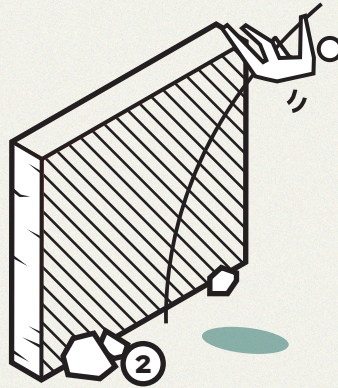


Meaningful Youth Participation

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS



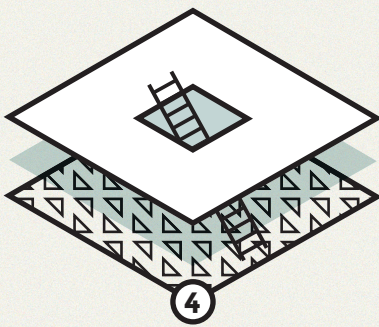
Analyze the current state of MYP in the organization and program



Build the capacity of adult partner organisations



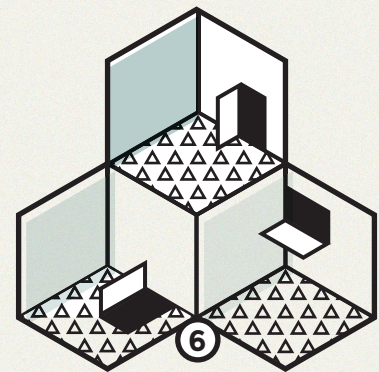
Select young people to be involved



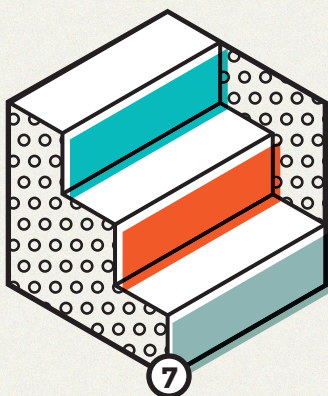
Plan for ongoing support and capacity building



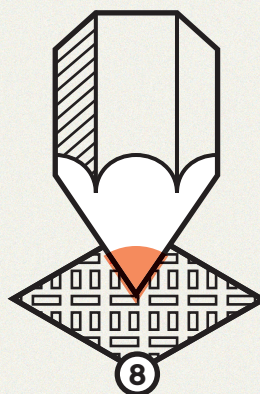
Provide mentorship and training



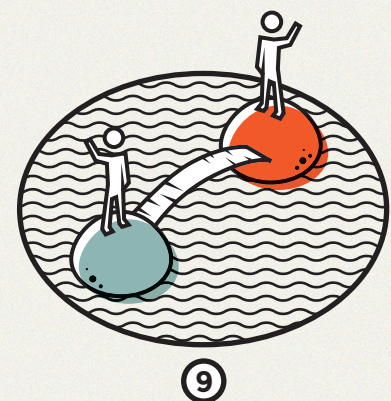
Ensure an enabling environment



Consider the opportunities you can offer



Prevent a 'check-the-box' approach



Identify and involve existing groups of young people

SOME SUGGESTED TOOLS

④ CHOICE Flower of participation

④ IPPF Setting standards for youth participation

④ Youth Coalition Meaningful Youth Participation factsheet

④ Youth Guide: Youth-led organizations and SRHR

④ RUTGERS WPF & IPPF: Explore Toolkit

Youth?

Young people aged 10 to 24 years old, with a specific focus on underserved groups including YPLHIV, LGBTQI youth, young mothers, disabled youth, hard-to-reach youth in remote areas, and young people age 10-16.

KEEP IN MIND: **Youth are a (highly) diverse group.**

Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) ?

MYP means that young people are empowered to take an active role in decision-making at various levels in an organisation and within different stages of a program. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to MYP; it must fit the organization, the program objectives and the needs of young people.

Each context and each youth group requires different strategies.

Simply having young people present does not result in 'meaningful' participation. Young people must have a certain level of empowerment, responsibility, and decision-making power to participate meaningfully.

CONTINUOUSLY ASK YOURSELF: **How are young people involved in this stage/element of the ASK program?**

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- 1 **Analyze the current state of MYP** in the organization and program. How is MYP being realized at present, and in what way could it be used to benefit your organization, the ASK program and young people?
- 2 **Build the capacity of adult partner organizations** to overcome internalized and structural barriers to ensuring MYP. Search for innovative ways to overcome hierarchies and discrimination based on age and to promote the recognition of young people's experience and inputs.
- 3 **Select young people to be involved**, or preferably have young people direct the selection process themselves. Ensure that the youth involved are representatives of the target group and that you involve young people who want to have their voices heard: it is no use forcing them to participate! Mixing it up works well: older members with new members, younger age groups with older age groups, recruiting people from rural and urban areas, et cetera.
- 4 **Plan for ongoing support and capacity building** for new and returning volunteers to reduce the potential loss from turnover. Programs and organizations frequently find that young volunteers "age out" or grow into other commitments, increasing the turnover rate for young people. As an example, organizations can invest in a coaching system and Training of Trainers-manuals to overcome this.
- 5 **Provide mentorship and training** Build the capacity of youth involved through supporting them to engage in constructive dialogue with other program partners.
- 6 **Ensure an enabling environment** An enabling environment involves practical issues such as planning meetings around young people's exam schedules, avoiding unnecessary hierarchies or jargon or using a means of communication that is suited to the young people involved. Consider implementing supportive two-way supervision systems where young people and adults can support and offer feedback to each other through the project lifetime.

WHY?

- ▶ Young people's right
- ▶ Empower youth
- ▶ Better targeted and more effective services and projects
- ▶ Building the overall capacity of the organization

WHAT DO WE NEED?

MYP is based around youth-adult partnership, requiring a supportive environment:

- ▶ Democracy
- ▶ Non-discrimination
- ▶ Equality
- ▶ Understanding
- ▶ Respect

HOW?

There are several areas in which young people can be involved:

- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Program strategy, management, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation
- ▶ Context analysis
- ▶ Needs assessment and baseline
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Results/target definition
- ▶ Advocacy

- 7 **Consider the opportunities you can offer** for young people's professional growth and development when thinking about incentives for youth participation. Ensure young people are prioritized for external advocacy and growth opportunities as well as supported to build their capacity as part of the project or program.
- 8 **Prevent a 'check-the-box' or tokenistic approach** It is more worthwhile to have a small amount of young people involved in a strategic part of your organization or program than to have one or two young people that are not really meaningfully involved in all parts of it. It is also important to ensure that young people are supported to make decisions and implement them, and given leadership roles in governance and programming in order to avoid tokenism.
- 9 **Identify and involve existing groups of young people** It is often more useful to identify and involve existing groups of young people (e.g. a youth club or a youth-led organization) in a program or organization than to start from scratch. In addition to recognizing existing youth expertise, existing groups will already have a working structure and are used to working together, setting up a new group takes a lot of time and is not always a success.