TEEN VOICES FOR PEACE

A practical guide for bringing new adolescent voices to peace and security
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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide draws on decades of learning with seldom heard adolescents involved in Search for Common Ground (Search) programs.

It captures good practice, challenges and solutions for bringing new adolescent voices to media and policy in conflict affected countries across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. It was developed with the support of the Bezos Family Foundation and is intended for practitioners in NGOs who want to amplify the voices and support the leadership of adolescents. In particular, it focuses on ‘seldom heard’ adolescents; those who face a range of barriers to participation in social and political life.

Why we have produced a guide about seldom heard adolescents

Youth are the majority population in many conflict-affected countries and their meaningful inclusion is critical for sustainable peace and development. However, they face many barriers to meaningful participation in decisions and discussions on critical social and political issues in their societies.

*The Missing Peace*, a global study on youth, peace, and security which drew on the contributions of young people from around the world, highlights the extent of these barriers. It describes young people’s experience of exclusion as a form of “structural and psychological violence”. This is fueled by mistrust and stereotypes of youth as problematic, incompetent, and violent. It is compounded by discrimination due to other characteristics such as gender, disability, sexuality, ethnicity and religion, as well as socio-economic factors including access to education and cultural and conflict specific factors.
Adolescents often face further marginalization because they are perceived and treated as "children." Their voices are not valued by society. They are frequently excluded from programming and are often left behind or left out of decision making and leadership. At the same time adolescents, especially girls, assume adult responsibilities through early parenthood and domestic and caregiving labor.

Despite these barriers, there is ample evidence that young people have the capacities and power for creative problem-solving, bridging divides, and driving social and political change. Search has found that media and advocacy, which are led by marginalized young people, have the power to shift social norms, spark new conversations with their peers and elders on sensitive subjects, and improve their confidence and inclusion in decision making.

Search has found that this work requires a dual-pronged approach:

- Support adolescents to develop their voices and make themselves heard on issues that affect them.
- Bridge intergenerational divides and strengthen mutual understanding to create an environment where these voices can be heard and respected.

Golden Kids News: Empowering children through media in Liberia and Sierra Leone

In 1997, Search for Common Ground established Talking Drum Studio, a radio production house, to support Liberia’s recovery and reconciliation after a devastating civil war. Golden Kids News was one of the studio’s key programs. At a time when youth had little to no media presence, Golden Kids trained children as youth journalists. They produced reports, newscasts, and interviews raising awareness of the issues faced by young people during and after the war. The program covered topics from the reintegration of former child soldiers and children’s rights, to domestic violence, education and more. From Monrovia, the program expanded to involve children in camps for the displaced and decades later, Talking Drum Studio has become a household name.

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Gwendolyn Myers started as an anchor on Golden Kids News aged 13, reporting on young people’s perspectives in post-war Liberia. She went on to establish her own non-profit Messengers for Peace, which works with over a thousand young people across Liberia, and to play an important advocacy for UN Security Council Resolutions recognizing the positive role of youth in peace and security.

Watch this video to hear from Gwendolyn: https://youtu.be/v8peif5kBiM

Michael Sambola joined Golden Kids at 12 years old and grew to become Sierra Leone’s foremost investigative journalist. He says of his time as a golden kid “[When you are] a kid growing up, what you plant is what you’re going to sow. My values, norms, and tradition—those came from Search.”

Watch this video to hear about Michael’s work and experience: https://youtu.be/2xxnVSn57To

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What you will find in this guide

This guide is for practitioners who want to amplify the voices of seldom heard adolescents in conflict-affected contexts. It offers insights and practical suggestions for safe and effective design and implementation of projects alongside practical examples.

It draws on decades of evidence from children and youth-centered interventions, supported by Search across conflict affected contexts, which demonstrates how supporting diverse and marginalized youth to join the debate on important social and political issues has enormous value to society.

The guidance is divided into three sections:

01 Part one sets out preparatory activities and considerations that are key to enabling the participation of seldom heard adolescents.

It guides the reader through decisions and plans that need to be made to tailor an approach to adolescents and to fully address barriers to inclusion and considerations for safety and building resilience.

02 Part two focuses on the time and effort needed to identify and engage seldom heard adolescents.

It is important to have clear and transparent criteria and processes, to develop good relationships with parents, guardians and caregivers, and to keep expectations realistic. Once you have identified a group of young participants you will need to support them to build group cohesion.

03 Part three illustrates and includes practical guidance for amplifying adolescent voices while creating an environment where those voices can be heard.

It starts with guidance on supporting young people to build and use skills and confidence to become young journalists and advocates. It then focuses on the creation of opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and for changing attitudes towards young people so that they might be seen as assets to their communities.
Search for Common Ground’s work with children and youth

Search is the world’s largest dedicated peacebuilding organization. We have a long-term presence in over thirty countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States and a 40 year track record implementing programs in some of the most complex conflict contexts. Our over 1000 staff are deeply rooted in the countries and regions where we work, with 88% working in their native countries.

Young people are at the core of our mission to prevent and end violent conflict before, during, and after a crisis. Since our first programs with children and youth in West Africa in the mid 1990s, Search has led the field in working with young people as partners for peace. We created a dedicated Children & Youth division in 2002 to build on success and learning from our early programming; and to acknowledge the importance of working for peace with young generations. With our global network of over 1200 partners, we have pioneered methods for partnering with young people, including our widely-used methodology on youth radio for peacebuilding. Our extensive on-the-ground programming and global policy and field-building efforts engage young activists and peacebuilders. This includes youth-led groups that are informal and more rarely heard alongside key adult stakeholders across civil society, religion, media and government. As a founding co-chair of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, Search convened UN agencies, NGOs, youth-led civil society and others to create what is now known as the youth, peace and security agenda. Our intergenerational, collaborative approach to influencing policy and practice has seen considerable results in recent years, including the adoption of UN Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018), and 2535 (2020). And in 2020, the introduction of the first bi-partisan legislation in the US House of Representatives on Youth, Peace and Security, H.R. 6174.
Radio programming to amplify teen voices

Sisi Watoto (“We, the kids”): reintegration and demobilization of children in Democratic Republic of Congo

Sisi Watoto, an award-winning radio program produced by young reporters under the age of 18, was established in 2003 in response to the devastating effect on youth of the conflict in DRC. This 15 minute program in Swahili examines children’s rights and challenges in the Congolese context with particular attention on the experiences of children linked to armed groups who are reintegrating into civilian life, as well as other vulnerable children (heads of household, orphans, homeless children).

The program contributed to child demobilization and violence reduction.


Youth Talk: adolescent radio journalists in Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan.

This program, started in 2019 and funded by the Bezos Family Foundation, aims to amplify the voice and agency of adolescents around critical social and political issues related to peacebuilding; to strengthen mutual understanding and collaboration between youth and older adults; and to capture and share learning and tools with donors, policy makers, and practitioners.

In each country, the project trains young people aged 14-18 years old in journalism for peacebuilding and provides them with a platform to facilitate constructive discussions on key issues, providing space and opportunity for youth to be at the helm of radio programming content creation and production.

As part of the development of this guide, Youth Talk staff and adolescent journalists took part in a learning exercise. Their insights informed the guide and examples from their experience during Youth Talk are used to illustrate this guidance throughout.

Ni Nyampinga (“It is a girl who makes good decisions”): adolescent girls’ radio in Rwanda Search and Girl Effect in partnership.

Since 2009, adolescent girls have produced this weekly radio program for girls which addresses issues such as reproductive health, self stigma related to menstruation, challenges of poverty which push girls to unsafe sex, early and unplanned pregnancies, and the generation gap.

Radio is the most popular and accessible source of information in Rwanda, and Ni Nyampinga (formerly Urungano) takes advantage of this to create a space where girls can have a voice, learn positive social behaviors and attitudes, and hone their leadership skills. It has raised awareness of girls’ interests and challenges and ways to overcome them. Youth producers have gone on to develop their careers and one is now a journalist at National Rwanda Television.

Watch this video: https://www.sfcg.org/spotlight-on-ni-nyampinga/

Or visit this page for more information: https://global.girleffect.org/what-we-do/youth-brands/ni-nyampinga/

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**English**

**About the Youth, Peace and Security agenda:**
- Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security: https://www.youth4peace.info/About_GCYP

**UN Security Council resolutions:**
- UNSCR 2250: https://www.youth4peace.info/UNSCR2250/Introduction
- UNSCR 2419: https://www.youth4peace.info/UNSCR2419

**About Search’s work with children and youth:**
- Toolkits: https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits/
- Evaluations: https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-evaluations/
- Reports: https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-reports/

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**French**

**About the Youth, Peace and Security agenda:**

**UN Security Council resolutions:**
- UNSCR 2250: https://www.youth4peace.info/UNSCR2250/Introduction
- UNSCR 2535: (youth4peace.info): N2018294.pdf (un.org)

**About Search’s work with children and youth:**
- Toolkits: Cartographie des jeunes leaders pour la consolidation de la paix.pdf (sfcg.org)
From the design phase, practitioners should consider how each aspect of a program corresponds to the experiences and needs of adolescents living in conflict-affected contexts.

Positive factors in an adolescent’s environment can support positive life trajectories; and skills gained during adolescence help develop identity and self-direction. Adolescence is a time of turmoil and risk as well as an opportunity to learn and grow. It is a period of neurodevelopment which presents opportunities for positive life-shaping and recovery from past adversity. Adolescents tend to have heightened curiosity which invites exploration, discovery, and risk taking as well as increased awareness of their social status and stereotypes about members of groups that are non-dominant or stigmatized in society. They are particularly influenced by their peers.

Adolescents are often perceived and treated as “children.” As a result their voices are valued even less than older youth and they have even fewer opportunities to participate in society.
Considerations for program design

- Tailor approaches to the developmental capacities and opportunities of adolescents. Training curricula, tools, and activities developed for older youth will likely require adaptation.

- Identify barriers to participation that different young people may face and ways to overcome them. In conflict-affected settings, this could include adjustments for different literacy levels. Adolescents may have experienced interruptions in education or may not be proficient in the working language due to displacement.

- Ensure adolescents’ safety and support their resilience. This includes establishing and communicating safeguarding measures and using a trauma-informed approach, particularly in conflict-affected settings.

Since these considerations will have an impact on the timeline, scheduling, and budget, it is worth addressing them early in the design process, and revisiting throughout the program.
Peace Messengers Clubs in Côte d’Ivoire. A partnership between Search and UNICEF.

Peace Messenger Clubs were established in 2013 to run activities for high school students, out of school children, and former student union representatives identified for previous violent or disruptive behavior. The selection of facilitators (or ‘catalysts’) affected how young people engaged with the clubs and their effectiveness. Participants preferred “approachable” facilitators who considered their opinions, made them feel heard, and encouraged their participation. Engagement was stronger when facilitators demonstrated participatory leadership and held a strong belief in the potential of the club.

To find out more about Peace Messenger Clubs: https://www.sfcg.org/peace-club-civ/

These findings are echoed in other Search programs. A study of work with adolescent girls in Lebanon found that a key success factor is “professional and respected facilitators of different nationalities and genders who are genuinely interested in the lives of the adolescents.”


Seven principles for working with adolescents

01 Promote experiential learning

Allow young people to learn and gather their own insights by doing rather than listening to lengthy presentations.

Create opportunities for them to make connections between what they are learning and their daily lives and realities.

Tailor topics to be relevant to them.

02 Honor adolescent voices and inclusive leadership

Acknowledge and amplify the voices and agency of adolescents by:

- respecting adolescents’ opinions (even if you disagree)
- bringing out adolescents’ ideas and creativity
- helping adolescents find common ground with one another, for example using through team-building activities and skill-building on empathy, for example
- making decisions with adolescents jointly whenever possible
- ensuring that participants get the chance to demonstrate inclusive leadership, for example by encouraging a rotation of participants to lead discussions or exercises.
03 Create safe space for peer-to-peer engagement

Adolescents usually seek peer affiliation and intimacy while at the same time their impulse control is still maturing; so tensions can arise.

Facilitators need to:

- create plenty of space for peer-to-peer engagement, both structured and unstructured
- agree boundaries to ensure that everyone is safe and feels respected, for example, by creating a group agreement on expectations for behavior and interaction
- take into consideration power dynamics and tensions that might arise among adolescents due to conflicts and culture in their context
- consider what is culturally acceptable for girls when it comes to sensitive issues
- stay aware of the evolving interpersonal relations of the team members, in order to mitigate conflict, and to facilitate a good team dynamic.

04 Be Authentic

Adolescent participants quickly get a sense if an adult is not authentic or genuine.

Useful ways to demonstrate authenticity are:

- acknowledging your shortcomings and limitations
- being open to feedback and different ideas
- demonstrating care and commitment to the good of the participants and the project.

05 Have fun

Fun is a key ingredient to keeping adolescent participants engaged and motivated.

Include games, movement, drama, dance, and humor.

06 Secure support from parents/guardians/caregivers for adolescents' participation

Pro-active support from parents/guardians/caregivers is a significant enabler for adolescents' participation.

They are more likely to be supportive if they understand the project and the potential benefit to their child and are well informed about its activities.

07 Consider adolescents’ time availability

Adolescents tend to be busy with school, homework, work in and around their homes, leisure activities and other tasks. In many contexts girls have more domestic responsibilities than boys.

When planning activities, always consult the adolescent participants and their caregivers to find out when they are likely to be available in order to arrange training, meetings and activities at times that suit them.

Facilitators who are committed to participation generate greater engagement from young people.
Creating shared spaces and activities builds cohesion.

The Naija Girls Unite! program launched in 2013 to work with girls aged 12-15 from Muslim and Catholic communities.

Teaching peace education, trauma awareness and conflict transformation, it also supported the girls while they implemented initiatives that fostered peace and understanding among Christians and Muslims.

The facilitators placed emphasis on creating and maintaining a safe and open atmosphere for the girls while they enjoyed camping, field trips, role playing, sharing of sleeping spaces and rooms, joint chores, and participation in sport and games. All of these activities helped to break down barriers including long held prejudices between the Christians and Muslims.

To find out more visit: https://www.sfcg.org/naija-girls-ending-violence-in-northern-nigeria/
Planning around young people’s schedules helps maintain engagement

Countering and Preventing Radicalization in Indonesian Pesantren. Search partnered with the Wahid Institute and Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat in 2011 to launch an intra-religious program which sought to counter voices of intolerance and extremism by empowering the “silent majority” of moderate religious voices within communities. Search partnered with ten pesantren—private Islamic boarding schools run by local religious leaders—to set up and run local radio programs. The pesantren students received training in radio and video production and took part in a documentary competition featuring the themes of tolerance, coexistence, and cooperation. Planning around student schedules and holidays helped ensure that the program could be broadcast consistently to maintain audience interest.

To read about the student’s experiences with the program visit: https://www.sfcg.org/salam-from-pesantren-santris-experience-in-managing-media-for-peace/

To read about an evaluation of the project visit: https://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Countering%20%26%20Preventing%20Radicalization%20in%20Indonesian%20Pesantren-%20Final%20Evaluation.pdf

English

The Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation. UNICEF: https://adolescentkit.org/index.htm

Available in English and Arabic. See in particular the following sections:

- 10 key approaches for working with adolescents: https://adolescentkit.org/about/key-approaches.html
- Adolescents in humanitarian situations: https://adolescentkit.org/about/adolescents.html
- Foundational Guidance: https://adolescentkit.org/kit_docs/2.0_Foundational%20Guidance%20with%20Gender%20TN.pdf


See in particular the following section:

- Stages of adolescent development and opportunities for participation: In Appendix 8, p.58


See in particular the following section:

- Principles of participation, p.3
- Really listening to a child/ young person. p. 48,

Peacebuilding focused resources for working with young people:

- Guiding principles for young people’s participation in peacebuilding, Search for Common Ground :https://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/
- Common Ground Approach for Adolescents curriculum, Search for Common Ground: https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits/

French

Peacebuilding focused resources for working with young people:

- Principes directeurs sur la Participation des jeunes à la consolidation de la Paix, Search for Common Ground : https://www.sfcg.org/guidingprinciples/
- Common Ground Approach for Adolescents curriculum, Search for Common Ground :https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits/
1.2 Accessibility and inclusion

Seldom heard adolescents face numerous barriers to opportunities for their development and participation. These barriers will differ by context and person, and depend on background and individual characteristics such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion or disability.

Without a holistic approach to accessibility and inclusion, program design can create its own barriers.

Practitioners can listen to young people and work with them to identify and remove barriers to participation. Adults may need to build trust with young people who are not used to being heard.

The following are common reasons why youth are unable to access opportunities.

Barriers to communication and learning

- not being proficient in the working language which can be the case for young people who are displaced due to a conflict.
- having missed out on education - this is especially the case in conflict affected contexts where violence disrupts education.

Barriers due to economic reasons

- the household cannot support any additional costs such as food, clothing or transport
- participation takes young people away from income generation or family duties

Addressing economic barriers to enable participation

Youth Talk. SOUTH SUDAN. The Youth Talk program addressed some of the material needs of young people and their families to enable their participation. This included the provision of food items, hygiene materials for Covid 19 prevention, menstrual hygiene kits for girls and medical costs. The program also provided financial contributions toward school fees and uniforms and monitored how young people are getting on at school. This supported the family and the young person’s education but also helped avoid clashes between school and their involvement in youth journalism.
Barriers for young people with disabilities

Involving young people with disabilities will affect how you plan and conduct training and facilitation. Adolescents with disabilities tend to be subject to widespread discrimination, stigma and social exclusion with girls additionally facing disadvantages due to discriminatory gender norms and practices (for more information see the GAGE policy note in the resources section below). To support meaningful inclusion of young people with disabilities, tailor program design to both a) the type and severity of participant’s disabilities- whether physical, sensory or intellectual, and b) how the context affects how adolescents live with their disabilities- both in terms of access to services or mobility and attitudes and discrimination. Budgeting and workplanning based on these considerations will allow teams to ensure adequate time and resources are available to support accessibility and inclusion.

Building accessibility and inclusion into program design

**Questions to ask when planning and designing training**

**What language, references and concepts will be familiar to the participants?**

- Use familiar concepts and terms will help learning.
- Adapt training content and generic templates to the literacy levels of participants and their proficiency in the working language.

**How can we communicate the same information through text, speech and visuals?**

**Where can we use experiential learning such as role play and simulations?**

**How can we involve the participants in the facilitation of their own learning?**

- For example by leading and facilitating discussions and reflecting on their own experiences,

**Is there enough time?**

- Schedule plenty of time to allow for discussion and questions and further explanation and reinforcement for all activities, especially with participants using a second language.
- Schedule more time if your group has mixed educational levels and/or different levels of confidence in the working language.

**Do any families need financial or material support so that their child can participate?**

- Young people’s transport and food should always be covered.
- Include a flexible budget line for financial support to participants.
- Offer material support such as food, hygiene kits, medicine, or support with school costs.
What support and adjustments do individual young people need, for example if they have a disability?

- Identify adjustments needed to training material.
- Adapt equipment or buy new equipment.
- Assess the venue for accessibility.
- Identify local expertise to support these adaptations.

What has changed recently?

- Review these questions periodically during the program to identify any changes in the context where you work or in individual adolescent’s lives which might require adjustments in how you work.
- Build flexibility into budgets and longer term planning to ensure that you can manage these adjustments.

**English**

Designing inclusive programming:


See in particular the following section:

- Sensitivity and awareness of the needs of seldom-heard children and young people, p. 44.

Including young people with disabilities:

- Take Us Seriously!. Unicef: https://sites.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Take_Us_Seriously.pdf

Taking religious identity into consideration in program design:


**French**

Including young people with disabilities:


**Other resources in this Guide to support inclusion and accessibility**

- Section 1.3 outlines ways to support girls’ participation
- Section 2.1 shares suggestions for how to create a good learning environment.
- Section 2.2 provides guidance on how to create an inclusive selection process.
1.3 Consider what support girls will need

Girls face particular challenges to their safety. They often have greater limitations on their freedom of movement and more responsibilities than boys. They can have their opportunities limited by early marriage and/or pregnancy. As such they are likely to need flexible and sensitive program design to ensure their participation. Practitioners should consider how to design their program so that it keeps girls safe and also is accessible to girls who face limitations of time and movement.

Additional responsibilities

Adolescent girls often have additional demands on their time compared to boys. They are expected to undertake domestic labor when boys may have free time. This will heavily affect their participation in any program.

- Ensure that activities are designed around girls’ availability.
- Build a strong relationship with parents/guardians/caregivers to convince them to allow girls to take part even if this means not undertaking other responsibilities.
- Always confirm with girls that the agreed time and duration of an activity (including travel time) will work for them.

Safety

Girls are subject to specific risks which are heightened in conflict-affected contexts. It is important to mitigate these risks which include safety in public places, assessing risks for travel, and risks when they encounter men and boys through the program.

- Put in place safeguarding measures specific to girls and women that are tailored to the circumstances and locations where they will participate.
- Help them learn to manage difficult feelings and stress responses that may arise during the program.
- Make sure that girls and boys are aware of what is unacceptable behavior towards women and girls and what rights girls have.

Location

The location of project activities can impact negatively on girls’ participation. For example, in some contexts it would be considered inappropriate for a girl to visit a hotel even if it is just to use a training room; or to leave the home without a male escort.

- Find out early on about cultural norms to do with girls freedom of movement to avoid unintentionally excluding them.
- Make sure that your venue has separate toilets and changing spaces for girls.
Period poverty

If you are working with girls who are living in difficult circumstances it is highly likely that they struggle to maintain menstrual hygiene.

- Provide menstrual hygiene kits to ensure that young women can participate comfortably and with dignity.

- Given the widespread taboos around menstruation, provide kits to all the girls proactively rather than waiting to see if they need them.

Gender segregated sessions

- For some topics, girls might feel more comfortable having separate spaces for discussion with a female facilitator.

- Girl only sessions can also be valuable to help gain confidence and self-awareness before wider participation.

- Set aside times when young female participants can give feedback to or raise any issues with female staff.

Equal opportunity in all activities

- Encourage girls to speak their minds knowing that in patriarchal societies they will hesitate before raising their hands.

- Pay attention to girls' participation making sure that they are given as much opportunity as boys to speak, be heard, use equipment and take different production roles.

Increasing girls’ confidence and access to football

Ana La’abeh (“I am a [sports] player”). JORDAN. In 2016, in northern Jordan, Search engaged girls aged 12-14 from eight schools in a six month long football (soccer) project. Football camps took place in conservative communities and many of the girls who took part were initially shy and had never played football before. There were some challenges in convincing families to allow their daughters to participate in the program and locating qualified female coaches when male coaches would not have been appropriate. However, evaluation of the project found that the girls had increased confidence and leadership skills, forged lasting friendships with peers from differing backgrounds, and were able to challenge negative gender stereotypes.

This video shares the impact of the program: https://www.sfcg.org/ana-laabah-escaping-loneliness-football/
Support from family makes a difference for young mothers’ participation

Youth Talk. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC. The experiences of two young mothers in the Central African Republic illustrate the impact of an early pregnancy on their opportunities and the difference that family support can make.

One girl from Bangui had to drop out of the project and out of school. Her guardian would not take on the responsibility or expense of raising a baby. She joined the father of the child outside of the city.

The other girl, from Bambari, was able to attend project activities because her mother would take care of the baby. Her mother was a teacher and not always available so while she stayed engaged she could not always take part.

Female staff as role models and mentors

Youth Talk. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, MALI, SOUTH SUDAN. Women hold both senior program roles and technical roles for radio production in the Youth Talk teams. The team coordinators for South Sudan and the Central African Republic are younger women. They are respected by the boys and at the same time they can act as “aunties” to the girls, spending time with them away from the boys and giving advice privately.

Community dialogues to highlight the rights of girls and women

Youth Talk. SOUTH SUDAN. Youth Talk used intergenerational community dialogues and radio programming to highlight girls’ rights and generate discussion about those rights. Young journalists supported by Search staff organized a forum with parents, guardians, caregivers, community leaders and teenage girls. The meeting created awareness on the importance of promoting equal opportunities to education for all children, discussed the roles of parents and guardians in promoting girls’ education, and encouraged the Youth Talk participants to act as role models for their peers.
Plan advocacy opportunities

It can be difficult to address some of the barriers faced by girls within the scope of a program, in particular those relating to domestic responsibilities, marriage and pregnancy. Another approach alongside supporting girls to participate in program activities, is to support young men and women to raise and discuss these issues publicly.

Help address the barriers for girls by supporting girls and boys to advocate for their equality.

• What barriers do adolescent girls face that require institutional or societal change?

• What do participants feel are key areas affecting adolescent girls’ participation in their communities?
**FURSA and Better Together projects.**

LEBANON.
A study of two projects with adolescent girls demonstrates the impact that Search’s approach can have on the confidence, agency, and decision-making power of young women. The FURSA project (2017-2018) involved 600 Lebanese and Syrian 14-27 year olds. The Better Together project (2014-2016), involved 320 Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese 15-25 year olds.

Both projects aimed to build social cohesion among refugee and host populations and focused on activities around skill-building, conflict prevention and psychosocial support including summer camps, workshops, and community events.

The project encouraged girls to explore their own interests, identities and friendships, which in turn increased their self-confidence and resilience.

- The benefits identified by Syrian adolescent girls included improved psychosocial wellbeing, which is affected by the restrictions on their mobility in their household, school and wider community.

- Syrian and Lebanese adolescent girls appreciated being able to discuss their experiences – often traumatic – in a safe and conducive environment. They also welcomed being consulted in the decision-making process and reported that as a result, they felt confident in making their own decisions.

The programs also supported adolescent boys to develop positive attitudes to girls. Boys who took part respected girls’ rights to explore their own interests and identities and to build resilience within the safe space of the project. They had an opportunity to test out ‘different’ behaviors that were not always accepted by other (more conservative) community members, and were encouraged to use their voice in the community to support girls and help defend their rights.

Greater access to positive female role models promoted more gender-equal relationships. Boys became more sensitive to the needs, abilities and aspirations of their female peers, after as well as during the project. Exposure to role models promoted more gender-equal relationships with boys and helped girls dream of a better future, in which they could find paid work and have other opportunities. As a result, girls reported increased confidence, agency and decision-making power.

For more information see:
1.4 Put safeguarding mechanisms in place

Engaging adolescents, and particularly adolescents who have never participated in civil society activities, naturally brings risks which can be exacerbated in a conflict-affected context. These risks can come from project staff, operations, and programming, as well as the contexts where you are working. Activities that raise the public profile or exposure of adolescents such as youth-led research, media, or advocacy, bring additional risks with greater visibility and engagement with society and with people in positions of power. Program design should include measures to keep adolescents safe while they are being introduced to new experiences and opportunities, and developing and getting used to a raised public profile. Ideally, adolescents should also participate in identifying risks and resources for their safe participation in the program and specific activities, as adolescents and adult facilitators and project staff may perceive different risks and resources, and as a way of building adolescents’ awareness and preparation for risks they may face.

It is critical to establish a safeguarding policy and reporting process. It should be tailored to your country and context before beginning implementation. If your organization already has a policy, ensure staff are familiar with the policy and reporting process, for example through refresher training.

See useful resources at the end of this section if your organization does not already have a safeguarding policy.
Practical tips for integrating safeguarding:

- Make sure that organizational policies and practices are possible to implement and identify support or alternative approaches where they are not.
- Share your safeguarding plan with parents and young people.
- Support young people to build their own safeguarding awareness and resilience.
- Support young people to identify and to mitigate risks where they live.
- Make sure young people know who to talk to if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Identify a safeguarding focal point who would be perceived as trustworthy by the young people.
- Prepare adults to deal sensitively with disclosures of safeguarding concerns. Young people may turn to any adult they trust.

Integrate safeguarding into how you work, for example:

- Establish a group agreement on expectations for behavior and interaction between participants and with project staff, such as a code of conduct.
- Hold debriefs after activities so that adolescents and staff can raise any observations or concerns about safety and wellbeing.
- Have a place to share feedback anonymously.
- Monitor safe participation and safeguarding measures to assess their effectiveness. For example, include indicators and lines or inquiry such as the percentage of participants who reported feeling safe; and/or know how to report safety concerns.

Gender-sensitive safety and security is key to participation

Naija Girls Unite!, JOS, NIGERIA

The Naija Girls Unite! program in 2013 brought together Muslim and Christian girls aged 12-15. A staff member describes some of the measures taken to enable the girls’ safe participation:

“One of the main challenges faced was safety and security concerns for girls during camp/field trips. To address this, we did a lot of consultations on security concerns with security agencies/government, schools and parents. We made sure each girl or school had a chaperon throughout the field activities. Made sure locations were secure and safe for the girls. We also held regular meetings with parents and teachers to share the progress and impact of the project on their children. The children were allowed to host some of these meetings”.

For another video on the long-term impact of the Naija Girls Unite! program, visit: https://youtu.be/PbCBuKlM7qI
Building resilience

It is important to safeguard young people’s emotional and mental wellbeing as well as their physical wellbeing. Adolescents living in conflict-affected contexts may have experienced trauma and/or may be exposed to others’ trauma through your program. You will need to support them to build emotional resilience and stay well.

**Good practices when preparing to support the mental wellbeing and resilience of young people:**

- provide psychosocial support and trauma response training for facilitators
- build training in emotional resilience and dealing with stress responses into young people’s training opportunities
- organize for counseling to be available for young people as needed and identify referral pathways for emotional support
- ensure there are budget lines that will cover access to such counseling or other relevant services

**Awareness sessions and protocols prepare adolescents for stress or vicarious trauma**

**Youth Talk program in Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan**

The *Youth Talk* program includes a trauma-informed session to prepare adolescents for hearing difficult, traumatic, or violent stories from the people they interview. The participants are introduced to a set of protocols for what to do if they encounter someone asking for help or facing potential harm. This preparation helps to mitigate against undue stress or vicarious trauma for adolescents as well as to support them to recognize stress and/or deep feelings of sadness or fear, and to respond and cope with these feelings.

They are also introduced to Do No Harm concepts as a cornerstone of any peace-building work. This includes doing no harm to our participants and communities as well as doing no harm to ourselves by becoming over-stressed or upset by the research we do and stories we encounter.

The activities in the module helped them recognize their own feelings of stress, and identify how to prepare, cope and respond to this stress. They also practice how to respond in the face of other people’s stress or requests for help in a role play exercise followed by a debrief.
English

To learn about safeguarding and how to develop and implement a policy

- What is safeguarding? Animation to explain safeguarding in Amharic, Arabic, French, Hausa, Igbo, Oromo, Somali, Swahili, Tigrigna, Yoruba, Nigerian Pidgin and Juba Arabic. https://safeguardingsupporthub.org-multimedia/what-safeguarding-animation
- Protection Resource Library by young people for young people. UNOY. https://unoy.org/downloads/protection-resource-library/

Safeguarding persons with disabilities and/or mental health conditions


Preventing and responding to sexual abuse


Resilience and mental wellbeing:

- Supporting the participation of children and young people experiencing extra vulnerabilities A toolkit for professionals working in mental health settings. Young Minds.

Other resources in this guide to support safeguarding

- In Section 2.5 you will find guidance developing a code of conduct
Finding and involving seldom heard adolescents involves research and outreach and listening to young people, their parents/guardians/caregivers and people including leaders in their communities. Practitioners should consider designing selection criteria and processes that are intentionally inclusive. Participants will need support to become a cohesive group once they have been selected.
2.1 **Choosing where to work**

Consider working in places where you have already worked with children and youth and will have some insight into who is and who isn’t able to participate and why.

Before starting to identify participants, find out about the lives, opportunities and constraints on youth where you will work and identify the barriers to participation for different groups of young people, which are often differently affected by conflict.

- What are the reasons for working with seldom heard adolescents in this location rather than some other place?
- What do we know already about the lives of adolescents and their experience of exclusion in this location?
- What else do we need to know?

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**Rationale for deciding project locations**

Youth Talk.
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, MALI AND SOUTH SUDAN.

The *Youth Talk* project was set up in Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan because these countries:

- are experiencing conflict and have significant potential for youth engagement
- have youthful populations but social structures dominated by older men
- have recently signed peace agreements that are fraught with challenges and where young people were largely excluded from negotiation
- use radio is a main source of information
- Search had already successfully worked with young people in each country.
2.2 Finding and selecting seldom heard young people

It takes time and effort to find young people who aren’t usually included and face multiple barriers to participating in society. It involves building partnerships and relationships outside of the usual institutions.

Take the time to go beyond the ‘usual suspects’. If you only visit youth organizations, for example, then you risk only encountering young people who are already engaged and benefit from opportunities. It’s important to talk to other organizations and to community leaders and to listen to young people and go and find them where they spend time.

Different approaches to using local expertise and knowledge to identify seldom heard adolescents

**JashStan project. KYRGYZSTAN.**
The *JashStan* project builds resilience to violent extremism by showing young people that collaborative tactics can drive real, enduring change in society. In Kyrgyzstan, one-third of the population is between 14 and 28 years old, but young people often feel left out. They face social barriers that make them susceptible to identity-based conflicts and recruitment by violent extremist groups. From 2017-2020, the program worked in 15 areas focusing on three groups of young people who were typically marginalized or disempowered: youth under the age of 18 with a criminal record, children of labor migrants who were left behind by parents, and young relatives of people recently returned from combat zones or imprisoned for violent extremism.

There was a two part approach to selecting participants. Firstly a focus on vulnerable locations where violent extremism and recruitment by extremist groups was most prevalent. Secondly working with local government, schools, psychologists and community members (through focus groups) to identify the most vulnerable youth.

*For stories and information on the program, visit:*

**Youth Talk Project. CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.**
After identifying locations where adolescents were excluded from opportunity, the team collected information from youth associations in those locations. However they also visited communities to ensure that they were reaching young people who are not already engaged in youth programs. They visited IDP sites in Bambari and spoke with the heads of blocks who had lists of all the young people accommodated in the camps. In Bangui they spoke to the heads of neighborhoods who held the information about young IDPs who had been welcomed into families.

“I am so grateful that JashStan helped me to understand that I have rights for education and that I have a choice. Before JashStan I never cared about my studies. I was planning to learn just sewing skills. But now, I have come to realize that I’m capable of more. I am a role model now for girls in my village.”

– Female Youth, Alle Anarov
Selection criteria can address barriers to participation while also honoring project parameters

Youth Talk. MALI, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, SOUTH SUDAN.

Youth Talk used a set of selection criteria to frame the whole program:

- the most deprived and excluded adolescents
- youth who are typically left out of development and social initiatives
- heterogeneous groups which reflect the diversity of communities.
- at least 40% of participants should be girls
- age 14-18

Adolescents should:

- have an interest in radio
- demonstrate leadership potential among peers
- be attracted by the opportunity to share their perspectives and gain new skills and connections.

Each country adapted these criteria to fit the recognized forms of exclusion in that context.

Selection criteria for Bamako, Mali

Criteria to set basic parameters
- Age 14 and 17
- Live in the areas where the project is operating

Criteria that acknowledge barriers to participation and challenges for young people
- In or out of school
- Pupil at a Quranic school or a madras, or not
- Child living on the street, or not

Criteria that speak to interest and ambition for media
- Interested in journalism as a career
- Interested in radio and media
- Basic knowledge about journalism

Developing inclusive selection criteria

Do the criteria and the process make it clear that this opportunity is open to a wider range of young people?

- Do these criteria identify the groups of young people who are usually excluded?
- Will those young people recognize themselves in the criteria?

Design an inclusive selection process

- An application form favors applicants who have had access to education. You could provide application clinics to help fill in the form.
- An interview favors articulate and confident young people with more experience of engaging in society and young people using their first language. Look for a range of experience and perspectives amongst the interviewees as well as or rather than how well a young person expresses their ideas.
Validate the criteria and process

- Consult with your contacts in the communities where these young people live or hold a public meeting.

Publicize the opportunity widely

To reach a range of young people use a wide range of communication channels, methods and intermediaries.

- Share the opportunity with all the authorities, organizations, schools and leaders etc. that you met when researching the selection criteria.
- Make sure that allies understand the transformative potential of the program and its openness to young people, including girls, who have experienced exclusion and barriers to participation.
- Visit and talk to young people and their parents and communities.
- Go to the homes, communities and hang outs of young people.
- Visit places where young people spend time.
- Work with young people to identify other young people who would like to be involved.
- Use a range of communication media.
- Organize public meetings to share information about the project.

**USEFUL RESOURCES**

**English**


**Youth led approaches for identifying participants**


**French**

- [https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/101416789/006121+FRA+T-Kit+8+Social+Inclusion+WEB+BD.pdf/72f76049-0c18-a527-faca-37a9cadcd9669](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/101416789/006121+FRA+T-Kit+8+Social+Inclusion+WEB+BD.pdf/72f76049-0c18-a527-faca-37a9cadcd9669)
Always involve parents/guardians/caregivers at every stage of a program. Adolescents are still children and are usually part of a household. A young person’s participation in a program with a time commitment has an impact on that household.

Talk to parents/guardians/caregivers as soon as you have a list of candidates so that they have an understanding of the program before they give consent for the young person to take part.

Strong relationships with parents/guardians/caregivers are crucial to the success of a program. This is created through good initial communication and listening as well as good ongoing communication. Listen to their concerns and communicate with both parents/all caregivers even if only one will be your main contact.

Young people often play roles in the household as caregivers, domestic workers, or are working to bring in income. Girls are often expected to undertake more domestic labor than boys. They may also be attending school. The time they would invest in your program could take them away from these other responsibilities and place additional material or practical burdens on the household. This can be difficult when resources are stretched.

Ensure that expectations are realistic:

- Be clear at the start and throughout about what young people and their parents/guardians/caregivers can expect from the program.
- This means being clear about what is NOT part of the program as well as what is.

Parents/guardians/caregivers need to know:

- the value of this opportunity for the young person
- the level of commitment
- the kinds of activities and training involved
- where the activities will take place and when
- whether transportation will be provided.
Including parents/guardians/caregivers can shift attitudes about young people

As these examples show, including parents in activities gives them the opportunity to see their children and other adolescents in a different light.

Umoja Peace Clubs, TANZANIA.
From 2010 to 2015, Umoja Peace Clubs trained adolescents on conflict resolution techniques and supported them to conduct data collection and research into why young people drop out and turn to “mine intrusion” (informal and/or illegal mining of Artisanal Small Mines). The adolescents presented their findings to community leaders in order to initiate dialogue.

Initially parents and community leaders resisted the peace club activities because they did not value young people’s voices and did not view mine intrusion or absenteeism from school as a problem. Due to economic constraints, parents often pushed children out of school and into the mines to contribute to household income. Additionally, parents often encouraged young men’s mine intrusion activities as a way of asserting their masculinity.

The peace clubs included parents as key stakeholders in collecting data and sharing findings from the youth-led research. This ultimately shifted parents’ opinions on the peace club, as well as on mine intrusion and conflict, and the role of young people in peacebuilding.

To find out more about the Umoja Peace Clubs, visit: https://www.sfcg.org/umoja-clubs-tanzania/

Ways to keep parents/guardians/caregivers engaged and supportive of their child’s participation:

- hold an orientation meeting prior to asking for consent for children’s participation
- visit at home to talk about the participation of their children in project activities and keep them updated by phone.
- organize opportunities for them to see what the young people are doing.

In some contexts parents/guardians/caregivers will be reluctant to allow girls to participate and should be made aware of how young women will be kept safe.

- safe and safeguarding policies and practices in general and for each activity
- that this is NOT an income generation opportunity - young people are not being paid and will not get a job as a result of their participation
- what expenses, such as food and travel, will be covered by the program and what will not.
Youth Talk, SOUTH SUDAN
In South Sudan, the Youth Talk team kept one girl involved by building a good relationship with her father and making sure he had opportunities to hear his daughter in action.

Huda was one of the first presenters for Lugara Shabab, a youth-led radio magazine program. Her father was very reluctant to let her get involved in Youth Talk and was concerned that the program would mislead his daughter as a result and she faced challenges to participating regularly. However his attitude changed once he had heard a few programs presented by his daughter.

He now listens regularly, encourages his daughter to take part, and has joined a listener group to give feedback on the programs. As well as listening to the program, Huda’s father was reassured by his contact with the Youth Talk team.

Watch this video featuring Huda for more details:

English

  - English: https://rescue.box.com/s/srklsxbto4xfjvnjo39kmmtsrv1q98q
- Girl Shine Caregiver Curriculum. IRC (available in English, French and Arabic) https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/girl-shine/

French

- IRC’s Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit includes a “Curriculum for Caregivers of Adolescents” at http://shls.rescue.org/shls-toolkit/parenting-skills/#curriculum-for-caregivers-of-adolescents
  - English: https://rescue.box.com/s/srklsxbto4xfjvnjo39kmmtsrv1q98q
  - French: https://rescue.box.com/s/05lbgjlb1d3kg0s5sobt6sbl248j7ak
- Girl Shine Caregiver Curriculum. IRC (available in English, French and Arabic) https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/girl-shine/

Other resources in this guide to support engaging with parents/guardians/caregivers

- In section 1.2 there are examples of how to tackle economic barriers to participation
- In section 1.3 you will find guidance on supporting girls’ participation
Building and maintaining cohesion

2.4

There is likely to be some mistrust, tension, prejudice, and/or competitiveness in a group which includes young people with a range of backgrounds and experiences who would not usually mix together, especially in conflict-affected contexts. Building cohesion within these groups of young people who are unfamiliar and possibly mistrustful of the program, Search, and each other is a key first step in working to amplify adolescent voices. It offers an opportunity to strengthen the collective impact of these diverse voices and enables them to navigate and make their voices heard amidst the sensitivities of a society affected by conflict.

Here are some ways to build and maintain group cohesion.

- **Build foundational skills:** Search starts with training to build communication, collaboration and conflict management skills using a version of the Common Ground Approach that has been adapted for adolescents. It also builds participants’ sense of leadership and ownership of the program. Young people have the opportunity to practise collaboration, empathy, active listening, honoring dignity and conflict analysis.

- **Equal opportunities and mutual respect:** Tensions can arise when young people perceive a bias or feel that they are not being recognized or given the same opportunities as someone else. These tensions could arise between youth from different groups divided by conflict, or could also arise because of different educational levels. Equality of opportunity is important to maintain cohesion.

- **A sense of common purpose:** Cohesion will also build over time as the group trains and then works on projects together. Common purpose and pride in results can build cohesion.
• **Consider limiting group size or splitting participants into sub-groups:** It is hard to build cohesion in bigger groups. Stick to about 10 to 16 participants.

• **Peer to Peer mediation:** Young people can also play constructive roles in resolving tension between peers, especially when given tools to help and support from facilitators and project staff.

• **Establish an environment where young people feel safe to make mistakes:** Stress to participants that it is okay to make mistakes and that we learn from mistakes. Adult facilitators and project staff can set the tone and serve as role models by admitting when they make a mistake and what they might learn from it.

• **Creating a group contract /code of conduct:** Young people and adults can establish a group contract which serves as a code of conduct. This process serves to highlight, agree and maintain constructive behavior in the group. Both adults and young people sign up to the code of conduct.

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**A sense of joint purpose can build lasting relationships**

*Better Together: A youth-led approach to peaceful coexistence. LEBANON.*

*Better Together* was a peer to peer project intended to build social cohesion between Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese 15-25 year olds through conflict resolution training and artistic workshops in drawing, theater, music, and film. The training and joint activities from 2014-2016 helped resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner and to counter prejudice.

**Adolescent boys**

- reported greater empathy for others.
- made lasting relationships with peers.
- developed strong and supportive relationships with peers from all different nationalities and ages, and
- gained stronger emotional intelligence and communications skills.

*To read more about the program, visit:* [https://www.sfcg.org/better-together-a-youth-led-approach-to-peaceful-coexistence/](https://www.sfcg.org/better-together-a-youth-led-approach-to-peaceful-coexistence/)
Sample session for creating a group contract

Facilitate a discussion with the young participants to come up with positive rules about how everyone should behave during the project, including the participants and the project staff.

- Frame it as a group contract for how everyone will commit to behave and treat one another.
- Explain that everyone needs to agree on how to behave so that everyone has a good experience and can work together effectively.
- You could invite participants to co-facilitate and to write up the rules and responsibilities that emerge from the discussion.

The adult facilitator should then lead a discussion on “What we should do if we break the rules or responsibilities”.

- Possible ideas for consequences are: three warnings, apologize to the individual and group, compensate for damage done, being asked to leave the workshop temporarily or permanently.
- If participants suggest physical punishment or humiliation, challenge it and negotiate a different set of consequences by asking questions like, “How would you feel if that happened to you? Do we want something like that to happen in our project? I don’t want that.

Be careful not to assume that because a point is written on a flipchart that others agree to abide by it; seek buy-in, and only conclude with what everyone genuinely agrees to.

For example, someone may say ‘turn off cell phones,’ but then some else refuses to agree. A quick discussion may reveal that someone needs to be reachable by a sick family member, in which case everyone agrees to a ground rule of ‘cell phones on silent; calls taken outside.’

It is important that everyone accepts the agreement and has had a chance to respond to the proposed rules. At the end of the session you could have each participant come up to the board and sign the agreement, including the facilitators. Adults are role models and need to ensure that their own behavior is in line with the code of conduct and that they listen to young people’s feedback.

A sample code of conduct may include the following:

**I will respect myself by:**
- Arriving on time and staying for the whole activity
- Trying to pay attention and participating in activities
- Knowing I have the right not to speak or not to do something if I don’t feel comfortable
- Talking to my peers (if I feel comfortable) or a facilitator (if I need more support) if there is something I don’t like about my time at the activities, and try to think of ways to make it better
- Alerting a responsible adult about inappropriate touching, behavior or conduct by anyone - this includes members, staff, volunteers or anyone else
- Acting with honor by not stealing, cheating or lying
- Not using or distributing tobacco, drugs, alcohol or weapons in or near the meeting place

**I will respect others by:**
- Speaking one at a time and listening actively when someone else is speaking
- Using body language and words to show kindness and respect, especially when someone
Tips for practicing equality of opportunity:

Be transparent about reasons for choosing young people for opportunities.

Use participatory approaches to allocate roles in activities, especially for highly-coveted roles such as public speaking opportunities or chances to meet with celebrities or power-holders.

Young people’s participation should draw on their diverse life experience and perspectives rather than who is most confident or articulate.

Encourage the least confident to speak up, then stimulate respectful and constructive feedback to their contributions.

Peer to peer mediation

Youth Talk, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

There was tension between girls from different ethnic groups at the start of the Youth Talk program which was resolved through the intervention of other young people. A group of Fulani girls had difficulty being in the same room as some other girls during a week-long training and in the end did not take part in the final two days. Some Fulani boys decided at the end of the training to talk to the girls. They successfully convinced them of the benefits of the project and that the training could have a positive impact on them and other adolescent girls. The girls returned to the program and completed the rest of the training.

USEFUL RESOURCES

English

Creating group rules/codes of conduct

- Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation: Agreeing to group rules. UNICEF. https://adolescentkit.org/kit_docs/4.1.2.5.0_Circle_Building_ACTIVITY-All.pdf
- Creative rules that promote healthy interactions video. No Limit Generation. https://nolimitgen.org/lessons/creative-rules-that-promote-healthy-interactions/ (note that this resource requires free online registration)

Building group cohesion

- Facing Differences, Challenge resources, Students Rebuild; https://www.studentsrebuild.org/challenges/facing-difference/resources

French

  - Available in English: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-8-social-inclusion
  - Available in French: https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/101416789/006121+FRA+T-Kit+8+Social+Inclusion+WEB+BD.pdf/72f76049-0c18-a527-faca-37a9adcd9669
Search’s long history with children and youth has shown that adolescents have much to offer in terms of creative problem-solving, bridging divides, and driving social and political change.

Media and advocacy led by marginalized young people has the power to shift social norms, spark new conversations with their peers and elders on sensitive subjects, and improve their confidence and inclusion in decision making.

Search has found that this work requires a dual-pronged approach:

1. **Support adolescents to develop their voices and make themselves heard on issues that affect them.** This involves creating a supportive learning environment that keeps young people active and engaged and creating platforms through which they can raise their voices.

2. **Create an environment where these voices can be heard and respected.** This means working to bridge intergenerational divides and strengthen mutual understanding as well as creating opportunities for young people to facilitate, contribute to and convene dialogue with community members, peers, leaders and decision makers.
3.1 Principles for working with adolescents

The guidance laid out in the previous parts of this guide will help create a supportive learning environment.

A good learning environment is one where adolescents:

- are happy to ask questions and make mistakes
- feel safe
- are given the time to they need to learn irrespective of educational experience or language proficiency
- have opportunities to speak and are listened to irrespective of how confident or articulate they are
- feel that they are respected and equally included irrespective of their background or characteristics.

Build confidence as well as skills

Ni Nyampinga (“It is a girl who makes good decisions.”) RWANDA SEARCH AND GIRL EFFECT IN PARTNERSHIP. 
Ni Nyampinga is Rwanda’s first magazine and radio show for girls by girls which started in 2009 (originally called Urungano). Girls aged 17 -22 were recruited and trained to produce, design, and host the weekly radio program. The girls were shy at the beginning as they were embracing a new field of work which included tasks like interviewing well known figures from public life. As a solution, the team organized regular training sessions and coaching exercises to build their confidence.

Watch this video to hear more about the young women who produced Ni Nyampinga
https://www.sfcg.org/spotlight-on-ni-nyampinga/

For more information on the Ni Nyampinga program now, visit: 
https://global.girleffect.org/what-we-do/youth-brands/ni-nyampinga/
Adolescent learning preferences

Youth Talk, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, MALI, SOUTH SUDAN

Participants in Youth Talk were asked what they thought helped their learning. They included:

- using explanation, demonstration of tasks/instructions to boost understanding of activities
- using collaborative learning techniques, for example having peer facilitators
- having opportunities to practise skills
- providing handouts
- adapting materials to young people
- using examples because "everyone benefits from different people's experiences"
- spending enough time on an activity so that young people are at ease and stay engaged and motivated
- paying attention to the educational level of different young people during facilitation, for example, putting emphasis on the practical and using simple language
- emphasizing key concepts to help capture and comprehension
- paying attention to participant feedback and ensuring facilitators act on it in order to improve
- having fun - as one participant noted, "don't be too serious as it makes young people ill at ease"

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English

- Implementing a Safe Healing and Learning Space in Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit
  http://shls.rescue.org/shls-toolkit/shls-approach/
- See in particular the following section: Creating a safe and friendly environment for seldom-heard children and young people, p.37.
- Adolescent Kit includes age-appropriate energizers. UNICEF. https://adolescentkit.org/activity-box.html#nav-energizer
As discussed throughout this guide, adolescents have many responsibilities, commitments and interests beyond the program. There can be many reasons why they might disengage or leave. This may be due to wider circumstances.

**Common reasons include:**

- having to move away
- needing to focus on school or income generation
- early marriage and parenthood especially for girls
- parents/guardians/caregivers might develop concerns about their child’s involvement
- young participants might become frustrated or lose interest.
Ways to keep young people engaged and motivated

Plan

- Good planning and scheduling and good communication of plans, schedules, and role allocation helps reduce tensions and misunderstandings.

Keep momentum and connection

- Have a number of different activities happening which provide regular opportunities to participate in different ways.
- Use social media tools to keep in touch when unable to meet while bearing in mind that some young people may be excluded if they do not have a phone.
- Avoid long lulls in activity, and if these happen, stay in touch with participants.
- Visit the homes, communities and hang outs of young people rather than always bringing young people out of their communities.
- Find ways to involve young people who are short listed but not selected, such as in listener feedback groups for radio programs.

Find out and respond to what motivates each young person which might include:

- certificates of achievement to recognize progress
- being on the radio because it builds a connection to and respect from community and peers
- having access to decision makers
- being committed to becoming a good journalist and critical listener.

Maintain good relationships with the family

- Visit young people at home and talk to parents and caregivers.
- Offer financial and material support.

English

- Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation: Activity box. UNICEF. https://adolescentkit.org/activity-box.html
  - See in particular the following sections: Capacity-building with groups of seldom-heard children and young people, p. 66.
  - Review and Evaluation of how participation is going and taking action to change practice, p. 127.

Other resources in this Guide to support keeping adolescents engaged

- See section 2.3 for guidance on keeping good relationships with parents/guardians/caregivers
- See section 2.4 for guidance on building and maintaining cohesion
3.3 Supporting and amplifying adolescent voices

Key to Search’s approach to working with young people is ensuring they have support for self-transformation as well as spaces for sharing their voices and ideas, and to influence decisions and policies that affect them. Search uses a combination of the following activities.

- **Ensuring young participants have the tools and skills to understand key issues and conflict in their lives and to bridge divides with other young people.** This includes training on conflict transformation skills such as active listening, empathy, and conflict analysis, as well as activities such as youth-led research.

- **Helping adolescents understand their rights to protection and participation.** This includes rights guaranteed to them by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, other international frameworks such as UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace, and Security, as well as regional and national frameworks.

- **Creating platforms and spaces for young people to be heard and take part in local and national dialogues on issues that affect them.** Media is one way of doing so, as it appeals to young people’s creativity and innovation.

Many of Search’s programs with children and youth have centered around radio programming because it supports the development of skills and confidence and also provides a platform for young people. After foundational training on the Common Ground Approach, young participants are trained in radio journalism and journalism in conflict-affected contexts. They can develop their skills in research, listening, interviewing, facilitating discussions, editorial practice and the technical elements required. They are trained and mentored by radio professionals. They produce youth-led radio programs which go out on local and national radio stations creating a large audience amongst their peers, communities and leaders and decision makers.

### Adolescent radio program engages youth and adult audiences

**Youth Talk, SOUTH SUDAN.**

A group of young journalists devised a radio program called “Lugara Shabab” (“Youth Drums”). The half hour pre-recorded magazine program consisted of short interviews, music, straight talk, news’ spots, vox pops, sports news and information, jingles, and public service announcements. They chose this format because there is a variety of inputs; it is easy to deliver without too much equipment; it is easy to combine with a school schedule; it is colorful and retains the audience; it can bring out a story if packaged well; it can show a particular dimension of a conflict; it can be very informative when a topic is well covered; and it can also embed live audience engagement.

They have gained youth and adult audiences and also the attention of leaders and decision makers who accept invitations to appear on the programs which has covered many social and political issues of importance to young people including:

- youth exclusion to education
- effects of social media on young people
- youth engagement in preventing the spread of COVID19
- youth involvement in elections
- youth contribution to peace dialogues
- intergenerational conflicts
- effects of alcoholism in the lives of youths
- early and child marriage
- domestic violence
- conflict affecting youth in IDP Camp
Practical tips from young journalists on radio production

Getting feedback

- Listeners’ groups help young people understand how well they are communicating with their audience.
- Having staff listen to the programs and give constructive feedback.

Technical support and training

- Refresher and continued coaching and mentoring, for example about how to collect stories through interviews on location.

Full involvement in decisions about content

- Hold workshops for participants to identify themes for programs.
- Hold editorial meetings before each program.

Preparation and rehearsal

- Meet and talk to interviewees prior to the interview itself.
- Rehearse presentations before recording.
- Decide on program themes and inform young people a few days in advance so that they have time to think and come up with ideas.

Resources on digital and social media for peacebuilding


Note: These guidebooks include sample programs, guidebooks on responsible media coverage of elections, covering trauma, and rumor management and audio guides on covering conflict and gender-based violence.

USEFUL RESOURCES
3.4 Bridging intergenerational divides and strengthening mutual understanding

Building the skills and agency of seldom heard young people without addressing the attitudes and relationships which led to their exclusion can create harm and does not enable transformative change. Bridging intergenerational divides creates an environment where young people are more likely to be heard.

Seldom heard young people, if given support, training and opportunities, can be advocates and can convene dialogues with their peers and adults. Each young journalist brings knowledge of their communities, languages, attitudes and culture. As a diverse group they bring different voices and show that young people can engage in dialogue with adults and decision makers.

Search uses a range of ways to foster intergenerational interaction and dialogue which enable adults to learn to value young people. Through this dialogue and interaction, adult perceptions of young people and their role in their communities and society often shift to be more positive.

Examples include:
- youth led audience research
- listener groups and consultations for radio programs
- intergenerational community dialogues and townhalls
- participatory theater and arts- and sports-based programs that engage the community
- supporting and acknowledging young people’s own initiatives and informal engagement in their communities and society

A ‘home visit’ approach to community dialogue

Youth Talk, MALI.
To foster community ownership of the project and build bridges between adults and adolescents, a ‘home visit’ approach was initiated in Mali. Young people met in each other’s homes on a rotating basis to hold community consultations with community members to discuss themes of interest to young people.

These visits built the confidence and profile of the young people. Parents and other adults gained an understanding of what the young journalists were doing. They heard young people’s perspectives and observed them speaking and facilitating discussion with and for others. The adults joined the conversations bringing different elements to the discussion. Furthermore, these visits helped Search staff get a better understanding of the lives of the young people and the communities they live in. The young journalists valued these workshops and wanted to hold more. They suggested other locations to enable participation and were keen to inform people in advance to increase participation. Search staff observed that through the consultative workshops a stronger relationship between adults and young people developed.

“It is not that usual for young people younger than 17 to meet with adults and share ideas. The workshops have challenged this and more and more the young people talk about how they are listened to more in their families and better regarded in their communities.” (Youth Talk facilitator)
How young participants can shift attitudes about adolescents

Informally

- Adolescents share what they learn with their family, friends, at home and at school.
- They mobilize their peers.
- They use their new skills to reduce tensions in their own households.

In their community

- Adolescents are supported to convene and facilitate community events.
- This demonstrates the capacity of young people to contribute positively to those communities.
- This provides an opportunity to raise and discuss issues of concern to them with adults.

With decision makers

- Young people invite and involve leaders and decision makers in their events or radio programs.
- Having access to decision makers creates opportunities for advocacy and influencing and leads to young people being invited to meetings to consult on policy making.
- Changing the perceptions of public figures contributes to transforming norms and addressing negative perceptions of young people and their potential contribution to social and political debate.

Through media

- Adolescent journalists are supported to produce their own radio programs which are aired on popular radio stations and listened to by other young people and adults.
- Issues of concern to young people and their opinions are heard by a large audience.
- Adolescents have a platform for inviting public figures to engage with young people.

Out of school “troublemakers” build relationships with police through peace clubs

Peace Messengers Clubs (PMC), CÔTE D’IVOIRE

After noticing a connection between out of school children and classroom disruptions in the first phase of the “Peace Messengers Clubs,” the second phase of the program prioritized engaging and involving those out of school children as “peacekeepers.” Many of these out of school children also had criminal records. By using mediation techniques learned through the club training, many of these out of school “peacekeepers” transformed their relationships with local police forces, working hand-in-hand to serve as intermediaries between violent groups in the communities and the police officers and resolving school conflicts rather than calling in police. One police officer stated, “when a conflict occurs in a school and it is within their control, the peacekeepers contact us [police] to reassure us that we should not get involved.”

To learn more about the impact of the Peace Messengers Clubs, watch: https://ecdpeace.org/video/learning-peace-cote-divoire-peace-messenger-clubs

or read the evaluation which used participatory video and most significant change methods with the young people: https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/Pace_Clubs_in_Schools_in_Co%CC%82te_d%E2%80%99Ivoire.pdf
Engaging marginalized youth in local decision making

Jashstan, KYRGYZSTAN

In an evaluation of the Jashstan project young participants described increased engagement in local decision making processes and an increased sense that their grievances were being heard at the local level.

Local governments in the districts of Jeti-Ögüz and Kashgar-Kyshtak set aside funding for future youth activities. "I used to think that the government was deliberately ignoring us young people," said Fakhridin Kamilov, a participant in the first stage of JashStan and currently a youth mentor in Kashkar Kyshtak. “Now I know that the reality is that the politicians simply don’t understand our needs. It’s only when we young people find our voices that we will change society and overcome the frustrations that lead to violence.”

Learn more at:

Tools and exercises for adolescents as participants, representatives, and facilitators, and for working with adults in:

- We are Here: A Child Participation Toolbox, EuroChild and Learning for Wellbeing. https://www.eurochild.org/fileadmin/public/05_Library/Thematic_priorities/05_Child_Participation/Eurochild/We_Are_Here_Toolbox.pdf

Case study series ‘Youth Leadership of 2250,’ United Network of Young Peacebuilders.
3.5 Opportunities beyond the program

As young people develop confidence and skills they will discover new opportunities. Adults need to be ready to support them to progress and continue; to support them to stay safe and to thrive as active contributors and peacebuilders in their communities.

Some young people use their skills in conflict resolution in their families and communities; others become advocates or pursue opportunities in the media.

Practical ways to support young people’s continued involvement in peacebuilding

- Provide training in how to set up a youth association.
- Help make connections with other local organizations and opportunities.
- Commit to providing seed grants to help them develop their plans.
- At the end of the program, hold a discussion about their personal projects for change.
- Include former participants as mentors in the next cycle of the program.

Lifelong impact of adolescent empowerment

Sisi Watoto ‘We the Children!’
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Broadcast nationally in the DRC, the award winning Sisi Watoto radio program trained young journalists to conduct interviews, produce radio programs, and raise awareness about a range of relevant issues around children’s rights. Launched in October 2003, the program aimed to sensitize youth on issues of armed conflicts; to support reintegration efforts; and to increase youth participation in rebuilding communities. Sisi Watoto attracted a large audience due to their entertainment value and ability to reflect the language and outlook of ordinary people in eastern DRC.

The program had a lifelong impact on many of its participants. One former child reporter, Pascaline has gone on to found a non profit organization that supports young people to build skills that they weren’t able to learn because of the war; and to be the first Vice President of the National Youth Council in the Ministry of Youth. She credits her experiences with Search and this radio program for the path she has taken.

“When young people have agency at that age in media, it affects the rest of their lives...For the first time, I felt that I was part of the solution. I finally didn’t feel like a victim anymore.”

Read more about Pascaline’s experience:
Youth journalists start their own radio programs

Youth Talk. MALI.
Young people living with albinism and/or visual impairment are often excluded and highly stigmatized in Mali. This had been the case for Harouna and Bintou who joined the Youth Talk program in Bamako and initially were quite shy and lacking in confidence having experienced a good deal of stigma and exclusion in school and community life. The inclusive and youth led nature of Youth Talk has made a big difference to their lives even though there were challenges to joining a program which did not have all the adaptations needed for visual impairment.

“Children with albinism are often left out. I think seeing me behind the microphone will give them confidence. It will open their eyes to the fact that they have the right to the same opportunities and the same life as others.”

- Bintou

“Youth Talk has made a big difference to my life even though there were challenges to joining a program which did not have all the adaptations needed for visual impairment.”

- Harouna

“As part of Youth Talk they have covered wide ranging topics including forced marriage, drugs, school violence, conflicts and albinism. “The shows make me question things. Then, when I go home, I continue to write about what we talked about, discussing it with my friends.”

(Bintou)

As a result of their success on the Youth Talk radio programs, a Malian advocacy association for people living with albinism asked them to host their own program. “The Voice of the Voiceless,” a weekly program on Saturdays which deals specifically with disability.

“From the very first show, I felt my fear disappear. I felt free to say what I think, to believe in myself and my ideas.” (Bintou)

English

Training material

- The Article 15 Resource Kit. A toolkit for adolescents to organize and manage themselves as a group: The Article 15 Project. (Available in several languages), https://crc15.org/kit/
- See in particular the following section: Structures for groups of seldom-heard children and young people in organisations, p. 23.

To connect with other young peacebuilders and for a range of resources and support

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