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**WOMEN DELIVER ANNOUNCES LARGEST, MOST DIVERSE CLASS OF YOUNG LEADERS IN PROGRAM'S HISTORY**

*300 young advocates from 121 countries join award-winning program to drive progress on gender equality and the health, rights and wellbeing of girls, women, and young people*

**New York, NY, 27 February 2018** – Today, Women Deliver — a leading global advocacy organization for gender equality and the health, rights and wellbeing of girls and women — announced its newest, largest and most diverse class of Young Leaders to date: 300 changemakers who have dedicated their lives to advancing gender equality.

This was the program's most competitive application process yet, with nearly **3,000 applications for 300 spots**. It is also the largest and most diverse cohort to join the award-winning program: the group hails from **121 countries** and collectively speaks **98 languages**. The Young Leaders also represent groups too often marginalized, including **66 people affected by humanitarian emergencies, 29 self-identified indigenous persons** and — for the first time — **18 adolescents**.

Women Deliver selected all the Young Leaders for their potential to have a lasting impact on the lives of girls and women. As a group, they have already driven tangible progress on a wide range of issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, LGBTQ+ rights, peace and security, water and sanitation, gender-based violence, education, maternal health, and political participation.

"Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow — they are leading today, not least when it comes to changing gender norms and breaking down barriers facing girls and women," said **Katja Iversen, President/CEO of Women Deliver**. "The Women Deliver Young Leaders Program is here to amplify the voices of youth, maximize the impact and support the incredible work these young advocates are already doing."

Similar to past years, the 2018 class of Young Leaders will receive training and resources to extend their influence and actively shape programs and policies that affect the health, rights and wellbeing of girls, women and young people. This support includes training through Women Deliver's Digital University courses, opportunities to speak on national and global stages through the Women Deliver Speakers Bureau, opportunities to apply for advocacy project grants, and a scholarship to the Women Deliver 2019 Conference, the world's largest conference on gender equality and the health, rights and wellbeing of girls and women, taking place in Vancouver, Canada in June 2019.

"This program is all about authentically engaging young people — and that means ensuring they are present in the halls of power and have seats at the decision-making table," said **Lori Adelman, Director of Youth Engagement at Women Deliver**. "We are committed to continuing to push the boundaries of what prioritizing youth looks like in the health and development community and beyond."

Since 2010, Women Deliver's Young Leaders Program has trained, supported, and elevated 400 youth advocates who are tackling the greatest challenges facing girls, women, and young people in

their communities. In just the past 2 years Women Deliver Young Leaders have been appointed to **10 influential commissions and boards**, had **335 meetings with decision-makers** and made **more than 180 media appearances**.

Young Leaders from the 2016 class attest to the difference the Young Leaders Program has made to their advocacy efforts.

“The Young Leaders Program is the reason for many firsts in my career as an advocate/activist. [It] provided me an avenue to improve how I advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Philippines,” said **Anthony Lopez, a Young Leader from the Philippines**. “I have grown more mature as a young leader and it has helped keep my passion for SRHR burning.”

“Prior to the programme, I was a vocal advocate in a half-filled room. The Young Leaders Program has positioned me to explore my youth voice across dynamic global platforms where it matters most,” said **Olaoluwa Abagun, a Young Leader from Nigeria**.

#### **Testimonials from the new class Women Deliver Young Leaders:**

- "Aboriginal women in Canada are far more likely to face numerous adversities, including domestic violence, sexual harassment/abuse, lack of health care access, food insecurity, and more. As a health care provider in Canada, I'm grateful to join a cohort of people who are taking challenges like this head-on in their own communities, and to share ideas, resources, and information with them to boost our efforts at the community level and globally." — **Emily Chartrand-Hudson, 25 years old, Canada**
- “The Young Leaders Program will help increase the scope of our collective impact, and I believe that that is exactly what social change is about.” — **Mashiyat Rahman, 21 years old, Bangladesh**
- “The Young Leaders Program will help in meeting potential partners and mentors that can help actualize my dreams.” — **Osamede Peace Smith, 21 years old, Germany**
- “I believe in girls and women and the power we hold, and strive to be one of the agents unleashing that power and working with girls and women to create a just world that we can all enjoy.” — **Jama Jack, 27 years old, Gambia**
- "By intensifying efforts to empower girls and women, we can ensure that they are equipped to be their [own] strongest advocate[s]. With support from others, as their allies, they can push for their rights and needs." — **Sanne Thijssen, 23 years old, Netherlands**

The full list of the 2018 class of Young Leaders can be found [here](#).

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**About Women Deliver:** As a leading, global advocate for gender equality and the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women, Women Deliver brings together diverse voices and interests to drive progress for all, with a particular focus on maternal, sexual, and reproductive health and rights. Women Deliver builds capacity, shares solutions, and forges partnerships, together creating coalitions, communication, and action that spark political commitment and investment in girls and women.

Women Deliver's Young Leaders Program trains, elevates, and empowers youth advocates to catalyze action for gender equality, including the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls, women, and young people. The program provides youth advocates with the training and resources necessary to be meaningfully engaged, extend their influence, and actively shape the programs and policies that affect their lives. Started in 2010, the award-winning Women Deliver Young Leaders Program is comprised of 700 youth advocates from more than 120 countries. The Women Deliver Young Leaders Program in 2018 is supported by Global Affairs Canada, the Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Johnson & Johnson, and WCG.

Learn more at [womendeliver.org/youth](http://womendeliver.org/youth) and follow us on Twitter at [@YouthDeliver](https://twitter.com/YouthDeliver) and [@WomenDeliver](https://twitter.com/WomenDeliver).