percentage point drop from 2022).
- There has been a slight increase (78% as compared to 77% last year) in the proportion of those who feel that they have the necessary resources to fulfil their role.
- The proportion of respondents who always felt unsafe has remained the same since last year, indicating the need for targeted attention in this area.



Do respondents feel valued?



- 100% are proud to volunteer with Restless Development (compared to 99% from the past two years)
- 98% shared that they felt their views were being listening to and respected during the course of their engagement with Restless Development (98% last year)
- 98% felt that Restless Development values its young leaders and recognises their contribution (consistent from last year)
- 99% of those who responded feel that Restless Development has supported them to develop as a leader (99% last year)

- 100% of respondents feel that Restless Development encourages, welcomes and values diversity in its workplaces and programmes (98% last year).
- 100% of those who responded feel proud to volunteer with Restless Development (compared to 99% from last year) and feel that Restless Development encourages, welcomes and values diversity in its workplaces and programmes (98% last year)
- The proportion of those who felt that their views are being listened to and respected, that they are valued and recognise the contribution that Restless Development has had in their development as a leader, remained the same from the past year.
- Respondents appreciate the quality of the training received, platforms and opportunities provided to develop as leaders and being supported financially.
- Respondents proposed that re-looking at our compensation criteria; providing linkages to employment opportunities and connecting them with other youth organisations and networks are some of the ways by which Restless Development can strengthen its support offer.

Impact of volunteering with Restless Development:

- 87% of respondents (82% last year) feel that they are better able to work collaboratively with partners and community members.
- 68% of respondents (62% last year) have recognised becoming resilient as one of the impacts of volunteering with Restless Development.
- There has been an increase in those who report having improved knowledge and understanding of development work (85% as compared to 81% last year) and communication skills (88% as compared to 86% last year).

Recommendations and suggestions

Below are some recommendations and suggestions that have come out of the experiences of young leaders with Restless Development. These are similar to the recommendations from the previous year, given the respondents' perceptions have remained the same, warranting a need to continue to build on these, rather than develop new ones. These are not intended to be prescriptive; rather hubs are encouraged to adapt these recommendations keeping in mind the context of their operations and activities.

- It is important for Restless Development hubs to consider practical ways by which they can support young people in their leadership journey, both during and after their engagement.
- Restless Development needs to continue to prioritise the safety of its young leaders during their engagement with the agency, exploring the actions suggested in the main report.
- Young Leaders have identified adequate compensation for their time as one of the ways by which Restless Development can support them better.
- Young Leaders are looking for Restless Development to provide linkages to employment opportunities post their volunteering with the agency.

Introduction

Restless Development's Annual Young Leaders Survey is carried out every year to gain feedback from our young leaders on their experience with us. The survey forms a central part of our commitment to listening and learning from young people who lead our work in order to improve the support we provide throughout their journey. This helps us to build on what works well and address any challenges to ensure we are setting up our young leaders for success.

The Annual Young Leaders survey 2023 was carried out across our Hubs, and was responded to by 331 young leaders comprising those who are currently volunteering and those who have completed their volunteering. The survey was completed by all types of young leaders, from peer educators delivering activities in communities to advocates, researchers, campaigners, mobilisers, monitors and reporters.

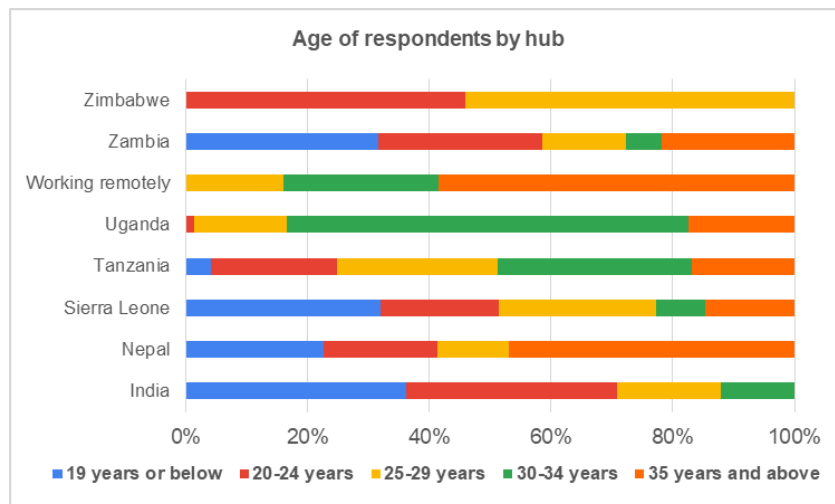
This report is split into four sections:

1. Demographic data: Who are the young people leading our work?
2. Support received from Restless Development
3. Experience of volunteering with Restless Development
4. Respondents' perception of the impact of their work

This report provides a global overview of the data from across seven of our Hubs²: India, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. We also received a small number of responses³ from young leaders based in other countries, but 95% of responses were from the seven countries listed above.

Section 1: Who are the young people leading our work?

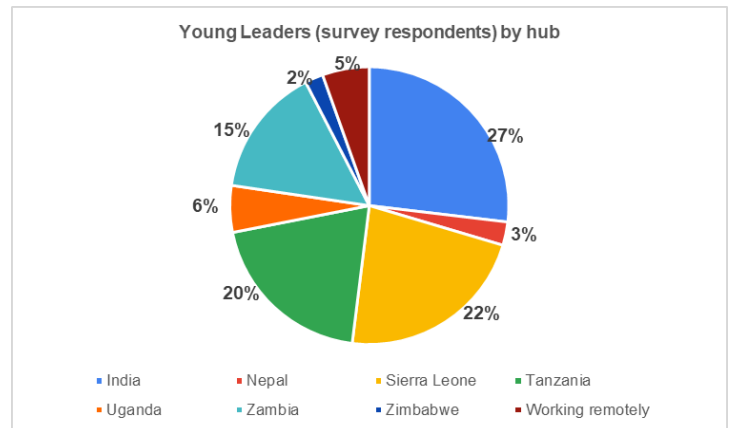
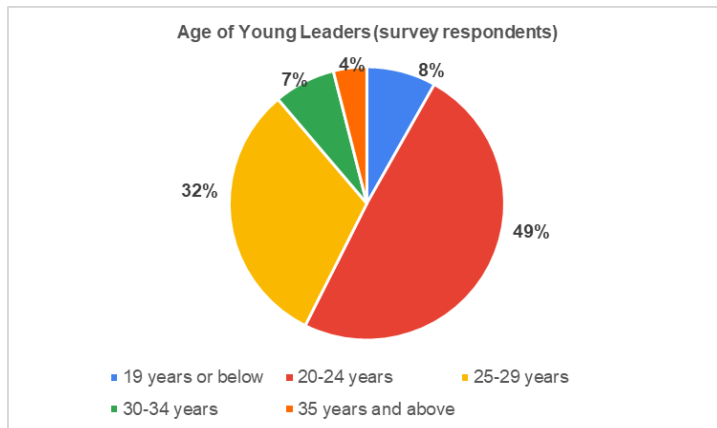
The majority of our respondents (72%) were currently volunteering with us at the time of the survey, while 28% had completed volunteering in the last 12 months. The majority of the young leaders who responded are community volunteers or peer educators (78%); 9% are campaigners and activists; 4% are researchers. The remaining proportion consisted of mobilisers and communicators.



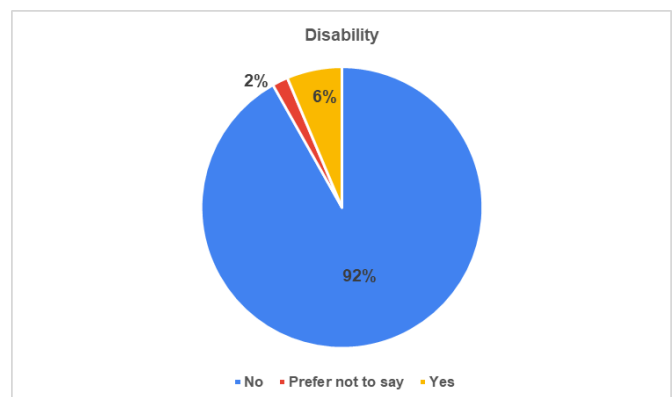
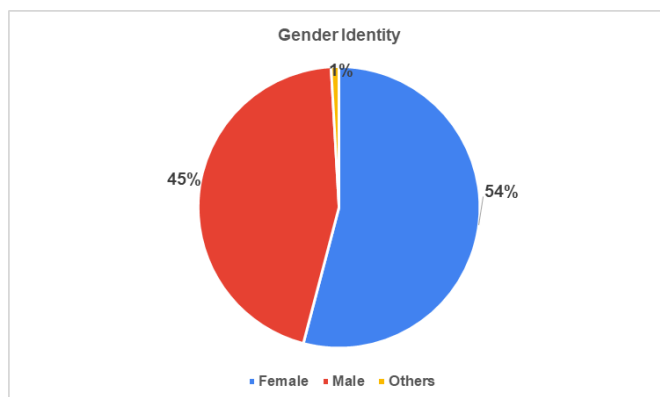
² There was no response from the USA or the UK; while the former is now primarily a fundraising hub, with no active implementation of our strategy, active programmes in the latter did not recruit any young leaders at the time of the survey.

³ There were 18 responses from young leaders who identified themselves as working remotely, which comprised 5% of the responses received in 2023. This is a slight increase from 2022, which is a potential indicator of the fact that our initiatives are working with young people that do not necessarily reside in our hubs and satellites.

A vast majority of respondents were in their 20s, with 49% being in the age group of 20-24 years; however, there has been a slight reduction (of seven percentage points) from the previous year of the overall proportion of respondents in their 20s. This reduction has been assimilated in slight increases in the respondents below 19 years and those between 30-34 years. 4% of the respondents who completed volunteering in the past 12 months were also in the age group of 35 years and above. As can be seen from the graphs above, the distribution shifted widely across our hubs, with more young leaders in India, Sierra Leone and Zambia belonging to the age group of below 19 years which is in line with their school based interventions; whereas Tanzania and Uganda have a greater proportion in the age group of 25-29 years.



Of the young leaders who responded to the survey, 6% identified themselves as persons with disability, which is a three percentage point reduction from the previous year (9%). 54% identified themselves as female and 45% as male⁴. Data from Quarterly Programmes reporting suggests that more than half of young leaders volunteering with Restless Development are female, which is in line with these findings.



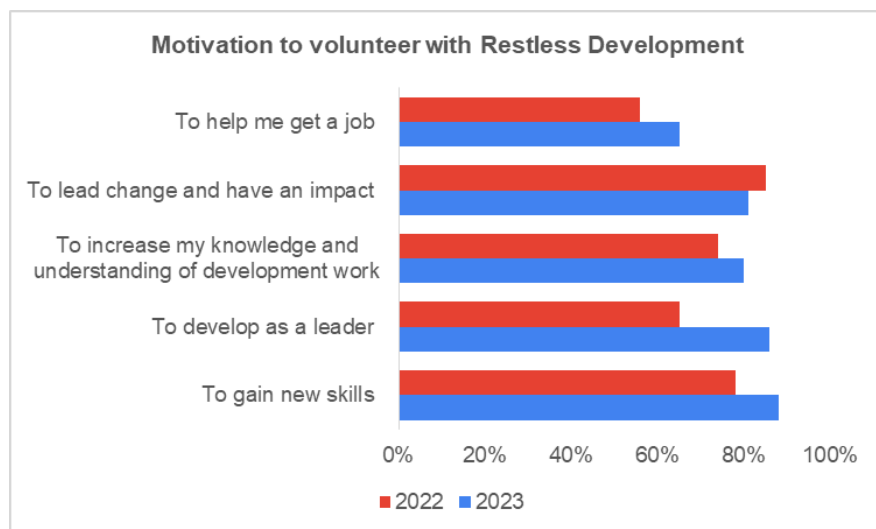
Section 2: Support received from Restless Development

This section analyses young leaders' motivations to volunteer with Restless Development, and how they rate the support provided to them. **The most popular motivation for young people to volunteer with Restless Development is to gain new skills (88%) and develop as a leader (86%). While respondents continue to appreciate the quality of our training and ongoing support as excellent or**

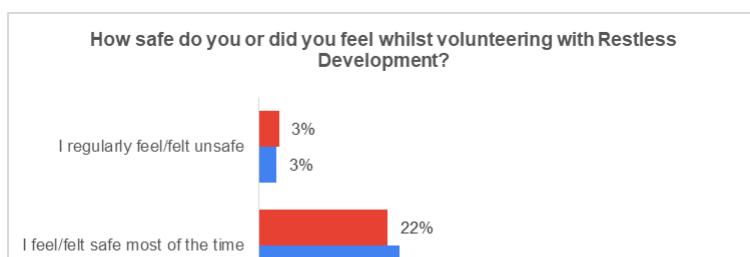
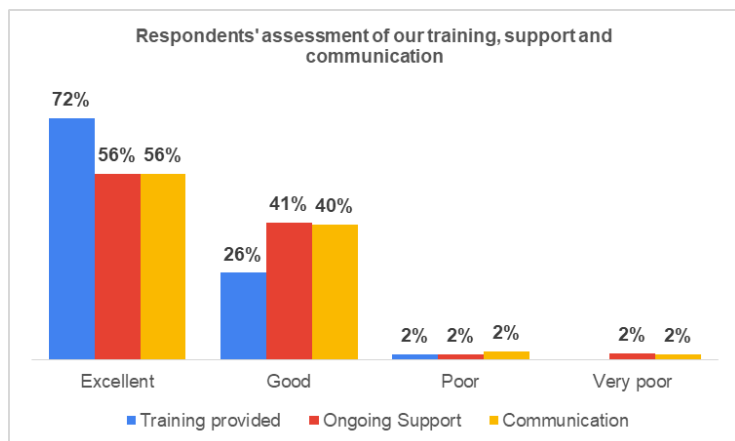
⁴ There were 3 responses from those who identified themselves as 'Others'.

good; there has been a slight reduction in the assessment of the quality of communication. The proportion of those who felt unsafe during their volunteering has remained the same from the previous year, which needs targeted attention.

Compared to the previous year (percentages in brackets), the most popular motivation for young leaders to volunteer with Restless Development is to gain new skills (88% as compared to 78%), followed by a desire to develop as a leader (86% as compared to 65%) and to lead change and have an impact (81% as compared to 85%). Similar to the previous year, more young leaders are motivated to volunteer because they felt that it would help them get a job (65% as compared to 56%). A significant change from the previous year is that the motivation to volunteer has shifted from leading change and creating an impact to developing as a leader and gaining relevant skills that could help them get a job. **This is indicative of the challenging economic climate that young people are facing and their desire to volunteer in a way that they are able to learn skills that are employable and would help them build their livelihood.**

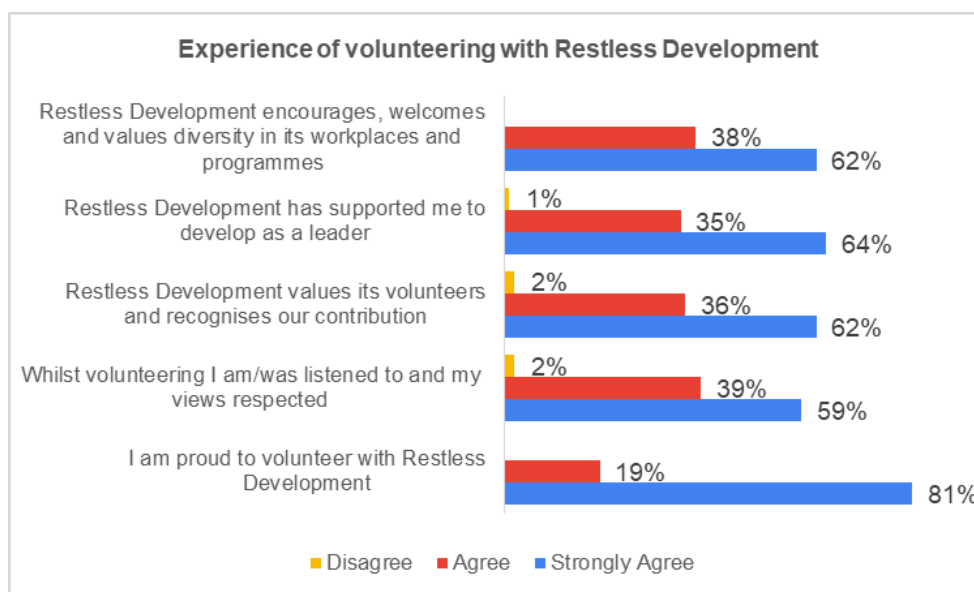


Survey responses have indicated that while the **assessment of the quality of our training and ongoing support has remained the same, there has been a slight reduction in those assessing our communication with them as excellent or good**. 98% of our young leaders rating the training we provide as excellent or good (as opposed to 98% from the previous year). 97% of young leaders who responded rate the ongoing support received whilst volunteering as excellent or good, and 96% of young leaders rate our communication with them during their placement as excellent or good (as opposed to 98% for the previous year). 78% (as opposed to 77% from the previous year) feel that they have the necessary resources (equipment and financial support) to fulfil their role.



A key recommendation from the survey conducted in 2021 was for Restless Development to prioritise the safety of its young leaders during their volunteering with the agency. There has been a slight decrease in the proportion of those who always felt safe (73% as opposed to 75%) and a slight increase in those who felt safe most of the time (24% as opposed to 22%). **However, the proportion of those who have felt unsafe has remained the same as the previous year (3%)⁵, indicating that the agency still needs to look into the recommendations around safety and security from the 2021 survey.** Similar to the previous year, female respondents were more likely to feel safe all the time (57%) than male respondents (42%). Suggestions on how Restless Development could ensure safety and security of young leaders include routine checks, especially when young leaders are working with communities in remote locations; providing safety gear like helmets, rain boots, raincoats and night lights so that they are able to travel safely to and from the field; develop a plan so that staff can accompany young leaders during some of their community visits, especially during the inception period; having a dedicated component of stakeholder engagement so that community leaders and members are aware of Restless Development and its programmes ensuring accommodation provided is of good quality and gender-inclusive; encouraging to take breaks to prioritise mental health and well-being; providing identity cards to verify their association with Restless Development and making sure that the safeguarding team in the hub is trained and proactive in the event of an emergency.

Section 3: Experience of volunteering with Restless Development



Young leaders who responded feel proud to volunteer with Restless Development and feel that their contributions are recognised and valued. They have appreciated the training and mentorship, platforms and opportunities, and the space provided for them to grow as leaders, allowing for more peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Support could be improved by ensuring adequate compensation, linkages to employment opportunities and opportunities for capacity building, connection and collaboration with youth organisations and networks.

From the above chart⁶, we can see (last year's scores in brackets):

⁵ These cases are spread across our Asia and Africa hubs, primarily India, Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone.

⁶ These scores are calculated by adding together those that "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with these statements.

- 100% are proud to volunteer with Restless Development (compared to 99% from the past two years)
- 98% shared that they felt their views were being listened to and respected during the course of their engagement with Restless Development (98% last year)
- 98% felt that Restless Development values its young leaders and recognises their contribution (consistent from last year)
- 99% of those who responded feel that Restless Development has supported them to develop as a leader (99% last year)
- 100% of respondents feel that Restless Development encourages, welcomes and values diversity in its workplaces and programmes (98% last year).

Scores in this section were particularly high, with the vast majority of the respondents reporting a very positive experience and relationship with Restless Development, feeling proud, listened to, valued, supported as leaders, and that the agency values diversity. The overall scores have shown slight improvements in some aspects from last year.

Young leaders were also asked to elaborate on the specific type of support they received from Restless Development and what could be improved.

Respondents appreciated:

- The continued training and mentoring that they received which helped them develop skills on research, campaigns, handling budgets, public speaking and employability skills;
- The platforms provided and the confidence placed in them to lead initiatives, allowing them to become assertive;
- Being supported financially, enabling young leaders to support their education and families;
- Space provided to learn and grow as leaders, as well as learn and connect from other young people ;
- Being able to develop the confidence, communication and negotiation skills that helped them navigate their families as well as work with communities.

Suggestions on how we can improve on the support we provide our young leaders included:

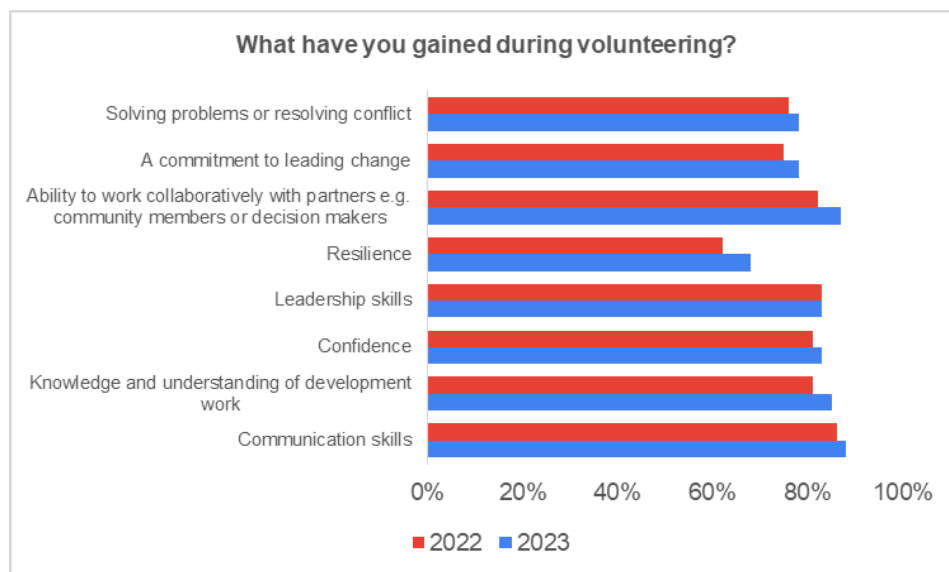
- Continued trainings and mentorship, especially on leadership, communication, advocacy and employability skills which goes beyond their contract;
- Opportunities where diverse young people can represent the organisation at local, regional and global forums;
- Being more intentional about putting young people in leadership roles;
- Supporting with accessing employment pathways post volunteering, both within and outside Restless Development;
- Re-looking at compensation criteria and increasing the stipend received due to rising costs, including reimbursing travel;
- Providing linkages with youth organisations and networks for connection, collaboration and learning.

Section 4: Respondents' perception of the impact of their work

This section looks at what young leaders feel they have gained from volunteering and how young leaders have had an impact in the communities that they work with. **Respondents have recognised the positive impact that their volunteering has had on them personally as well as the communities they worked with. There has been an increase in the proportion of those who have felt supported by**

Restless Development to become a leader, to gain new skills and become resilient as well as market ready for employment.

The chart below shows what respondents feel they have gained from volunteering. The responses are quite evenly spread with slight increases in proportion from the last year, with the most common responses being: communication skills, followed by ability to work collaboratively with partners, knowledge and understanding of development work, and confidence and leadership skills. While gaining communication and leadership skills were the most common; this year young leaders felt that they gained the ability to work with partners and improve their understanding of development work in addition to gaining skills that would help them get a job.



When asked about the most significant aspect of their volunteering, the responses were in relation to the impact they observed on people, communities and partners they worked with rather than an impact on the young leaders personally. This was visible through:

- Communities recognising the importance of educating a girl child, delaying the age of marriage and changing attitudes towards women and girls;
- Increased participation of young people in decision making spaces by advocating for young people's priorities;
- Increased responsiveness from decision makers on the priorities of young people;
- Increased trust in young peoples' ability to lead change in communities;
- Increased knowledge and access to sexual and reproductive health information and services;
- Young people in communities having improved skills related to finance, setting businesses, responding to climate change, negotiation, decision making and communication

Recommendations and Suggestions

Below are some recommendations and suggestions that have come out of the experiences of young leaders with Restless Development. These are similar to the recommendations from the previous year, given the respondents' perceptions have remained similar. These are not intended to be prescriptive; rather hubs are encouraged to adapt these recommendations keeping in mind the context of their operations and activities.

- **It is important for Restless Development hubs to consider practical ways by which they can support young people in their leadership journey, both during and after their engagement.**

This is indicative of the fact that young people are willing to take on more responsibility; have leadership roles and decision-making responsibility; be listened to by decision makers; be visible on influential platforms; and have full autonomy to make decisions. Respondents have valued the confidence and skills that they have learnt through the course of their engagement with Restless Development that has allowed them to grow both personally and professionally. Hubs should look at practical ways by which they can strengthen their support offer to young leaders, especially looking at peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and how they can improve the quality of their communication with young leaders.

- **Restless Development needs to continue to prioritise the safety of its young leaders during their engagement with the agency.**

A key recommendation from the survey conducted in 2021 was for Restless Development to prioritise the safety of its young leaders during their volunteering with the agency. While the proportion of those who felt safe always has decreased slightly, the proportion of those who felt unsafe has remained the same from last year. It could be prudent to relook at hub risk assessments, investing time in quarterly safeguarding training with staff and young leaders, conducting regular welfare checks (can be added to the review meetings) as well as spot checks in the community and ensuring that they have adequate resources to carry their tasks safely would be an important exercise. It is equally important to ensure that there is clear communication on how and who to report to in the event of an incident. Finally, brainstorming on how we can move towards safety, security and safeguarding systems which are more youth-led and governed by what young people perceive as safe and unsafe is another way through which we can prioritise their safety.

- **Young Leaders have identified adequate compensation for their time as one of the ways by which Restless Development can support them better.**

Adequate and fair compensation to young people for their time is important to ensure that they feel valued for the work they do; which has been a consistent demand since 2021. What constitutes fair compensation is contingent, and it would be useful for hubs to identify what that might mean for their contexts, and to review their systems periodically to consider the extent to which they are keeping up with unprecedented rise in prices and the economic climate.

- **Young Leaders are looking for Restless Development to provide linkages to employment opportunities as well as connections with youth networks post their volunteering with the agency.**

Restless Development hubs need to critically consider what they can offer young people in this regard. While it may not be possible for Restless Development to provide employment opportunities to young leaders, it should think about establishing linkages with other organisations in its network and the Youth Collective where young leaders could find meaningful employment along with signposting relevant opportunities.