

## Act for Change Fund: current terminology

**These are key working definitions to help us understand and learn about youth-led social change. Language and terminology evolve as we learn. If you have any feedback, do get in touch via the contact box on this website [or just link to email?].**

Young people: those aged 14 to 25.

Youth organisation: An organisation that works primarily for the benefit of young people.

Youth-led organisation: An organisation with young people in decision making roles, particularly those organisations where young people constitute or influence governance.

Youth-led social action: Young people taking practical action to challenge the status quo with the intention to see change that benefits individuals and/or communities who experience injustice and inequalities. This can take place through a structured programme or be self-generated by young people.

Youth-led social change: Changes to young people and the communities they advocate for as a result of youth-led social action or activism. This can include change in specific spheres, for example: legal changes, public attitude, or corporate behaviour. We recognise that campaigners will sometimes be trying to prevent something happening, rather than driving change.

Change: change happens at various levels – in the lives of individual young people, within communities and social groups, within organisations and within institutions. Work needs to focus on driving change that will make a difference at a structural and systemic level.

- a) In the lives of **individual young people**: young people feel empowered, they have an understanding of the systems in which they exist/are oppressed and are equipped with the tools to engage and lead change
- b) Within **Communities/Social groups**: community resilience, changes in the way young people are viewed, the creation of spaces and the ability for young people to harness their collective voice and power to act
- c) Within **Organisations**: inclusive governance structures within organisations where young people can action change, having opportunities to develop their skills and a clear pathway for engagement in social change
- d) Within **Institutions**: changes in the political arena. This includes inclusive decision-making, young people are engaged and can shape policies/legislation/narrative and culture at a local, regional, and national level; young people have power to act within the institutions that affect them.

Lived experience: work where young people who experience injustices and inequalities lead change to address issues that they have identified as underpinning unfair systems or the root causes of their disadvantage and marginalisation.

Educated: activity, information and context to support young people eg organising, critical thinking, power and privilege, focussed on concrete systemic change (rather than symptoms of injustice), deep social and political understanding (political literacy), learn how to deal with, harness and work with conflict

Activated: activity, information and context to support young people eg a focus on anti-racist practice, civic engagement, shared power, supported (well-being and mental health a priority), working intergenerationally, inclusive, with agency, networked, building up real trust, belonging, group self-activation, grounded in rich historical, sociological, and psychological frameworks around injustice and inequality, recognising that social, commercial, and private sectors are each a crucial focus for change

Youth Voice: a variety of activities and platforms to enable young people to share their views, attitudes and opinions. Voice often refers to mechanisms for young people to influence institutions that are generally created by and run by adults, and is conceptually distinct to youth power (See below)

Power: This work is about equipping young people to act on and with power: to interrogate power, engage in democracy, influencing, and activism in many forms, to drive change at a structural and systemic level. It means handing more power to young people and less to organisations and institutions, requiring adults to work with young people as equal partners.

Organising: Building a base of young people impacted by the issues they seek to address who are equipped, engaged and expert to organise and affiliate; building a community to hold people and institutions to account and to use their voice, votes and agency to create meaningful change. Grounded in racial, gender, and economic justice, youth organising is the process of engaging young people in building power for systemic change while supporting their individual and collective development.

Activism: young people's political activation to build power and create social change