

## **Section II.**

# Background Handouts





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## Definitions of Youth and Youth Participation

Definitions of youth and youth participation vary significantly. In general, in all of the sections of the *Youth Participation Guide*, the terms *youth*, *young people*, *young adults*, and *adolescents* are used interchangeably – all referring to people 10 to 24 years of age, unless otherwise specified. The terms *youth participation* and *youth involvement* are also used interchangeably; the term *youth-adult partnerships* is used in a narrower sense, referring to one aspect of youth participation. Definitions are related to context, culture, programmatic goals, objectives, and other factors.

### Definitions of Youth

#### Webster’s Dictionary, 1998

The quality or state of being young; youthfulness; juvenility; the part of life that succeeds childhood; the period of existence preceding maturity or age; the whole early part of life, from childhood, or, sometimes, from infancy, to manhood.

#### *Ages 15 to 24*

(United Nations General Assembly, the basis for UN statistics on youth)

Note that by this definition, children are those under age 15. However, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as up to age 18, thus providing theoretically more protection and rights to those up to age 18; there is no similar United Nations Convention on the Rights of Youth.

#### *Ages 15 to 24*

(U.S. Agency for International Development)

Youth is generally defined as the cohort between ages 15 and 24, the generation straddling childhood and adulthood, especially by researchers working with U.S. Agency for International Development funding. Adolescence is firmly under way even for the youngest in this group, making it possible to track patterns in adolescent experience, such as sexual activity.

#### *Ages 13 to 19, Teenagers and Ages 20 to 24, Young Adults*

(United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development)

This distinction is important since the sociological, psychological, and health issues they face may differ. Some countries consider young people to become young adults when they pass the “age of majority,” usually age 18, and they are then given equal treatment under the law. However, the operational definition and nuances of the term “youth” often vary from country to country, depending on the sociocultural, institutional, economic, and political factors.



## **Definitions of Youth Participation**

### *Adolescent Participation*

UNICEF uses this term, defining it as “adolescents partaking in and influencing process, decisions, and activities.”

### *Children’s Participation*

Roger Hart uses this term in his essay, “Children’s Participation, From Tokenism to Citizenship.” In it, he describes participation as the process of sharing decisions that affect one’s life and the life of one’s community.

### *Youth-Adult Partnerships*

Emphasizing an equitable working relationship between youth and adults, this term refers to a situation where “adults work in full partnership with young people on issues facing youth and/or on programs and policies affecting youth,” as defined by Advocates for Youth.

### *Youth Involvement*

This term is often used interchangeably with *youth participation*.

### *Youth Participation*

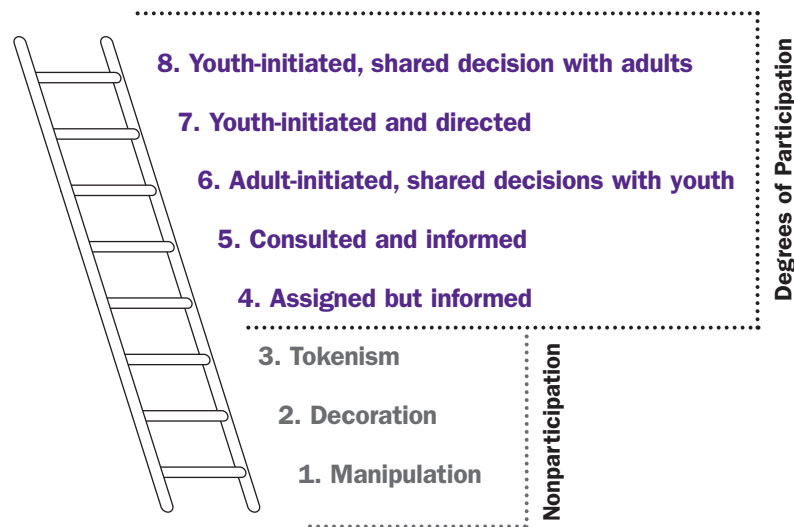
This is the most common term used in the fields of youth development, youth governance, and health. It follows the terminology used for the inclusion and involvement of other marginalized groups (i.e., participation of people living with HIV/AIDS). The U.S. National Commission on Resources for Youth defines youth participation as “Involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunity for planning and/or decision-making affecting others, in an activity whose impact or consequences extends to others – outside or beyond the youth participants themselves.”

# From Youth Participation to Youth-Adult Partnerships

An organization should undertake critical thinking about kinds and levels of youth participation. Hart’s Ladder of Participation (see below) depicts participation on a continuum, from manipulation and tokenism, which do not constitute real participation, to higher levels of participation in which young people initiate, direct, and share decisions with adults.<sup>1</sup>

The ladder of participation highlights two important characteristics about true youth participation. First, participation is not an either/or phenomenon. Simply having a young person present does not result in true participation. Young people must have a certain level of empowerment, responsibility, and decision-making power to participate meaningfully. Second, the quality and type of the partnership between youth and adults is important.

## Ladder of Participation



An example of participation at the lower end of the ladder is to add young people on a program discussion panel without giving them any role in the management, administration, or decision-making about the program. The integration of young people into many levels of an organization, such as serving on boards or steering committees as well as participating in day-to-day decision-making, are examples of the highest levels of participation.

## Youth-Adult Partnership

A true partnership is not simply a checklist that either youth or adults follow. A true partnership between youth and adults in a professional setting, in contrast to a personal relationship (such as an uncle and teenage boy), has several distinguishing characteristics:

- ◆ It integrates the realistic perspectives and skills of youth with the experience and wisdom of adults.
- ◆ It offers each party the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions.



- ◆ It recognizes and values the contribution of both the young person and the adult.
- ◆ It allows young people and adults to work in full partnership – envisioning, developing, implementing, and evaluating programs.

Sharing with youth the power to make decisions means that adults respect and have confidence in young people's judgment. It means that adults recognize the assets of youth, understand what youth can bring to the partnership, and are willing to provide additional training and support when youth need it.

Both youth and adults may need to embrace change in order for the partnership to work. For example, adults may need to modify their ideas about what will and will not work and about times and conditions under which work proceeds. Similarly, youth may need to understand the limitations and realities that affect a program's development, operation, and evaluation.

In addressing adolescent and reproductive health issues, youth and adults can work together in a number of ways such as conducting a needs assessment, writing a grant proposal, raising funds, designing a program, training staff, delivering services, implementing interventions and projects, overseeing a program, collecting data, evaluating a program's effectiveness, improving unsuccessful aspects of a program, and replicating successful programs. For more on types of activities, see *Background Handout 5. Where to Involve Youth in an Institution*.

### **Safeguards Should Protect Youth from Abuse**

Minors need special protection when working in institutions with people older than they are. Institutions should have anti-harassment policies designed to prevent discrimination or harassment on any basis: racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, socioeconomic, or age. The policies should outline how they are enforced, including a clear and safe grievance procedure. Young people being mentored by adults and older youth need special protection to prevent any type of abuse that may go unchecked without such a policy, awareness of the need for such a policy, and its enforcement. Females are especially vulnerable to abuse, particularly sexual abuse.

In countries where it is legal and possible, the backgrounds of all adults and older youth should be checked prior to employment or involvement with the institution to help prevent harassment. This process should also be clearly stated by organizations in its recruitment guidelines and followed for all staff.

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1 Hart R. *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship. Innocenti Essays No. 4*. New York: UNICEF, 1992.

## Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships – Research Evidence and Program Summaries

In the reproductive health and HIV/AIDS fields, information about the impact of youth participation and youth-adult partnerships is limited. But literature from related fields indicates that involving young people in programs has many benefits. Program experience and research suggest 10 elements that lead to effective youth-adult partnerships. Programs that seek to develop such partnerships should keep these elements in mind.

### Elements of Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships

**Establish clear goals for the partnership.** Youth and adults should understand the reasons and objectives for establishing the partnership.

**Share decision-making power.** If youth have no power to make decisions, their participation is not one of partnership.

**Have commitment from highest level.** The highest level of the organization should commit fully to meaningful partnerships.

**Be clear on roles and responsibilities.** Be clear on which youth and adults have partnership roles and ensure that those persons in partnerships know everyone's roles and responsibilities.

**Be selective.** Select the appropriate youth and adults for the partnership. Youth vary widely in their level of development and readiness to assume responsibility, and adults vary widely in their degree of commitment to work with youth.

**Provide training.** Young people may need training in communication, leadership, assertiveness skills, and technical areas. Adults may also need training in working with youth as well as in technical areas.

**Be aware of different communication styles.** Different styles of communication do not necessarily imply disrespect, disinterest, or different goals and expectations. Asking questions and communicating clearly can help diffuse conflicts that arise from different communication styles.

**Value participation.** Part of valuing youth involvement is to hold young people accountable for their responsibilities, just as one would with adults. The skills and commitment that adults bring to the partnership should also be valued.

**Include room for growth.** Establish ways for youth to advance to increased levels of responsibility, including opportunities for advancement.

**Remember youth have other interests.** Youth may not be able to meet high levels of obligations, due to other commitments and priorities. Work with youth to develop a level of responsibility that matches their time and commitment.



## Impact on Youth

Youth participation can:

- ◆ Help those youth involved form higher aspirations, gain confidence, attain resources, improve skills and knowledge, change attitudes, and develop more meaningful relationships with adults<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Foster resilience by giving youth opportunities to contribute to family or community<sup>2</sup>
- ◆ Enhance young people's social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ Help young people be more open to learning, engaging in critical dialogue, exercising creativity, and taking initiative<sup>4</sup>

Resiliency research has identified protective factors that seem to account for the difference between those young people who emerge from high-risk situations with positive results and those who do not. While many factors influence health behaviors, resilient children, in particular, display some important characteristics, including:

- ◆ Social competence, including responsiveness, flexibility, empathy, caring, communication skills, a sense of humor, and other pro-social behaviors
- ◆ Problem-solving skills, including the ability to think abstractly, reflectively, and flexibly and the ability to arrive at alternative solutions to cognitive and social problems
- ◆ Autonomy, including a sense of identity and an ability to act independently and to exert control over the individual's environment
- ◆ Sense of purpose and future, including having healthy expectations, goals, an orientation toward success, motivation to achieve, educational aspirations, hopefulness, hardiness, and a sense of coherence<sup>5</sup>

The findings above come primarily from literature on youth development, defined as the ongoing growth process in which youth are engaged in attempting to meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, be spiritually grounded, and build the skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives. Thus, situations facilitate youth development when young people have consistent opportunities to:

- ◆ Feel physically and emotionally safe
- ◆ Build relationships with caring, connected adults
- ◆ Acquire knowledge and information
- ◆ Engage in meaningful and purposeful activities in ways that offer both continuity and variety<sup>6</sup>

Research also shows that contributing to one's community has many positive outcomes. One study found that college students who provided community service for credit

significantly increased their belief that people can make a difference and that people should be involved in community service and advocacy. They became less likely to blame social services clients for their misfortunes and more likely to stress a need for equal opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

Behavior change theory and research on resiliency suggest that, while the types of activities offered by successful youth development programs vary, “the emphasis lies in providing opportunities for active participation and real challenges.”<sup>8</sup> Proponents of youth development programs and of youth-adult partnerships have in common a belief that youth are caring and capable individuals. Rather than seeing youth as problems to be managed, youth development proponents view young people as valued resources with individual assets.

Proponents of youth-adult partnerships see young people as individuals with the capacity to make positive and wide-ranging contributions when they receive support and the opportunity to develop their skills. Few things can more concretely demonstrate a belief in young people’s capabilities than when trusted adults share with youth the power to make decisions.

The literature leaves little doubt that youth involvement benefits those youth who participate meaningfully in programs. By providing young people the opportunity to develop skills, competencies, leadership abilities, self-confidence, and self-esteem, youth involvement programs contribute to building resilience, a protective factor that can help prevent negative health outcomes and risky behaviors.

### **Impact on Adults and Community**

Youth involvement also has an impact on adults involved in the partnerships. A U.S. study examined organizations in which youth had such decision-making roles as advisory board members, staff members, peer educators, and program planners. Interviews and focus group discussions with young people and adults from 31 organizations showed that adults began to view youth as competent individuals who contributed to the organizations rather than simply as recipients of services. The energy of youth also enhanced adults’ commitment to the organizations and ability to work collaboratively.<sup>9</sup>

The study found that adults:

- ◆ Experienced the competence of youth firsthand and begin to perceive young people as legitimate, crucial contributors
- ◆ Found their commitment and energy enhanced by working with youth
- ◆ Felt more effective and more confident in working with and relating to youth
- ◆ Understood the needs and concerns of youth, became more attuned to programming issues, and gained a stronger sense of connection to the community
- ◆ Received fresh ideas from different perspectives

- ◆ Reached a broader spectrum of people
- ◆ Developed more relevant and responsive programming and services
- ◆ Shared knowledge

The study also identified positive outcomes for the organizations:

- ◆ Young people helped clarify and bring focus to the organization's mission.
- ◆ The adults and the organization, as a whole, became more connected and responsive to youth in the community, leading to programming improvements.
- ◆ Organizations placed a greater value on inclusion and representation, and saw programs benefiting when multiple and diverse voices participated in making decisions.
- ◆ Having youth make decisions helped convince foundations and other funding agencies that the organization was truly committed to meaningful youth development and youth involvement.

## **Impact on Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS**

Programs involve youth in various ways in the reproductive health and HIV/AIDS fields. Substantial partnerships at the local programming level include youth involvement in planning and developing programs, peer education projects, youth-led clubs and sports teams, and youth-run newspapers. Involvement with advocacy, policy development, governance, and evaluation is also expanding. Below are brief summaries of the limited research that does exist on the impact of such efforts, most of which covers peer education. Adult partners typically work with these projects, encouraging youth to make decisions and providing assistance where needed.

### **Peer Education**

- ◆ In Peru, a peer program resulted in improved youth knowledge and attitudes, a reduction in the proportion of sexually active males, and increased contraceptive use at most recent intercourse.<sup>10</sup>
- ◆ In Cameroon, a community-based peer program resulted in improved knowledge about contraception in the intervention site, with increased condom use at last sex associated with influence based on peer education.<sup>11</sup>
- ◆ An FHI study of 21 peer programs found that most peer educators reported changes in their own behaviors as a result of their involvement. Thirty-one percent said they were practicing safer sex, including using condoms, and 20 percent said they had reduced the number of partners.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ Some researchers have concluded that peer education interventions tend to influence only the behaviors of small numbers of peer educators, not necessarily the target populations, making these interventions not cost-effective enough to justify implementation on a large scale.<sup>13</sup>

## Other Program Activities

- ◆ In Nigeria and Ghana, through the West African Youth Initiative, youth worked as peer educators and were involved in program planning, design, implementation, and evaluation. Reproductive health knowledge, willingness to buy contraceptives, ability to use contraceptives, and proportion of sexually active youth reporting use of a modern contraceptive increased significantly.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ A media campaign in Zambia (called HEART) included seven youth on its design team and a Youth Advisory Group of 35 young people from 11 youth organizations. Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and pre-testing of materials with young people who were the target audience helped shape the media messages. A year after the campaign, viewers were 46 percent more likely to be practicing primary or secondary abstinence and were 67 percent more likely to have used a condom at last sex, compared to nonviewers.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ In Kenya, the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) in a slum area of Nairobi offers reproductive health education while operating football teams, garbage collection, and other community projects. Youth manage MYSA, emphasizing the skills and ideas of youth as its strongest resource.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ In Uganda and Kenya, a youth-run newspaper called *Straight Talk* shows how a youth-led editorial board can respond to questions from youth with a candor and connection that makes the paper widely popular in school clubs throughout the countries.

## Institutional Involvement

- ◆ The International Planned Parenthood Federation now has a substantial number of youth on its board of directors.
- ◆ A growing number of organizations working globally, such as YouthNet and Advocates for Youth, have made a commitment to having young people on their permanent staff and linking interns in a two-way mentoring program.
- ◆ Groups such as the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children are incorporating youth into evaluations of projects.
- ◆ Involving youth in reproductive health and HIV/AIDS programs increases credibility, visibility, and publicity for the program, according to several studies.<sup>17</sup>
- ◆ Youth can be visible ambassadors for programs and organizations. The Barcelona YouthForce, an alliance of some 150 youth and 50 adults from around the world, worked at the XIV International AIDS Conference in 2002 to make youth a higher international priority in HIV prevention efforts through press conferences, an on-site newsletter, and other advocacy efforts. This was expanded at the XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok in 2004 with an emphasis on involving youth in the scientific component of the meeting.

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## Targeting Diverse Youth

Ideally, youth involved in project activities would be representative of the populations targeted by the project. Thus, a project needs to identify the demographic mix of youth in the community being targeted for services, including age, sex, ethnicity, religion, language groupings, socioeconomic and educational levels, and HIV/AIDS status. The questions below can help a project consider the demographic issues related to youth participation. These questions can also help a project examine how its recruitment process incorporates demographic issues and whether it includes strategies to recruit qualified candidates from diverse groups. Projects also need to monitor the types of applicants who apply for participation and the selection process.

There is no correct answer or one way to target diverse youth. Some might say it is necessary to target all categories of youth, but that is likely unrealistic. As an institution, you need to consider the scope of characteristics and make informed and conscious decisions.

### Age

- ◆ Consider your constituents as an institution. Do your programs serve younger youth (10 to 17 years of age) or older youth (18 to 24 years of age)?
- ◆ Does it make sense to include representatives of your target audience in the work place?
- ◆ Can your institution manage and support both younger and older youth?

Including youth ages 18 to 24 years may be easier since they are more mature. Moreover, institutions can usually integrate them into their pre-existing management structures since they are starting their professional careers and legally require the same support structures as adults.

### Youth Stars

Institutions should be careful not to make their youth into media, public forum, conference, or office “stars.” This can eclipse the real purpose of youth involvement or the mission of the institution and have negative impacts on adult and other youth staff alike. Adult staff may feel frustrated if a “youth star” approach obscures true work. Youth may develop unrealistic expectations for future employment. The best techniques to prevent and minimize youth stars is to take time to identify the skills that adults and youth each bring to the institution, share expectations of one another, plan for the future for individuals and the institution, and build team spirit, regardless of age.

Involving younger youth ages 10 to 17 years requires more serious reflection. If considering younger youth for a project, groups should consult with an authority on the local child labor laws and policies. These youth may be able to volunteer and provide valuable insight and skills, but they may require additional structures and support systems. Parental consent should be sought and parents should be made aware of how to contact their children during work hours.

### **People Living with HIV/AIDS**

Involving people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) in the work place has pros and cons that should be given serious consideration prior to involvement. Participation of PLWHAs can give perspective and sensitize institutions to the realities that PLWHAs face. This may ultimately improve the quality of its services to this group. It may also encourage individuals to contribute to others in their communities, as well as empower PLWHAs to build confidence in their own abilities. In some cases, being open about HIV status can give hope and inspiration to other PLWHAs.

However, PLWHAs should not be pressured to go public with their status, and their privacy must be protected. Great stigma is often attached to being HIV-positive. Families and communities alike may not be prepared to accept or deal with such traumatic news.

The institution should prepare staff and volunteers in advance to ensure readiness to deal with these issues for both HIV-positive and HIV-negative staff. It should consider providing access to qualified psychological counselors and referrals to support groups for PLWHAs.

### **Sex and Gender**

- ◆ Is there a balance of male and female youth participation?
- ◆ Are the roles of youth sensitive to negative gender norms?
- ◆ Are females and males given equal responsibility and positions throughout the institution?
- ◆ Are sexual and gender identity taken into account?

Institutions should strive to have equal numbers of young women and men participating, even if programs target only males or females. Depending on the program, you may need to increase participation of females due to power imbalances, or in some cases, of males.

## Special Needs Groups

- ◆ Does your institution or program include young people with special needs?
- ◆ Does your institution have the capacity to support the participation of young people with special needs?

In addition to the range of demographic issues described in this handout, other special needs of youth should be considered. Involving youth from potentially marginalized groups of youth may be challenging and require extra attention. These groups include pregnant girls, orphans and vulnerable adolescents, mentally and physically challenged youth, street youth, and young people living with HIV/AIDS.

## Marital Status

- ◆ Does your institution serve both married and unmarried youth?
- ◆ Culturally, can both married and unmarried young men and women participate?

Often involvement of married youth is decided by cultural norms and volunteerism. If norms allow involvement, the degree of personal commitment may be the key factor for a young person's willingness to be involved.

## Ethnic, Religious, and Language Groupings

- ◆ Does your institution work with specific ethnic and religious groups?
- ◆ Does your work require facility in one (or more) languages?
- ◆ Is it appropriate to recruit from various ethnic groups?

Striving for appropriate religious and cultural diversity is important, but an organization must also know its limitations. An organization can mobilize interest in communities effectively by selectively involving youth from groups they target.

### Conflicting Groups

If there are colleagues in the institution with long-established conflicts (such as traditionally antagonistic ethnic groups), time and resources should be devoted to periodic team building and diversity training. Such efforts will help to enhance the abilities of staff members to work together effectively.

## Socioeconomic Status

- ◆ What levels of socioeconomic status does your institution target?
- ◆ Can your institution manage youth from the target audience and provide appropriate training and logistics?

As much as possible, an institution should recruit from the socioeconomic groups that it intends to serve. If finding staff with necessary skills is challenging, a group should try to recruit and develop staff skills over time so that it contributes to the development of the human resources of that community.

Income levels will affect how staff and volunteers can participate in activities. The institution may need to provide cash advances for out-of-town work (travel, board, lodging) for youth, in the same way it would for adult staff.

## Educational Levels

- ◆ Are positions available for multiple educational levels?
- ◆ Is it appropriate to include youth with both strong and weak formal-education backgrounds?

Classifying positions by the necessary educational requirements can be helpful. This is a fundamental consideration and one that is easy to review. However, be aware that someone without a formal education may still be able to contribute significantly.

## Job Descriptions Important

Both youth and adults benefit from detailed job descriptions. But youth in particular benefit from a clear understanding of the tasks they are being asked to complete. Detailed job descriptions facilitate performance assessments and a feedback process with supervisors. When youth understand their responsibilities and managers can follow up on specifics, both sides benefit. When recruiting and interviewing, education and maturity should be assessed. Laws may prevent institutions from directly asking the age or social background of a candidate.

## Awareness When Recruiting Youth

After careful consideration of all of the above factors, an institution should set recruitment standards for all demographic categories, with an emphasis on the population it serves. It should develop strategies to recruit qualified candidates from each group, monitor and evaluate how well recruitment standards are met, and study the relationship of recruitment approaches with project outputs.

## Where to Involve Youth in an Institution

<b>WHERE?</b> <b>Potential Places in an Institution</b>	
<b>Structural</b>	<b>Programmatic</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Governance</li><li>◆ Administration</li><li>◆ Human Resources</li><li>◆ Program Coordination</li><li>◆ Financial Development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Planning and Design</li><li>◆ Implementation</li><li>◆ Evaluation</li><li>◆ Research</li></ul>

Youth can participate in most positions in an institution. Youth can intern or be hired as part- or full-time employees. They can be given a stipend or a salary, or they can volunteer.

Involvement can be broken down into two categories: structural and programmatic. Structural positions facilitate the functioning of the entire institution, while programmatic positions support specific program activities and processes.

### Structural Positions

- ◆ **Governance.** Serving on advisory boards or councils, such as the board of directors, youth councils, or other decision-making bodies.
- ◆ **Administration.** Administrative functions such as accounting, writing reports, or processing program paperwork.
- ◆ **Human Resources.** Acting as recruiters, interviewers, or reviewers of applications.
- ◆ **Program Coordination.** Support to management of programs or work plan development.
- ◆ **Financial Development.** Writing proposals, fundraising, networking with collaborating agencies, or seeking new funding opportunities.

### Programmatic Positions

- ◆ **Planning and Design.** Contributing to the development and design of a project including policy, advocacy, behavior change, livelihoods, and other areas. This involvement can take place at various stages of the project planning process, including the initial assessment, needs identification, formative research, or literature reviews.



- ◆ **Implementation.** Training roles such as training peer educators or direct program activity such as developing messages and creating communication materials, writing newsletters, organizing events, or any step related to program implementation.
- ◆ **Evaluation.** Tracking implementation activities, designing questionnaires and instruments, collecting information, analyzing, or reporting.
- ◆ **Research.** Assistance of various types, depending on level of training. Some researchers and program evaluators remain skeptical about whether youth who have no research training can make an important contribution. Even without formal training in research methods, youth can still review study designs for feasibility in the local setting, review questionnaires for language and comprehensibility, observe interviewer training, introduce interviewers into the community, and help to interpret and disseminate results. With formal training, they can do even more, such as providing input into the design of the protocol and study instruments, interviewing, processing data, collecting and analyzing data, and writing.

# Challenges to Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships<sup>1</sup>

## Attitudes as Challenges

Many adults still believe that the opinions of young people do not matter, that youth are not capable of contributing in a valuable way, and that adults have nothing to learn from youth. The issue of adults' attitudes about youth might be viewed as one of cultural diversity, where firsthand experience can be an effective strategy for change. For example, involving young people at high levels of responsibility and decision-making enables adults to see youth as thoughtful and contributing people. When anyone comes to see a formerly undifferentiated group as varying and diverse, that person becomes more open to valuing the individuals within the group and breaking stereotypes.

Power dynamics, usually rooted in cultural norms, may contribute to challenges in young people and adults working together. Formal instruction in school often teaches youth to expect adults to provide answers and to ignore, deride, or veto youth ideas. Adults frequently underestimate the knowledge and creativity of young people and may be accustomed to making decisions without input from youth, even when youth are directly affected by the decisions. Therefore, joint efforts toward solving problems can be difficult, requiring deliberate effort on the part of both adults and youth.

## Spectrum of Attitudes

In a "spectrum of attitudes" theory, adults may have one of three types of attitudes toward youth, which affects how they view young people's ability to make good decisions.<sup>2</sup> These attitudes also determine the extent to which adults will be willing to involve young people as significant partners in decisions about program design, development, implementation, and evaluation.

- ◆ **Youth as Objects.** Adults believe they know what is best for young people, attempt to control situations involving youth, and believe that young people have little to contribute. These adults seldom permit youth more than token involvement. For example, an adult might write a letter to an elected official about an issue pertinent to youth and use a young person's name and signature for impact. Adults may feel the need to protect youth from the consequences of potential mistakes.
- ◆ **Youth as Recipients.** With this approach, adults believe they must assist youth to adapt to adult society. They permit young people to take part in making decisions because they think the experience will be good for them but also assume that youth are not yet self-sufficient and need practice to learn to think like adults. These adults usually delegate to young people responsibilities and tasks that the adults do not want to undertake. The adults usually dictate the terms of youth's involvement and expect young people to adhere to those terms, deliberately retaining all power and control. An example of



this attitude might be adults extending an invitation to one young person to join a board of directors otherwise comprised solely of adults. In such a setting, a young person's voice is seldom raised and little heard – adults do not expect the young person to contribute, and the young person knows it.

- ◆ **Youth as Partners.** Adults respect young people and believe they have significant contributions to make now. These adults encourage youth to become involved and firmly believe that youth involvement is critical to a program's success. They accept youth having an equal voice in many decisions (see box on equal decision-making). They recognize that both youth and adults have abilities, strengths, and experience to contribute. These adults are as comfortable working with youth as with adults and enjoy an environment with both youth and adults. They believe that genuine participation by young people enriches adults just as adults' participation enriches youth and that a mutually respectful relationship recognizes the strengths that each offers. One example might be hiring youth to participate from the beginning of the design of a program.

## Organizational Environment

Adults who endorse the concept of youth-adult partnerships must also be willing to identify and alter the organizational environment where institutional barriers can be especially significant for young people. The elements of effective youth-adult partnerships address many institutional barriers that can make genuine youth-adult partnerships difficult. These include:

- ◆ **Hours for Meetings and Work.** An organization's hours of operation usually coincide with times when young people are at school or work. To engage youth, program planners must find nontraditional times at which to hold important meetings. Often, scheduling conflicts can be difficult to overcome. However, compromise is vital if an organization is to create effective youth-adult partnerships. For adults, this may mean altering schedules to hold meetings in the late afternoon, early evening, or on the weekend. For youth, this may mean gaining permission from school or other commitments to attend a daytime meeting.
- ◆ **Transportation.** Many young people do not have assured access to a vehicle. Program planners should schedule meetings in easily accessible locations. They should also provide youth with travel vouchers or immediate reimbursement for the cost of travel.
- ◆ **Food.** Few young people have the income to purchase meals in business districts or dinners in restaurants. When a meeting occurs at mealtime, the organization should provide food or sufficient funds for young people to pay for the meal.

## Equal Decision-Making?

The goal of equal decision-making may not be realistic or attainable if adults have financial responsibility, youth are short-term interns, or the work requires technical skills that youth do not have. In these cases, it is important for adults to be honest with youth about the situation and identify areas where youth can make meaningful contributions to decision-making processes.

- ◆ **Equipment and Support.** Organizations should provide youth with the same equipment as other employees, such as a computer workstation, mailbox, e-mail account, and business card. Failure to do so carries a powerful message that these youth – whether they are volunteers, interns, or peer educators, full-time or part-time – are not important or, at least, are not as important as adult employees.
- ◆ **Procedures and Policies.** With input from both youth and adults, organizations should develop policies on youth-adult interactions. For example, if a program involves overnight travel, youth and adults should be clear about their roles and responsibilities in traveling together. The policies will need to respect youth’s desire for independence and, at the same time, address the legal liability of the organization, the comfort level and legal responsibilities of adult staff, and parental concerns about security. Organizations may consider establishing policies requiring the consent of parents or guardians for youth participation, for staff driving young people to meetings, or other policies specific to a particular institution’s work.
- ◆ **Training.** In organizations that have always operated from an exclusively adult perspective, staff may need cultural competency training. Whether working directly with youth or not, staff will need to accept young people’s perspectives and ideas and work to change workplace rules to meet the needs of youth. Each organization and each staff member must make a determined effort to let each young person know he or she is valued.

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- 1 This background handout is based on, with permission: *Transitions 14:1* Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, 2001.
  - 2 National 4-H Council. *Creating Youth/Adult Partnerships: The Training Curricula for Youth, Adults, and Youth/Adult Teams*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1997.

## Tips for Adults Working with Youth<sup>1</sup>

1. Be open to and nonjudgmental about young people's insights and suggestions. Let them know that their involvement is important.
2. Take advantage of the expertise that youth offer. Young people know about and should be encouraged to share the needs of their community. Affirm this input.
3. Make sure youth will participate in meaningful ways. Young people should be involved in making decisions from the beginning of the project. Actively ask for their opinions.
4. Be honest about expectations for the project, what you want youth to contribute, and how you hope to benefit from their participation. Do not expect more from a young person than you would from an adult. Keep expectations realistic; hold young people to your expectations. Do not patronize youth by lowering your expectations.
5. Integrate young people into group and coalition efforts. Schedule meetings when youth can attend and in a location accessible to youth. As with adults, keep young people informed about plans and meeting times.
6. Treat young people as individuals. Do not assume one young person represents the views of many youth. Assure the young person that you are interested in his or her individual opinion and do not expect him or her to speak for an entire population.
7. Be prepared ahead of time to offer support. Think about the kinds of support (financial, logistical, training, emotional, etc.) it will take to involve youth in the project and who will be responsible for providing this support.
8. Make the work interactive, fun, and valuable. Like adults, youth are more likely to get involved and remain active in projects that are interesting and fulfilling.
9. Many youth feel intimidated by adults and are not used to participating in discussions with adults. Time and commitment are needed to get the input of these youth. Be aware of this factor and work to overcome it.
10. Do not make assumptions about what individual young people are like.
11. Do not move too fast. Develop trust and rapport with youth before expecting too much. Take the time to explain why actions are being taken. Youth may interpret an adult who is abrupt and hurried as a sign of disinterest in youth's participation.
12. Remember that there are times when youth need to say "No." They have many competing interests among family, school, and community.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted and used with permission from: National 4-H Council. *Creating Youth/Adult Partnerships: The Training Curricula for Youth, Adults, and Youth/Adult Teams*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1997.

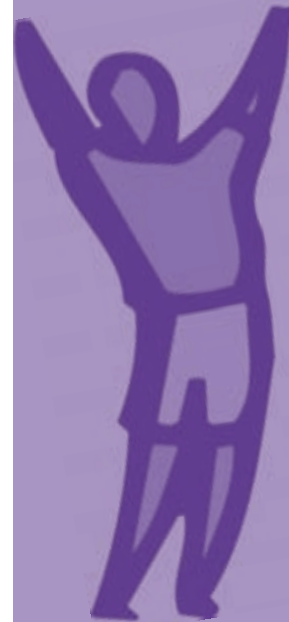


## Tips for Youth Working with Adults<sup>1</sup>

1. Most adults have good intentions. Remember that they are simply not used to working in partnership with young people.
2. Criticism does not necessarily mean condescension or that an adult does not value your contribution. It may mean the adult is treating you the same way he or she would an adult colleague. Remember that adults are used to critiquing each other's work and offering constructive ideas to improve a project. Just because an adult does not agree with someone, it does not mean that he or she disrespects that person.
3. Adults may not be aware of the capabilities of young people. They can be told many times that young people are mature, but showing them is the best way to emphasize it.
4. Adults often feel responsible for the success or failure of the project. This is what makes it hard for them to share power. They may need reassurance that you are willing to share in both the successes and the failures.
5. Adults are often just as uncertain as youth. They have just learned to disguise it better.
6. Sometimes adults use phrases and expressions, whether consciously or not, that suggest they are not treating youth as partners. Be prepared to point out to adults such use of language (e.g., using words like "kids" to describe youth).
7. Do not be afraid to ask for clarification. Adults often use words, phrases, and acronyms that you might not understand. Adults new to the program may not understand them either.
8. Do not be afraid to say "No." Adults will understand that you have other important commitments, like your education, family, friends, hobbies, and sports.
9. Adult professionals often have studied the science of behavior change and use what sounds like technical jargon. At times, this "theoretical" framework may seem unnecessary, but if you ask them to explain it in more practical terms, it often makes a lot of sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted and used with permission from: National 4-H Council. *Creating Youth/Adult Partnerships: The Training Curricula for Youth, Adults, and Youth/Adult Teams*. Chevy Chase, MD: National 4-H Council, 1997.



## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating youth participation can help assess its effects and impact at different levels and how to improve efforts to effectively implement it within the organization. Basic qualitative and quantitative information can be collected to help monitor progress and serve as the basis for evaluation. Generally, monitoring refers to tracking project inputs and outputs, while evaluation involves measuring the effects and impact of a project.

Quantitative data refers to numerical information obtained from surveys, clinic records, or service statistics, which can be counted and expressed statistically. By contrast, qualitative data involve descriptive or text information obtained from focus groups, mapping, case studies, in-depth interviews, or text analysis.

### Sample Quantitative Indicators

Below are some of the types of quantitative data that could be collected to monitor the overall level of institutional youth participation:

- ◆ Number of youth serving on decision-making groups (ratio of youth to adults)
- ◆ Number of paid youth staff (full- and part-time, perhaps by position)
- ◆ Number of youth represented in planning and implementing projects
- ◆ Number of youth interns (receiving stipends)
- ◆ Number of youth volunteers
- ◆ Distribution of youth by department (Human Resources, Administration, etc.)
- ◆ Number of capacity development trainings (subject and ratio of youth to adults)
- ◆ Characteristics of participating youth (age, sex, nationality, urban or rural, etc.)

In addition, institutions can monitor the progress of youth participation through questionnaires to assess changes in attitudes towards youth staff and quality of youth and adult experiences within the organization. Structured questionnaires can provide evidence to help recognize strengths and weaknesses, as well as offer potential solutions for scaling up and improvement.

### Sample Qualitative Indicators

Below are some questions that provide qualitative information in monitoring and evaluation efforts. These questions and others might be used during in-depth interviews with individuals or in focus groups with youth, adults, or youth and adults together. Depending on how youth and adults work together in your organization, you will likely want to tailor these questions to match those activities.

- ◆ How successful has recruitment for diverse youth been? Did you meet your goals? If not, why not? Does your recruitment strategy affect your organization's ability to meet overall goals?



- ◆ How do youth staff and their adult managers feel about their work process? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Do young people feel they have a voice and have been heard? How could the relationship be improved in the future?
- ◆ Is there adequate institutional support for youth staff? Do youth feel they have been included in trainings, meetings, workshops, etc.? Do adults feel that youth are prepared to do the job they have been asked to do?
- ◆ Do youth feel that their job descriptions are clear and realistic? Have achievements, challenges, and progress been monitored?

## Mandating Representation – IPPF

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is the world's largest voluntary organization in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights, working in 180 countries worldwide. The IPPF secretariat facilitates information sharing at the regional and local levels, where it works through family planning associations (FPAs) that are autonomous, each with its own board and procedures. IPPF has been a pioneer in youth participation and in integrating youth into its decision-making processes in partnership with adults, working at many levels of its operations.

In 1992, youth became one of the six priority areas in IPPF's strategic plan. In 1995, as adolescent issues became more and more prominent, IPPF established an International Youth Committee to advise the International Programme Advisory Panel. The panel's adult members proved to be receptive to the Youth Committee's recommendations, taking them seriously. IPPF recommended creating a youth parliament, and in 1998, the Youth Committee developed the IPPF Youth Manifesto, presenting a broad agenda for adolescent sexual and reproductive health to the youth parliament.

The Manifesto said that young people must have information and education on sexuality and services, be able to be active citizens in their society, and be able to have pleasure and confidence in relationships and all aspects of sexuality. The Manifesto has since become one of the guiding principles of IPPF's work, reflecting a positive approach to youth's sexuality and rights. IPPF's decision-making bodies and family planning associations are working to put the Manifesto into practice.

In 1998, IPPF merged its policy and decision-making bodies into a 30-member Governing Council, with five representatives per region, one of whom must be a person under the age of 25. Thus, at least 20 percent of Governing Council members are under the age of 25. Prior to each Council meeting, youth officers from IPPF's central office meet with the Council's members under age 25 to discuss the agenda and review key issues.

In spite of tremendous strides toward incorporating adolescent participation and youth-adult partnerships within IPPF at the highest levels, there still remains much to be done at the regional and local levels. Encouraging more partnerships between adults and youth at these levels takes time. One recommendation has been to require that 20 percent of regional and local representatives be youth.



## Institutionalizing Structural Change – Jamaica

In response to the increasing number of people infected with HIV in Jamaica, the ASHE Caribbean Performing Arts Ensemble was launched in 1992 to provide sexual health information to youth in a lively, realistic, and entertaining manner. “Ashe” is a West African word meaning the inner strength and the good within each person. The first production, *Vibes in a World of Sexuality*, was a humorous, entertaining musical revue, giving positive, accurate information to youth about self-knowledge, respect, empowerment, values, trust, and communication with parents and teachers and about the integral role that these attributes play in sexual decision-making.

ASHE’s staff members are teachers, counselors, performing artists, and youth who work together to develop and perform the scripts, songs, and dances. Performances are geared toward youth, parents, and teachers and address sexuality, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. ASHE also emphasizes the growth, development, and well-being of its young performers, who range in age from eight to 25. Performers, trained as peer educators, meet with young audience members after each show to discuss messages, answer questions, and refer youth requesting information to health services.

In addition to adults and youth working together to develop and conduct performances, ASHE has integrated youth-adult partnerships into its day-to-day decisions and operations. To this end, in 2000 ASHE undertook organizational development with assistance from Family Health International. Newly established youth-adult working groups created and identified:

- ◆ A joint vision for ASHE, clarifying its mission statement and core values
- ◆ Strategic objectives, including an implementation plan
- ◆ Proposed characteristics for board members, clarifying and committing to a participatory management style
- ◆ ASHE’s structure and processes for making decisions
- ◆ A plan for monitoring and evaluation
- ◆ Staff job descriptions and a staff evaluation system

The participatory work of the youth-adult groups was guided by the “appreciative inquiry” methodology, which focused on the positive aspects, rather than the problems, of an organization. This methodology helped ASHE create an environment of trust that promoted communication, mutual respect, and shared power. As a result, youth-adult partnerships are not just a characteristic of ASHE’s program work, but rather a part of its organizational culture.



## Program Collaboration – Peru

Instituto Peruano de Paternidad Responsable (INPPARES) is a Peruvian affiliate of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). INPPARES aims to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people in Lima. It has fostered youth-adult partnerships by:

- ◆ Hiring and promoting adult staff who treat young people respectfully
- ◆ Employing youth and engaging volunteers
- ◆ Supporting youth with the skills and tools they need to function effectively
- ◆ Providing youth with opportunities for promotion and growth within the organization
- ◆ Granting youth the power to make decisions on behalf of the organization
- ◆ Developing a manual for training adults on working with youth (*Manual de Trabajo con Jóvenes*)

One key program, for example, is the Yes! Program, which seeks to increase young people's use of information and health services through drop-in centers – Youth Empowerment Stations (YES) – in four districts of Lima. Youth work in partnership with adults in all aspects of this project, including designing the logo, devising the work plan, producing educational materials, providing counseling and education, and participating in monitoring and evaluation activities. Youth coordinators, educators, and volunteers staff the YES centers. Innovative YES materials, designed by youth with adult support, include a CD-ROM and eight educational board games.

Another INPPARES program in which youth and adults work together is the Futuro Youth Center. This is a youth-friendly clinic, offering clinical and educational services to youth ages 10 to 25. About 200 youth volunteer at the center, working in collaboration with adults to train, develop educational materials, provide television and radio interviews, write articles for the popular press, provide peer counseling, coordinate activities among institutions in Lima, conduct research, organize outreach activities, and evaluate services.



## Youth-Adult Committees in Rural Areas – Burkina Faso

In 1998, Advocates for Youth launched a four-year community participation project in three southern provinces in Burkina Faso, in collaboration with an evaluation partner, the Pacific Institute for Women's Health. The project aimed to improve adolescent reproductive and sexual health by including community members, especially youth, in actively designing and implementing interventions. The project also sought to build capacity among in-country partners, including local nongovernmental youth associations.

Advocates for Youth worked in partnership with Mwangaza Action, a Burkinabé nongovernmental organization, and three youth associations – the Association pour le Développement de la Région de Bittou, the Réseau des Jeunes de la Sissili et du Ziro, and the Association des Jeunes pour le Développement de Pama. The partners worked to mobilize rural communities around youth reproductive and sexual health, using participatory approaches developed by Save the Children and the National Cooperative Business Association. Advocates assisted Mwangaza and the youth associations to include community members and to foster youth-adult partnerships.

Advocates for Youth and Mwangaza incorporated into the community participation process specific exercises on how adults and youth can work together. The exercises encouraged mutual respect and trust between youth and adult staff of the youth associations and helped them improve skills to work together. In turn, the youth association members replicated these exercises when working with the village committees (each consisting of eight youth and two adults). Working both separately (according to age and sex) and together in group work, focus group discussions, consolidated meetings, and village assemblies, the committees helped villagers identify the priority adolescent reproductive and sexual health issues in their communities. Then, youth and adult staff of the youth associations helped the village committees identify appropriate strategies to deal with those issues. Chosen strategies included peer education; information, education, and communication activities; youth-friendly services; and parent-child communication activities. Youth worked in partnership with adults to lead all the chosen strategies.

Reaction to the youth-adult partnerships has been positive among both adults and youth. Adults said that the program has allowed them to relate to and better understand young people's lives. Young people said that, without such partnerships, it would have been much more difficult to work to improve adolescent reproductive and sexual health within their villages. For example, female peer educators would have faced greater resistance, both from their peers and from the adult community.



## Long-Term Youth-Adult Partnerships – Philippines

For the past three decades, the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines (FPOP) has provided family planning and maternal and child health services through its 26 chapters and nine community health care centers in more than 40 provinces across the country. FPOP, a private, voluntary organization, is committed to empowering individuals, families, and communities to take responsibility for their health and quality of life. It currently has three core programs, including the Development and Family Life Education for Youth (DAFLEY) project in three provinces.

Recently, FPOP engaged youth and adults as partners in updating its policies on youth. Adult staff worked with young people already involved in the DAFLEY project. Together, they identified how best to put sound policies in place. One such recommendation was to increase youth's representation on each of FPOP's 26 chapter councils. At present, one youth represents a sector in the National Council. In the newly approved policies, youth representatives at the chapter level will also have the right to vote for representatives to the National Council.

At first, young people were hesitant to speak during working sessions with adults. However, after youth received training to build their participation and communication skills, they effectively outlined their ideas and shared them with adult coworkers. The adults welcomed the partnership as a chance to bridge the generation gap and to understand young people's needs. Logistics constituted the main challenge in working together, mostly due to differences in schedules as well as the problems caused by distances between project sites.

In working together, the youth and adults set new policy directions for FPOP and created new opportunities to foster young people's participation in the initiatives of the organization. For example, FPOP's National Youth Coordinator is now a member of the Technical Committee for the State of the Philippines Population Report, which highlights initiatives and data on adolescent reproductive health in the Philippines.

Bringing together youth and adult staff has strengthened the project. Today, DAFLEY responds more effectively to young people's needs because of the new ideas arising out of youth-adult partnerships. However, this kind of partnership needs constant nurturing. Moreover, youth and adults need ongoing training and activities to build skills and teamwork and to reinforce the benefits and relevance of youth-adult partnerships.



## Incorporating Adults into a Youth Organization – Botswana

In 1999, the Youth Health Organization (YOHO) of Botswana was formed as a youth-led nongovernmental organization (NGO) working to create an AIDS-free generation in Botswana. YOHO uses the power of young people themselves to educate and motivate youth to make responsible decisions about their sexual health. Through “edutainment” activities, YOHO members work throughout the country of Botswana offering realistic approaches to reducing the spread of HIV and unintended pregnancies.

YOHO has four action teams of youth volunteers that use various strategies related to behavior change communication to effect change. The Theatre and Arts Program (TAP) uses theater and music to reach youth in Botswana. YOHO is most famous for its jam sessions, whereby YOHO members set up a stage and sound system in a community and use music and dancing to educate youth about sexual health issues. The Peer Education Program (PEP) works with in-school and out-of-school youth, using life skills-based sexuality education approaches to behavior change. The Media and Advocacy Program (MAP) uses mass media to spread messages, as well as to implement advocacy efforts with policy-makers. Finally, YOHO’s Research and Evaluation Team provides internal evaluation and documentation of YOHO programs, as well as conducts external research projects to guide programmatic development.

Founded by a group of motivated youth, the original board and staff were comprised exclusively of youth under age 25. However, as YOHO began to grow, the executive board recognized the benefits of including “adult allies” for sustainability. During YOHO’s second strategic planning process, it was determined that a coordinator should be hired with a few years experience in NGO management, but still under the age of 30. In addition, as the organization began to receive funding, the executive board began to adapt its policies on board membership and expand itself to include some key adult stakeholders. Members from the private sector, governmental agencies, parents associations, and the faith community were recruited to serve on the board of directors; however, the executive committee of the board still remains all youth. Thus, YOHO successfully made a transition from a youth-led NGO to one grounded in youth-adult partnerships.

Through the partnership, a unique fundraising scheme has been developed. For adult allies, YOHO offers “honorary youth membership” in YOHO (for those people over the age of 30). With a minimal donation, an adult can become an “honorary youth,” complete with a membership card stating the adult is an honorary youth.



## Measuring Youth Participation – West Africa

The West African Youth Initiative (WAYI) was a collaborative adolescent sexual and reproductive health project between the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) in Ibadan, Nigeria, and Advocates for Youth in Washington, DC, USA. WAYI supported 10 community-based youth-serving organizations to implement peer education projects in Nigeria and Ghana. WAYI was developed to improve knowledge of sexual and reproductive health, promote delay of sexual intercourse among youth not yet sexually active, and increase safer sex behaviors (including condom use) among sexually active youth.

The youth-serving organizations trained over 400 adolescent peer educators to reach at least 50,000 in-school and out-of-school youth with information, education, condoms, and counseling on reproductive and sexual health. In addition, the peer educators spread awareness of available reproductive and sexual health services and referred youth for appropriate health care services, such as prescription contraceptives, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, or professional counseling. Youth participated in all aspects of the project, such as the selection of peer educators and program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Evaluation showed significantly positive outcomes regarding peer education and youth participation. Following the intervention, evaluation showed no increase in the amount of sexual activity among youth who were sexually experienced at the beginning of the project. However, sexually experienced youth increased their use of contraception, including condoms. These youth also showed improvements in attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health, such as being open to purchasing condoms and being willing to go to school with a person infected with HIV.

A portion of the evaluation looked at the effects of youth participation on the project and on the youth themselves. Indicators associated with youth participation included: number of youth trained, duties and roles of youth, amount of time youth contributed to the project, youth attendance at meetings, opinions of youth about their involvement, and opinions of community members about the importance of youth involvement.

Qualitative data suggested that WAYI resulted in increasing youth knowledge and self-efficacy related to sexual and reproductive health. It also increased the peer educators' self-efficacy related to future employment. Among other outcomes, evaluation showed that recipients found the interventions quite relevant to their lives.



## Adult Allies as Mentors and Advocates – USA

In order to receive federal HIV prevention funding in the United States, each state health department must convene a group of community members to assist in drafting a state plan for implementing HIV prevention. Community planning groups (CPGs) typically include public health professionals, scientists, AIDS activists, and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The groups set priorities in terms of sub-populations to be reached and interventions to be implemented. They then submit plans to the federal government to obtain funds for HIV prevention programming through the state health department. Each CPG is cochaired by representatives of the health department and the community. If the health department fails to involve the community or receive its endorsement of the plan, the community cochair may contact the federal government to ask that funding be delayed until the full CPG endorses the plan.

A core tenet of the CPG process is Parity, Inclusion, and Representation (PIR). Thus, CPGs work to ensure that each person involved in the planning process is heard, that all participate in making decisions, and that all community groups affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS are represented. Since youth under the age of 25 represent the fastest growing group of HIV infections, youth must participate in developing the plan.

To achieve this mandate, the Pennsylvania State Department of Health developed a program called the Young Adult Roundtable project. Since the state divides its community planning process into eight regions, eight roundtables were formed to bring young leaders together in order to get their input into the process. The youth meet on a bi-monthly basis (six times a year) and determine their priorities for the development of regional plans. One adult “mentor” and a young adult facilitator attend each meeting. Once the priorities are set, a youth – accompanied by the adult mentor – takes these priorities to the regional community planning group and advocates for the inclusion of the priorities in the regional plan. Once the regional plan is drafted, a statewide conference of regional CPG members (including at least two youth per region) is held to formulate the plan that will be submitted to the federal government.

Ground rules, which evolve as needed from group members, engender trust and openness, essential features of the process. One essential ground rule is that meetings are entirely confidential. Thus, roundtable meetings are closed and group participants are told in advance about invited guests, such as local AIDS educators, PLWHA who provide personal perspectives, or others. The meetings typically involve educational components, teaching the youth about behavior change science or epidemiology. Thus, their discussions are informed by public health science.

To date, Pennsylvania’s CPG process has assisted in consistently prioritizing youth issues and programs within the state plan. In each plan, relevant and realistic strategies – such as youth leadership development forums, media campaigns targeting youth, and peer-delivered comprehensive sexuality education – have been priorities for prevention programs and policies in the state.



## Advocacy – International AIDS Conferences

In July 2002, at the XIV International AIDS Conference, held in Barcelona, Spain, a group of youth leaders and adult professionals joined forces to sponsor the Barcelona YouthForce, coordinated by the Student Global AIDS Campaign, Youth Against AIDS, Advocates for Youth, and YouthNet/FHI. Two years later, a similar effort worked at the next International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, called the Bangkok YouthForce. The lessons learned from Barcelona had an impact on the activities in Bangkok.

Well before the conferences, organizers recognized the meetings as opportunities to raise awareness about the strength of youth as leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS. From the beginning, youth and adults members of the YouthForce met regularly and shared equally in making decisions. Both youth and adults focused on fundraising, connecting with youth who were coming to the conference, and developing an advocacy campaign. Recognizing the strengths of both youth and adults enabled the effort's success. Working with a common goal, participants built trust that enabled the YouthForce to carry out successful activities.

At Barcelona, the YouthForce sponsored an opening rally and reception, press conferences, a satellite meeting examining cutting-edge issues, a daily newsletter, networking and skills-building sessions for youth, and an MTV-sponsored Global Forum. Broadcast worldwide, high-profile leaders – including former U.S. President Bill Clinton – were questioned by youth about HIV/AIDS issues affecting youth. “More Youth Voices = Fewer HIV Infections,” a YouthForce visibility campaign that used stickers and T-shirts, raised awareness of the lack of youth participation in HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs.

The Barcelona YouthForce successfully raised the issue of youth and HIV/AIDS and gained greater visibility in the international arena. For example, former President Clinton mentioned the work of the YouthForce in his closing ceremony speech at the conference, and various media also reported on YouthForce activities, including BBC, CSNBC, and Voice of America, among others. In addition, two YouthForce organizers were invited to speak on youth and AIDS at a Summit of African First Ladies following the conference.

The Barcelona YouthForce led to greater youth involvement in planning the Bangkok conference, with more youth sessions, more youth participants on panels, a youth coordinator for the conference, and a Youth Advisory Committee that participated in giving youth scholarships and choosing youth abstracts. The Bangkok YouthForce sponsored a pre-conference workshop on technical issues to help prepare youth for the conference sessions. YouthForce members have also implemented actions in their own countries and communities, including the creation of a youth activist network on AIDS prevention in Botswana and the facilitation of youth inclusion on a state HIV/AIDS committee in Lagos State, Nigeria.



