enhance

Empowering Girls and Young Women Across Europe and the MENA Region

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NON-FORMAL EDUCATION TECHNIQUES FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Empowerment does not happen by chance—it happens when young people are given space, trust, and the right tools to grow. Across different communities, girls and young women continue to face barriers that limit their participation, confidence, and opportunities. Non-formal education has proven to be a powerful response to these challenges, offering creative, inclusive, and learner-centered approaches that place young people at the heart of the learning process.

This toolkit – **"Non-formal Education Techniques for Girls and Young Women Empowerment"** is designed to support youth workers, trainers, organizations, and institutions working with young people—particularly girls and young women—in delivering meaningful trainings and workshops through non-formal education. It aims to strengthen the capacity of those working in the youth field to create safe spaces, inspire critical thinking, and foster personal and social development.

The socio-economic conditions, access to education, and cultural norms within many communities significantly influence the ability of girls and young women to actively participate in society. These factors often reinforce gender stereotypes and inequalities, limiting opportunities for self-expression, leadership, and future employability. Addressing these challenges is essential not only for achieving gender equality, but also for enabling girls and young women to reach their full potential as active and empowered members of their communities.

This toolkit has been developed within the framework of the *ENHANCE* project – ***"Enhance girls and young women inclusion with the full support of the community."*** ENHANCE is a 24-month project co-financed by the European Commission under Erasmus+ Capacity Building in the Field of Youth. The project brings together seven organizations from EU countries (Cyprus, Italy, North Macedonia) and non-EU countries (Jordan, Morocco, Egypt), united by a shared mission to tackle gender inequality and discrimination. Through capacity-building activities, ENHANCE supports NGOs and youth work practitioners in identifying barriers, challenging stereotypes, and promoting inclusive practices within their local contexts.

One of the key aims of the ENHANCE project is to increase the ability of youth workers and organizations to use non-formal education and youth work methodologies to provide girls and young women with safe spaces and high-quality learning experiences. These experiences are designed to strengthen essential life skills such as critical thinking, communication, self-confidence, cooperation, and leadership—skills that are crucial for both personal development and future employability.

The toolkit is divided into two main parts, making it easy to navigate while keeping all relevant information collected in one place.

The first part focuses on the foundations of non-formal education and youth work, including non-formal education methods and tools, digital youth work, theatre in youth work, trainers' and facilitators' tips, practical know-how, and the recognition of non-formal education.

The second part addresses broader yet interconnected themes such as empowerment, inclusion, skills development, inclusive practices, mental health and well-being, and intergenerational dialogue—all explored through a non-formal education perspective.

Special attention is given to understanding empowerment and inclusion and to building skills for empowerment. This toolkit dives deeper into regional realities, with a particular focus on the MENA region. It includes situation analyses, case studies, and practical insights that highlight the importance of non-formal education in these contexts. The content combines research findings with hands-on tips, offering inspiration and guidance on how similar activities can be adapted and implemented in different communities.

Designed to be youth-friendly, practical, and easy to follow, this toolkit supports users step by step—from understanding key concepts to applying concrete methods in real-life settings. It is not only a resource, but an invitation to reflect, adapt, and take action.

Ultimately, this toolkit is a reminder that empowering girls and young women is a shared responsibility. By using non-formal education as a transformative tool, youth workers and communities can contribute to more inclusive, equal, and resilient societies—where every girl and young woman has the confidence, skills, and support to shape her own future.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (NFE)



"Building a peaceful society requires the re-engineering of the mind. This task can be carried out only through education – more through informal education than formal education"
– Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

We need to get out of our heads the idea that education is limited to something we do with a book, paper and pencil. Although learning is sometimes equated with educational institutions and evaluated in terms of aims described by curricula, actually learning cannot and should not be understood in only a narrow sense.

Learning can be defined in two different senses. One is an institutional sense of learning, i.e. learning that is organized and structured and is intentional from a learner's perspective. The other is a human sense of learning, something inseparable from human existence, simply because learning is a human capability. This human learning in the wider sense can be divided into formal (or institutional) learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. Informal learning is everyday learning, which is often unintentional, and happens in workplaces or during leisure time. Non-formal learning takes place in activities which are designed but not necessarily for the purposes of learning. The young people learn social skills when doing sports, they learn foreign languages when communicating on the internet and they may develop their identity when taking part in youth activities.

Education goes beyond what takes places within the four walls of the classroom. A child or a young person gets the education from his experiences outside the school as well as from those within on the basis of these factors. There are three main types of education, namely, ***Formal, Informal and Non-formal***.

In 1973 **Philip H. Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed**[1] established definitions of formal, informal and non-formal education:

- **Formal education** has a hierarchical structure, organised in chronological order within the education system. It starts in primary school and ends in university. Moreover, it includes programmes or courses dedicated to technical and professional education;
- **Informal education** is the vital process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge. These are gained through daily experiences and from influences or resources in your surroundings, whether it's from your family and friends or from the media;
- **Non-formal education** is all organised education activities that are outside the formally established system. It can work separately or within a larger activity, according to the participants or learning goals.

[1] Coombs, P. H., Prosser, R. C., & Ahmed, M. (1973*). New paths to learning for rural children and youth.* International Council for Educational Development.

Non-formal learning belongs to non-formal education. Non-formal education (NFE) refers to planned, structured programmes and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, that happen outside the formal educational curriculum, including in youth organisations. Non-formal education is complementary to formal and informal learning. *(adapted from Compass[2])*

Non-formal education usually happens in places such as organisations and youth organisations, youth centres, sports clubs, drama and community groups where young people meet, plan and undertake projects together, they do different educational activities, play games, discuss, entertain themselves or make music and drama. Non-formal education is evident also in the formal educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities.

Key Characteristics of Non-Formal Education

In the past, education and learning were seen as something primarily related to schools and universities, something that children and young people needed to do in order to become adults with a profession and basic social competences. Over the last 50 years, society has broadened this idea of learning, recognising that humans are capable of learning at any age — not only when they are young, but throughout their entire lives — and in many different places beyond school. In the 1970s, this idea of lifelong and life-wide learning became central to the concept of education in Europe and beyond.

With it came the need to rethink the way we look at education as such. So, the distinction between Formal, Informal, and Non-formal Learning was born. Formal Learning refers to the learning experiences taking place in a structured education system, mostly in schools. Education systems generally involve compulsory classes and tend to lead students towards a profession or at least some type of certification. Students follow a pre-defined curriculum designed for their age group and knowledge level that stretches from primary school to vocational college or university.

Informal Learning refers to learning experiences that happen mostly in non-structured ways, through everyday life experiences: at home with friends and family, online — surfing the internet — or during holidays, for instance. Finally, Non-formal Learning refers to planned educational activities that happen outside of the school curriculum. These can include community training programs, youth exchanges, or summer camps, for instance. Often, non-formal learning does not involve classes nor grade-giving, but it is a planned process with clear learning objectives.

Non-formal education isn't a replacement to formal education, which is key and fundamental to the growth of the person, however, it can complement it by covering needs or certain aspects that the regulated institution lack.

UNESCO[3], for example, emphasizes the flexibility of non-formal education and how it allows for more personalized learning to be developed for each person.

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[2] Council of Europe. *COMPASS: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People.*

[3] Jacques Delors et al., *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, UNESCO, 1996).

How is it flexible? Non-formal education is open to any age, origin and personal interest. Moreover, it's a relatively voluntary type of education, with diverse teaching methods and its end goal isn't a degree, but rather pure learning.

This idea is key for **Jimmy Wales**, for example. The founder of Wikipedia is one of this biggest defender of non-formal and informal education. He insists on continuous learning throughout life in a voluntary and experiential way to create better citizens. More information about his views is available in YouTube videos, with the links listed in the footnote[4].

Via non-formal and informal education, which have a great advantage thanks to modern technology, we can understand the world around us much better. Above all, everything we discover will stay embedded in our brains, because we've had our own drive to learn.

That said, the benefits of non-formal education can be summarized as follows:

- Helps grow and mature, on a personal level, as well as within society. In many cases, teamwork or coexisting, can play an important role;
- By developing the skills of each individual, you boost their self-esteem;
- The capacity to learn and discover on your own develops a healthy critical attitude of your surroundings, social norms and power mechanisms;
- Boosts job placement opportunities and encourages self-employment.

Non-formal education may take different shapes and forms. There are some common characteristics, however:

- NFE is a planned learning process with educational objectives;
- NFE activities are based on the needs of learners. NFE activities are open to the input of learners to the learning process and encourage making links to real life;
- NFE is based on the voluntary participation of learners (in other words, NFE is not a compulsory activity);
- NFE is inclusive and accessible, in other words every young person can take part and organisers actively seek ways to include persons that may experience exclusion or marginalization;
- NFE methodologies are varied, participatory and learner-centered, they include a mix of individual and group learning and encourage people to learn from each other;
- NFE it is all about learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship;
- NFE is holistic, which means engaging learners' emotions, minds, and bodies;
- NFE activities may be run by professional educators/trainers and/or volunteers.

[4] Aprendemos Juntos. (2018). *Jimmy Wales, creador de Wikipedia: "Aprender cómo aprender es más importante que nunca"* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYAYeR92T5g
Aprendemos Juntos. (2018). *V.O. Informal Learning, Jimmy Wales* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnKeDwrKVTU

NFE is based on *active participation* (doing, experiencing). A central part of the learning process is *self-reflection*. Exercises in NFE are of an *experiential* nature (for example, simulations and role-plays) and input will always be *interactive* (a product of the facilitator and participants; they contribute with their experiences and knowledge). (*adapted from Manual for facilitators*[5])

Formal, non-formal and informal education are complementary and mutually reinforcing elements of a lifelong learning process. Non-formal education achievements are usually difficult to certify, even if their social recognition is increasing. As non-formal learning can take place in very different settings, it can be very adaptive and hard to define. Still, here are some of the principles that are generally considered when designing non-formal learning activities.

1. Voluntary participation

Generally speaking, non-formal learning activities are attended by people who choose to take part in that learning experience. The facilitator should motivate learners to get out of their comfort zones but should also allow participants to clearly express their boundaries. It's the learners' choice to take part in a learning activity — or not.

2. Active participation & Ownership

The educational methods used during these activities should encourage learners to play an active role in the process by voicing their opinions, making suggestions, asking questions, sharing their experiences, and supporting others in their own learning process. Ideally, learners should even be involved in designing and preparing the activity.

3. The group (or context) as a source of learning

Learning from each other is a central aspect of non-formal learning. In addition to the facilitator's expertise, the learners are equipped with many resources and experiences that can be valuable to each other. That is why, in a non-formal learning setting, activities should promote cooperation, dialogue, and supportive group dynamics.

4. Learner centeredness

The participants' needs and motivations should be at the heart of the learning process. The facilitator needs to be flexible enough to adapt the contents and the methods in order to allow learners to explore what they feel is most relevant for them, and apply them in a way that works best for them.

[5] Milutinovits, L. (Ed.). (2022). *Manual for facilitators: A guide for organising and facilitating the educational process of study sessions held at the European Youth Centres* (Revised ed.). Council of Europe

5. Experiential Learning

In non-formal learning settings, facilitators create learning opportunities based on real experiences. They mediate the dialogue and the reflection about these experiences in order to foster participants' cognitive, behavioural, and emotional development.

6. Holistic approach

The learning process should take into consideration the physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of the learner. This requires using a diverse range of methods that allow participants to integrate not only new knowledge, but also new-found skills and attitudes.

7. Value-based

Non-formal learning is based on the principles of democracy and promotes human rights and social inclusion. These values should form the ethos of any non-formal learning activity. They guide the facilitators' practices and influence group dynamics. These are just a few of the fundamentals of non-formal learning. When designing an activity in this setting, other important aspects, such as transparency or confidentiality, should also be considered.

Non-formal learning is the main approach used in youth work, especially at the international level. In youth centres or youth organisations, during activities like youth exchanges, training courses, or while volunteering abroad, young people are given a space to be curious, to explore their own interests, and to develop personal and social skills that will allow them to play a more active role in society. In practice, there can also be many intersections between formal, non-formal, and informal learning — sometimes even in the same activity.

At the end of the day, what really matters is that we all continue to grow and learn.[6]

Tools for Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

The ETS Competence Models for trainers and youth workers working at international level

The Competence Model for Trainers[7] was developed as part of the European Training Strategy of the Youth in Action programme (2007–2013). Its purpose is to support trainers in developing their competences, to help organisers of trainer training courses design effective training offers, and to assist organisers of training activities in strengthening the competences of their trainers or trainer pools.

The ETS Competence Model defines six key competence areas for trainers working at the international level: 1) understanding and facilitating individual and group learning processes; 2)

[6] SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre. (2020). *Non-formal learning in a nutshell* [Video]. YouTube.
[7] SALTO-YOUTH Training and Cooperation Resource Centre. (n.d.). ETS Competence Model for Trainers.

learning to learn; 3) designing educational programmes; 4) cooperating successfully in teams; 5) communicating meaningfully with others; and 6) intercultural competence.

The ETS Competence Model for Youth Workers Working Internationally focuses on the need to integrate European issues into the everyday work of youth workers. It particularly addresses working in international teams and supporting young people in international learning mobility projects. The model is intended to inspire and guide organisers of training for youth workers by providing a reference on which competence areas to prioritise when designing training curricula, with a specific focus on the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme. In addition, it supports youth workers in assessing their own competences and identifying areas for further development.

The revised European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers

The revised Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio[8] was launched at the 2nd Youth Work Convention in April 2015. It is designed to support youth workers, youth leaders, and youth organisations across Europe in better understanding and developing their youth work competences. The portfolio can be used in practice to identify, assess, and document competences, as well as to set learning and development goals.

The tool is also useful for trainers, youth work managers, youth policy experts, and anyone interested in quality development and the recognition of youth work. The online portfolio includes a self-assessment tool and a learning plan that can be used by individual youth workers or youth leaders, as well as by teams and organisations involved in youth work.

Learning Badges

The Learning Badges are built on the Mozilla Open Badges[9] Infrastructure - the online standard to recognise and verify learning that happens anywhere and can be shared further in the places that matter. In the recent years, Learning Badges have been developed for and increasingly experimented in the context of youth projects and training activities. Learning Badges help to support young people in their learning process, to encourage reflection in a playful way and make the process of self-assessment easy and exciting.

The Mapping of recognition tools – Visible Value

This Mapping[10] was carried out in 2014 by two experts of the EU-CoE youth partnership. It consists of a collection of the existing recognition tools and practices, gathered through an open call for contributions and selected for presentation in the current version of the Mapping available online. The main aim of the Mapping is to contribute to the promotion of youth work, as well to share, transfer and multiply well-tested approaches and inspire further initiatives towards

[8] Council of Europe. (n.d.). *The Council of Europe Youth Work Portfolio*. https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio
[9] Open Badges is the world's leading format for digital badges. Open Badges is not a specific product or platform, but a type of digital badge that is verifiable, portable, and packed with information about skills and achievements. Open Badges can be issued, earned, and managed by using a certified Open Badges platform. (https://openbadges.org/)
[10] Council of Europe & European Commission. (n.d.). *Mapping youth work. Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth*.

recognition at local, national and European level. It is to be seen as an informative and inspiring collection of current and/or recently developed tools and

practices. It is the hope and intention of the EU-CoE youth partnership that the Mapping will be regularly updated and become a growing collection of tools, kept up-to-date together with the field of practice.

The Compendium of testimonies on the impact of youthwork

The Compendium 'how youth work changed my life?'[11] is a compilation of individual stories about the impact of youth work on young people's lives, whether these are from a local community youth centre, a national event/activity or on a European/international level. The initiative was carried out in 2014 by two experts of the EU-CoE youth partnership. The Compendium currently includes 26 stories but it is the hope and intention of the EU-CoE youth partnership that the Compendium will keep on growing and be regularly updated.

Europass portfolio

The newest instrument in the Europass portfolio[12], designed by the European Commission in partnership with CEDEFOP and launched in December 2012, is an electronic portfolio which allows giving a comprehensive picture of the skills and qualifications that can complete a Europass CV. A change in the legal basis for Europass is foreseen, to allow more flexible developments in the framework.

Youthpass

Youthpass[13] is a European recognition instrument for identifying and documenting learning outcomes that are acquired in projects under the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes.

- Youthpass promotes individual reflection and awareness about learning and helps to make learning outcomes visible for the learners themselves as well as for others;
- It aims to reinforce reflective practices in youth work and solidarity activities, thereby enhancing their quality and recognition;
- It also supports the continued pathways of young people and youth workers, and raises visibility of the value of European engagement.

[11] Council of Europe & European Commission. (n.d.). *Compendium of Council of Europe documents related to youth NGOs and youth participation.* Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.
[12] Europass. (n.d.). *What is My Skills?* https://europass.europa.eu/en/what-my-skills
[13] Youthpass. (2007). *Youthpass: Recognising what you learn in youth work*. https://www.youthpass.eu/en/

Structure of the certificate

The Youthpass certificates may slightly vary depending on the different types of activities within the Erasmus+ Youth and the European Solidarity Corps programmes but the general structure of the certificate is the same for all activities. The Youthpass certificate is divided into three sections.

The first part confirms the participation in a given project and shortly lists the main facts about the project. It also provides background information about the general context and value of the EU youth programmes. It has to be signed by a legal representative of the organisation.

In the second section, participants reflect upon their learning and the outcomes. They are encouraged to describe what they have learnt in the course of the project through self-assessment. For writing the self-assessment they are invited to make use of the eight key competences for lifelong learning for the certificates in activities mainly targeting young people as learners (such as in volunteering projects, in youth exchanges, youth participation projects). In activities mainly targeting youth work practitioners as learners (such as training courses), European Training Strategy Competence Model for Youth Workers is used as the reference framework for self-assessment.

This part is signed by the learners themselves. If applicable, a dialogue partner is also invited to sign this section. There is neither a limitation to how much the participants are allowed to write, nor do they have to include every single competence area.

The third section is an optional part that informs about the activities within a project in more detail. The organisations in charge are mentioned, the aims, activities, and results of each activity are described. This part is intended to be used in projects that have several activities and in general is not meant to be used for single-activity projects.

Multilingualism

Youthpass certificates can be issued in several languages; it is also possible to issue one certificate in several languages. Translation of the certificates for the 2014-2020 programmes is already available in many languages. For the 2021-2027 programmes, the certificates are currently only available in Croatian, Czech, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Spanish. Further translations are in the making in cooperation with respective National Agencies and will be made available when they are ready. The first steps of mainstreaming Youthpass as a national recognition tool have been undertaken in Estonia and Latvia.

Youthpass and the revised Key Competences

When describing the learning outcomes in Youthpass, you are invited to use the key competences for lifelong learning. In 2006 the European Union has defined a framework of key competences that all types of education, including nonformal and informal learning, could refer to. In 2018 the definitions have been revised, and so has their implementation in Youthpass.

The framework describes main competence areas that all individuals need for personal and professional fulfilment, for social inclusion and active citizenship and to lead a sustainable and healthy lifestyle. A competence is defined as the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Key competences are grouped under 8 main areas; however, they are interconnected and build on each other. In a European youth project, learning of a certain participant may be relevant for all or only some of these competence areas. In the latter case, the remaining competence areas do not appear in their Youthpass. Specific competences that do not fit in this framework can be described in the »Other Specific Skills« or »Task-Specific Competences« fields on the Youthpass - depending on the certificate type.

COMPETENCE



Competence is the effective combination of Knowledge (know what), Skills (know how), and Attitudes/Behaviours (willingness/mindset), allowing someone to successfully apply these elements to perform a task, solve a problem, and achieve desired outcomes in a specific context. It's not just knowing things (knowledge) or being able to do things (skills), but the integrated ability to apply them, often including values, motivations, and professional attributes for successful real-world action.

The 8 Key Competences* for Lifelong Learning

1. Multilingual competence

Multilingual competence is the ability to use different languages for communication and to understand and express thoughts, feelings and facts orally or in writing. One would need to know the grammar and vocabulary of a certain language. The ability to learn a language in various ways is also important. Appreciation of cultural diversity and curiosity for intercultural communication are attitudes connected to this competence.

European youth projects involve interactions with people from different countries, who speak different languages. For many participants, communicating in a foreign language is of crucial importance. A European project offers the perfect environment to practice this. Especially in longer-term projects, this competence area is among the ones that the participants develop to the greatest extent.

Some questions to help with the reflection:

- How did you communicate before and after the project with the people from other countries (e-mail, Skype, zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, telephone)? What did you learn from that?
- What aspects (ways of communication, expressing yourself, new words and phrases, traditions etc.) of a foreign language did you learn? Which situations in the project helped you in that?
- Do you feel more confident now when you want to express yourself in a foreign language? In what ways?

2. Personal, social and learning to learn competence

Personal, social and learning to learn competence is the ability to learn to learn, to manage one's own learning and to reflect on oneself. It is about time and information management. Social competences include working with others in a constructive way and managing conflicts in a

supportive way. Personal competences include resilience, the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity and to show empathy. Ability to support physical and emotional well-being is also relevant for this competence area.

European projects often rely on group interactions which can be intensive where one is confronted with own attitudes. Reflecting on the self, the relation with others and one's own role in the group is therefore essential. Working together with others in a meaningful and constructive way plays a big role.

Learning to learn is crucial to improve oneself in all remaining competence areas. It is about being aware of one's own learning and taking responsibility for it. European projects offer the possibility to choose own learning paths and to decide what to get from a project. It is about setting learning objectives, reflecting on learning strengths and weaknesses and the ways one learns the best. It involves organizing own learning, self-motivation, assessing and monitoring the development, collecting outcomes and acknowledging the changes that one has gone through.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- How did you plan your learning objectives? To what extent have you reached them?
- Did you learn things that you did not plan or expect to learn? Which?
- How did you learn? When was learning easy for you and when was it challenging?
- What did you discover about yourself? In what ways do you think your participation in the project has changed you?
- How did you approach group work and how did you cooperate with others during the project?

3. Citizenship competence

Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts as well as global developments and sustainability.

In many projects, participants are directly or indirectly involved in a civil society organisation or they work on a locally or globally relevant social or environmental theme. They reflect on values, laws, human rights, make comparisons between practices, problems and needs in different realities in Europe. They may discuss what Europe and its core values are and how they are experienced in different contexts and from different perspectives. They may also reflect on their own understanding and experience of being an active citizen.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- What did you learn about the living conditions of the people from other countries?
- Did your perspective on Europe change? In what way?
- How can you contribute to the social or environmental initiatives around you?

4. Entrepreneurship competence

Entrepreneurship competence refers to the capacity to act upon opportunities and to turn ideas into action that has value for others. It includes taking initiative, creativity, innovation, critical

thinking and problem solving. It requires the ability to work collaboratively and to plan projects of cultural, social or financial value.

European projects are about turning ideas into reality, about being creative, and trying out new things that might also be risky. The project has to be managed in different contexts. Participants have different possibilities to develop talents, discover passions, try out new roles and get inspired to turn their ideas into action. In a volunteering or youth exchange project, if a participant wishes, then planning, preparation, management and evaluation of the project is done together with them. This is even more valid for a solidarity project or a youth initiative.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- Which interests, passions and talents did you develop during the project?
- What stimulates you to take action? How do you make ideas become a reality?
- How and from which situations did you learn about 'taking initiative'?
- What did you learn about project management, teamwork and cooperation?

5. Cultural awareness and expression competence

Competence in cultural awareness and expression is the understanding of how ideas are creatively expressed in different cultures, through different arts. It involves developing and expressing own ideas. It requires the knowledge of local, European and global cultures and the ability to express ideas and emotions in different artistic and cultural forms. Openness and curiosity are important attitudes.

Young people often develop creative forms of expression to make contact with others or to reflect on experiences. Either organisations offer an opportunity to develop cultural aspects during the project or the participants use this form of expression based on their own initiative. All forms of creativity and media can find their place in youth work. Increasing cultural awareness can prepare the ground for effective intercultural learning. It can also serve to raise awareness about dealing with ambiguity.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- How did you learn new ideas or methodologies for working with art and culture?
- How open were you to experience forms of culture that were new to you?
- When were you able to use different media and forms of expression (e.g. verbal, drawing, body) to express yourself in different situations?

6. Digital competence

Digital competence involves the responsible use of digital technologies; communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation, safety, intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking. It includes the ability to use information via a range of digital technologies, to question available information; curiosity and open-minded attitude.

Participants in youth projects can be involved in creating content for blogs, websites, social media platforms, etc., to share their projects. They can also create audio-visuals (videos, podcasts etc.) to communicate their impressions with others. In some projects, they may specifically work on the impact of media and media literacy.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- What kinds of different technologies did you use to prepare for and to realise your project (e.g. social media, audio-visual editing software, blogs)?
- How did you approach online information critically?
- How did you validate the reliability of your sources of information?

7. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering

Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, engineering (STEM) is the ability to use mathematical thinking to solve problems in everyday situations. Competence in science refers to the ability to use knowledge; to identify questions and to base opinions on evidence. It includes the ability to use logical and critical thinking, to handle technological tools and to communicate conclusions and reasoning behind them.

In a youth project, participants can improve this competence in thematic work (such as leading science labs or helping children with their homework). However, even in projects that do not directly work on scientific topics, participants can improve their problem solving and analytical thinking skills by being involved in decision-making processes regarding the management of different aspects of their project.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- How much were you involved in developing your own project and what have you learned in terms of project management (time or budget management, etc.)?
- How did you approach problems? How did you make sure that you could foresee potential problems?
- Do you have a good overview of the financial conditions and regulations concerning the project?
- How did you cope with new and unexpected situations in your project?

8. Literacy competence

Literacy competence is the ability to understand and express thoughts, feelings and facts orally, in writing or in other forms, and to interact with others. It is the basis for further learning. The openness to critical and constructive dialogue and the awareness on the impact of language on others are important elements of this competence.

In a youth project, a participant may need to create various types of written material for different target groups (social media posts, petition texts, official letters, newsletter articles, activity reports, etc.). They also get to know new terminology – even in their own language – on the topic of the project. They are likely to be in contact with different people (children, parents, teachers, decision-makers, foreigners living in the host country, journalists etc.) and need to adapt their communication to the context.

Some questions that might help in reflection:

- What kind of opportunities did you have to express yourself in writing?
- How do you feel about this?
- When and how did you adapt your language to different people you were talking to?

- How did communicating in a foreign language influence your communication in your mother tongue? Did that change the way you look at your own language?

Did you know?

Youthpass was launched in **July 2007**, and since then it has become one of the most important tools for recognising learning in non-formal education. By December 2025, **over 2 million Youthpass certificates** have been issued, covering **more than 111,000 projects** and involving **over 38,500 organisations** across Europe and beyond.

Youthpass helps young people make their learning visible, valued, and recognised—turning experiences into competences that matter for education, employment, and active citizenship. Read more about Youthpass here[14].

THE USE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE YOUTH WORK

It is often stated that Youth Work is a broad term covering a lot of different activities, programmes and initiatives. It is also clear that the term is understood differently in different parts of the youth work sector, in different countries in the EU and in different languages.

Youth work is a method and style of working with young people that can be characterised as informal, participatory, voluntary, and inclusive and that aims to support young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood.

However, Council Conclusions (2010 and 2013) provide two basic and essential statements on youth work, which in fact constitute a common point of reference and clear limitations for the work of the Expert Group. These are:

- "Youth work offers developmental spaces and opportunities for all young people and "is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation"."
- "Youth work focuses on the personal and social development of young people…"

Youth workers are here defined as:

- People working in direct contact with young people, carrying out activities designed for supporting their personal and social development through non-formal and informal learning.
- Youth workers, in turn, might be professionals or volunteers and be civil servants or work for NGOs.

[14] https://www.youthpass.eu/en/

It is also important to note that the term "Youth Work" does not even exist in many languages. Furthermore, it is understood differently in the countries where it does exist. The diverse nature of youth work and the different conditions under which it takes place has led to the fact that differing concepts and practices are being assigned to the term youth work in different countries. This has in turn led to that some countries have developed sub-concepts and a vocabulary around youth work that other countries lack or have developed in another way.

But youth work can be carried out in many settings. It can take place in urban settings — streets, parks and parking lots — or in the countryside; or in schools, youth clubs, prisons, cafes or shopping malls (Sapin, 2009[15]). It is not tied to a single context. Its flexible nature differentiates it from other public services such as schooling and healthcare, which require facilities where professionals can function. The flexibility of youth work allows youth workers to engage with young people in everyday situations where young people are learning.

It is important to acknowledge that there is a strong relation between youth work and learning outcomes that are becoming increasingly important in modern society, especially for marginalised young people in order to make it possible for them to (re)enter into education or the labour market.

From the point of view of the individual the skills and knowledge gained through non-formal and informal learning are of course equally important. Since non-formal learning takes place as the result of a planned activity youth workers must work directly and consciously on it if it is to take place. Informal learning on the other hand takes place spontaneously and is formed and nourished by the context and culture in which the individual lives. This in turn underlines the importance of youth work being active in creating a secure, open, inclusive and creative environment and culture where young people can meet and develop together. Youth work's focus on young people's will to develop and learn new things as is of course a vital part of that culture.

The method and style of approach used by youth worker is as important as the activities young people take part in within the youth service. Methods and styles of working with young people are instrumental in facilitating young people's engagement and inclusion in opportunities that aim to promote their personal and social development.

The key terms that can describe/summarise the method or style of approach within youth work are:

- Non-formal Youth Work operates outside of formal education, and is a planned intervention that remains flexible and adaptable to individual needs and local contexts. The informal approach includes a focus on equal, friendly, personal and involved relationships rather than authoritative, distant and detached.
- Participatory Youth work is carried out in partnership with young people; the young person is a full and equal partner in determining their own development and progress towards achieving their aspirations. Young people's control over activities is generally promoted and reflects the empowerment aims of the service.
- Voluntary Young people engage with the youth service on a voluntary basis.

[15] Sapin, K. (2009). *Essential skills for youth work practice*. SAGE Publications.

- Inclusive Youth work seeks to reflect diversity in the young people that come into contact with services, to ensure equality of opportunity to all young people in their transition to adulthood.

The focus on method and style draws attention to the importance of the role of the youth worker, "while clarity of purpose and relevant content are important, the determining features are the values and skills of those engaged with young people" (Maychell, Pathak, & Cato, 1996)[16]. The success of youth work is often dependent on the personal qualities and awareness of individual workers.

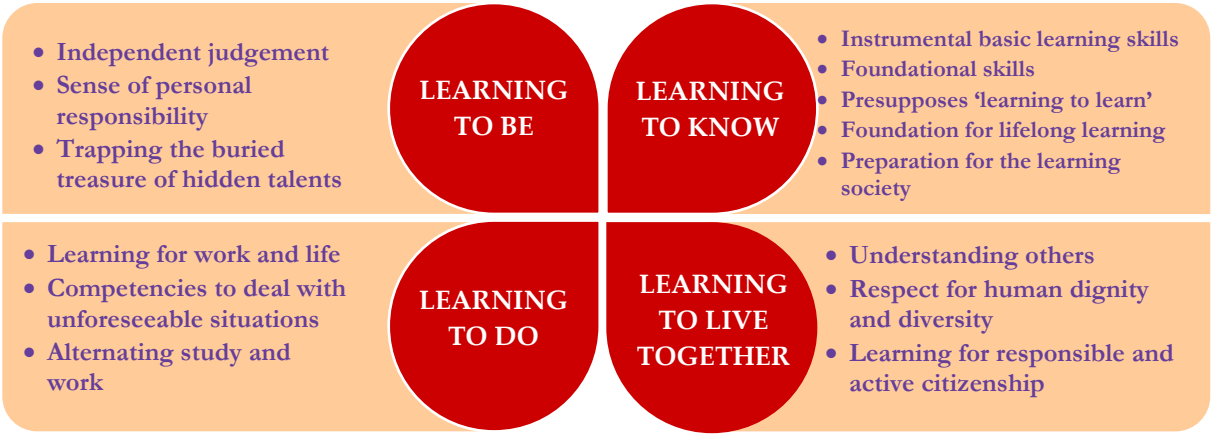
Youth work delivers a planned set of training which, "support young people to understand and act on the personal, social and political issues which affect their lives, the lives of others and the communities of which they are a part." (NYA, 1999, as cited in *Manual for Youth Workers*, n.d.)[17] Activities are pursued not as ends in themselves but because they contribute to the wider personal and social development of young people.

Youth work is carried out in youth clubs, in particular communities or estates (detached youth work), information and advice centers and residential centers. Youth work is delivered by voluntary organisations and local authorities. It includes services that are concerned with crisis intervention and prevention.

Methods and Tools that can be used in Non-Formal Education

Methods and theories of non-formal education are based on 4 pillars defined by UNESCO (1996) UNESCO report "Learning: The Treasure Within" and it is focused on the FOUR PILLARS OF LEARNING".

The four pillars of education



UNESCO defines the four pillars of learning as fundamental principles for reshaping education:

Learning to know: to provide the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning.

[16] Maychell, K., Pathak, S., & Cato, V. (1996). *Providing for young people: Local authority youth services in the 1990s.* National Foundation for Educational Research.
[17] Manual for Youth Workers. (n.d.). *In Manual for youth workers (p. XX).* (NYA, 1999 as cited in Manual for youth workers).

Learning to do: to provide the skills that would enable individuals to effectively participate in the global economy and society.

Learning to be: to provide self-analytical and social skills to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential psycho-socially, effectively as well as physically, for an all-round 'complete person.

Learning to live together: to expose individuals to the values implicit within human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable individuals and societies to live in peace and harmony.

Some methods that usually you can find in youth-related activities

Getting to know each other

Whether it is a small group of students or a large group of participants, we all want to feel that we have established some commonality with our fellow participants. By creating a warm, friendly, and personal learning environment, participants will participate more and learn more. One way to do this is to incorporate group activities, such as getting to know each other, icebreakers, team building activities, and energizers.

Your team is made up of people with different needs, ambitions and personalities. Getting to know them, and helping them to get to know each other, can build a happy, trusting team. Some activities can be found in the link in the footnote[18]!

Ice breaking activities

An icebreaker is a facilitation exercise intended to help members of a group begin the process of forming themselves into a team. Icebreakers are commonly presented as a game to "warm up" the group by helping the participants to get to know each other. They often focus on sharing personal information such as names, hobbies, etc. Ice-breakers are also used at social gatherings such as parties in order to introduce guests to one another in situations where they may not know one another.

Energizers

Energizers do just that – they energize the group! After lunch, after a particularly serious discussion, or when the energy in the training room seems low are all great times to introduce an energizer. These activities give participants an opportunity to laugh, have some fun, move around, give their brains some "time off" from the intensity of a serious topic. Again, as with icebreakers, energizers should be fun, not threatening. You can explore a few examples through the link listed in the footnote.[19]

Team Building activities

Team building is a collective term for various types of activities used to enhance social relations and define roles within teams, often involving collaborative tasks. Team building is one of the most widely used group-development activities in organizations as well as in the youth trainings. A common strategy is to have a "team-building retreat" or "corporate love-in," where participants

[18] SignUpGenius (n.d.) offers a variety of get-to-know-you games and icebreakers designed to help groups build rapport and connection. https://www.signupgenius.com/groups/get-to-know-you-games-icebreakers.cfm

[19] TeamBuilding.com (n.d.) explains that large-group energizers help raise energy and participation among participants. https://teambuilding.com/blog/large-group-energizers

try to address underlying concerns and build trust by engaging in activities that are not part of what they ordinarily do as a team.

Team building and the feeling of equality are the two major factors in creating a healthy and all-inclusive team. Equality and diversity or multiculturalism is the idea of promoting and accepting differences among participants. It ensures that all individuals are treated fairly and equally. It is about recognizing and respecting the differences to create an all-inclusive atmosphere. You can explore a few examples through the link listed in the footnote.[20]

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a group problem-solving method that involves the spontaneous contribution of creative ideas and solutions. This technique requires intensive, freewheeling discussion in which every member of the group is encouraged to think aloud and suggest as many ideas as possible based on their diverse knowledge.

Brainstorming combines an informal approach to problem-solving with lateral thinking, which is a method for developing new concepts to solve problems by looking at them in innovative ways. Some of these ideas can be built into original, creative solutions to a problem, while others can generate additional ideas.

Presentation

A presentation is a means of communication that can be adapted to various speaking situations, such as talking to a group, addressing a meeting or briefing a team. To be effective, step-by-step preparation and the method and means of presenting the information should be carefully considered.

A presentation requires you to get a message across to the listeners and will often contain a '*persuasive*' element. It may, for example, be a talk about the positive work of your organisation, what you could offer to participants, or why you should receive additional funding for a project.

Workshop

A workshop is a long interactive meeting or educational session designed to create a specialized result. Workshops are longer than the typical meetings and require more preparation beforehand. Workshops typically involve a central trainer or facilitator who works with a set of organisations or programmes to design the sequence of presentations, plan collaborative activities, and ensure the workshop will lead to the desired result. Workshops emphasize hands-on interaction. Strategic planning often includes one or more planning workshops. Kickoffs, team chartering, requirements analysis, product design, value stream mapping, and other meetings with large collaborative deliverables may all be conducted as workshops.

Dialogue

Dialogue and dialogue variations are activities that provide practice with listening and speaking skills in structured conversations. Using variations of a dialogue gives learners the opportunity to introduce their own responses into the activity and create a more authentic language experience.

[20] Wrike (n.d.) effective team building activities can strengthen collaboration, improve communication, and boost morale among group members. https://www.wrike.com/blog/ultimate-guide-team-building-activities/

Learners practice a set dialogue, discuss possible responses that they can use, and then take turns saying the dialogue with their peers.

Group discussions

Group discussions are a very important aspect of group communication. Group discussions are a creative and dynamic activity which stimulates reflective thinking among the members. Group discussions may be defined as an activity in which a small number of persons meet face to face and exchange and share ideas freely or attempt to reach a decision on a common issue.

Group discussions are unstructured and less formal compared to meetings or conferences wherein specific roles are assigned to the participants. In a group discussion, an individual's thought process is influenced by the views and opinions of the other members. It also depends on where and in which direction the mood of the discussion moves. In a group discussion, each participant is free to speak his views. A successful discussion involves both listening and speaking.

Networking

Simply put, networking events are organized gatherings for people to engage with one another and build valuable connections. The difference between a non-networking event and a networking event, is the people who attend usually have the intention to build professional connections.

Cultural awareness activities

The aim of cultural awareness activities is to give insight into the important cultural considerations you might need to think about when conducting activities with participants from other countries. As a Youth Worker, you should give some thought to cultural awareness to ensure that you are delivering language instruction without bias, discrimination, or prejudice. Being culturally aware helps you to meet the needs of your participants and create an environment where participants feel comfortable and ready to learn.

Cultural awareness begins with developing sensitivity and understanding of your students' beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and values. Be proactive when it comes to learning about the different cultural backgrounds of your participants. Learn about the cultural characteristics, history, and customs of your participants' native countries. Also, talk to your colleagues as they may have invaluable information that helps you get a better understanding of cultural issues that may arise in the training.

The World Café

The World Café is a global movement that aims to support meaningful conversations around the world in corporate, government and civic society. It allows big or small groups of people to hold conversations that matter and move forward through dialogue. Because conversations are so natural and instinctive that it is easy to underestimate the power of conversation. The World Café method helps to develop a network of conversations that are always intimate but become gradually interconnected.

The World Café requires a setting of tables and chairs just like in any other café. 4 to 5 people should sit at each table. The facilitators should set conversation rounds (at least three) and each round should have a specific topic or question to be debated and should last approximately 20 minutes. In each table there is a "tablecloth" paper where participants are encouraged to write, doodle and document the key points of their conversation.

Mission Impossible

Mission impossible[21] is a group building exercise which empowers participants to cooperate without the intervention of the trainer, in a self-management style. Ideally, it should be implemented on the first day of training, in any situation that the group of participants don't know each other yet.

Analysis of case studies

For many projects, conducting a case analysis is an important step in being able to come up with a solution to a project problem. Even if the solution seems clear without conducting research, an analysis can help you identify problems you may not be aware of and propose solutions that'll help an organization or a training reach its goals. Any individual or department within an organization can complete a case analysis for their own use.

A case study analysis requires you to investigate a project problem, examine the alternative solutions, and propose the most effective solution using supporting evidence.

Problem solving activities

"Every problem has a solution. You just have to be creative enough to find it."

– Travis Kalanick

Problem-solving is a skill that undoubtedly comes into play to improve creativity, execute and deliver projects delightfully. Strong problem-solving skills to improve creativity is a crucial asset for any team. Whether you're a manager or fresher, easy problem-solving tactics will help you glide over tough decision-making faster and approach problems smartly.

For example, in project management, your team might find itself questioning things like "How would we handle tight deadlines while maintaining the quality consistently?" or "How do we ensure that we effectively track progress on multiple projects?".

These are common challenges that are bound to arise on the youth work. However, being prepared and having the ability to handle difficult or unexpected situations is what will guide you to the end. Luckily, there are many ways to develop problem-solving skills to create innovative solutions.

Reflection

There are no rights and wrongs in non-formal education. It is open to a variety of opinions, learning from each other provided by active participation and responsibility of participants. The learning process is as important as the result. And the result is reached fully only if a reflection of learners is carried out. Research in the last decades have shown that purposeful reflection improves both the learning process and the result.

Reflection involves linking a current experience to previous learnings. Youth Workers who promote reflective trainings ensure that participants are fully engaged in the process of making meaning.

[21] Association of Non-Formal Education (ANEV) (n.d.) describes Mission Impossible as a dynamic non-formal learning method designed to challenge groups in creative problem-solving and collaboration. You can find the ready-to-use materials and an overview of the activity here: https://www.nonformal-education.eu/metody/mission-impossible/

They organize instruction so that participants are the producers, not just the consumers, of knowledge. As a facilitator, the Youth Worker acts as an intermediary between the learner and the learning, guiding each participant to approach the learning activity in a strategic way. The Youth Worker helps each participant monitor individual progress, construct meaning from the content learned and from the process of learning it, and apply the learnings to other contexts and settings. Learning becomes a continual process of engaging the mind that transforms the mind.[22]

As a Youth Worker:

1. Dedicate time for thinking. Sometimes the silence means "thinking silence";
2. If no one raises objections it does not mean that everyone agrees. Silence does not mean that the participants automatically agrees;
3. Every opinion is worth hearing out. Do not finish a thought or sentence instead of a participant;
4. Do not evaluate, do not analyse, do not comment! Use open questions!

Unfortunately, trainers/facilitators do not often ask participants to reflect on their learning due to lack of time or motivation. But, the more we dedicate time for reflection the better learning results we achieve. There are several ways and approaches to foster reflection, for example: discussions, peers' evaluation, face-to-face conversations, technologies, etc.

THEATER IN A YOUTH WORK

What is it about theater that has captured the interest of people for thousands of years and in every culture? Theater is an important part of many people's lives, bringing the gifts of entertainment and story sharing to people around the world.

Theater takes different forms in different cultures – Indonesian shadow puppets, Chinese opera, traditional African storytelling and drumming, and fully staged Broadway-style shows. No matter the style of theater, performances have the potential to create magical and unforgettable moments for their audiences.

Theater has always been a bridge between education and entertainment. From the earliest time, theater has been used to spread news, share history, or educate people about events outside of their communities. Recently, the use of drama and theater arts for training purposes has undergone a remarkable resurgence.

How does Theater influence people?

At its best, theater captures people's attention. Even young people bored by school work or bland television programmes are animated by live theater.

Theater engages the audience, focusing their attention and actively involving them in an experience. Active involvement means that the audience's emotions, not just intellectual or

[22] Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (2008). *Learning and leading with habits of mind: 16 essential characteristics for success.* ASCD.

cognitive skills, are affected. It is this ability to touch emotions that allows theater to influence attitudes in ways that traditional instruction cannot. However, in order for theater to change the behaviour of young people, it must do more than simply create an emotional response. It must deliver its messages in a way that youth can understand and act upon.

Hence, theatrical presentations and workshops must be based in educational and behavioural theory. Theatre methods designed for trainings should also have an evaluation component so Youth Workers can see how theater method is affecting their target audiences or participants.

Researchers have found that some of the most effective theater trainings for young people are those designed and acted by young people who have received training in theater techniques, they can bring enormous power to the messages they wish to share.

Theoretical Framework

Educational theatre, like other forms of 'edutainment', is based on the theories of Albert Bandura. Bandura recognized that people learn how to behave – and how to change their behaviour – by watching other people. In edutainment, actors demonstrate behaviour for an audience. The audience notes the behaviours of both positive and negative role models. Of central importance for the youth worker aspect of theatre is the transitional model: the character who changes his or her behaviour from risky to safe, demonstrating to the audience that change is possible and that a young person is capable and powerful enough to control his or her own behaviour.

Culturally and Developmentally Appropriate Theatre

For theatre education to be successful, it must be culturally and developmentally appropriate. Adolescents will not be moved by theatre designed for younger people. Urban youth may require a different vocabulary than youth in rural settings in order for the messages to be powerful and effective. Similarly, Arab youth populations are not homogeneous; differences in social norms, traditions, and lived experiences mean that they may perceive and respond to social changes in diverse ways. Recognizing these variations is essential to ensure that theatrical messages are relevant, respectful, and impactful for different communities.

Freedom and Fun

Foster an environment of freedom and fun in your training sessions, especially when playing theater games. For a variety of reasons, some of these games are initially intimidating for participants. The level (or even existence) of intimidation will vary by the individual and by game or activity and could surprise the participants, even after playing the game for some time. If it has been established that in the workshop or training it is impossible to 'do it wrong', the participant's fear is much more manageable and can be instructive.

Remember to be sensitive to cultural norms regarding touch and other issues, and adjust exercises as needed.

Some Things to Watch

Be careful not to put too many characters in one scene. Scenes can easily lose focus if they are overcrowded.

- Watch out for 'fight scenes' or other confrontational scenes. They can easily turn into shouting matches, which limits their educational value;
- Check the length of your scenes. Usually, less is more;
- Avoid having characters speak too many words. In real life, we use few words. Behaviour tells the story – sometimes a much more interesting story.
- Do not be afraid of humour.

Storytelling

Storytelling has always been a significant component of youth work. Stories are told both by youth workers and by the youths they serve, in order to address a variety of needs. In a world that changes rapidly, stories can help primarily with following social aspects. First, in learning, as they promote a broader and more inclusive development offer that addresses the breadth of experience and opportunities young people need in order to flourish. In second place, employment and its constant changes, through the development of employability skills, the closing of gaps and the increase of self-confidence. Finally, family and community, allowing young people to find an active and responsible role and place within the community – one that offers security, fulfilment and strong interpersonal relationships with family, local communities and other citizens. Next, we describe the impact of storytelling on some educative and psychosocial dimensions.

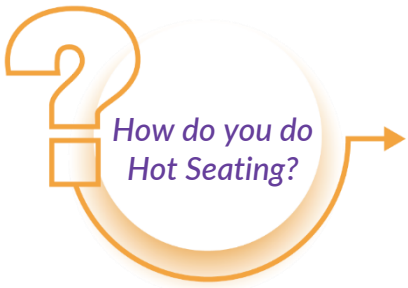
- In youth work, storytelling can promote understanding between people regarding their varied experiences. It is a nice tool to stimulate harmony in some groups where prejudice and intolerance are present. Listening to others' stories and sharing one's own helps youths care more about each other and treasure their well-being. As a West African proverb tells us, ***"The lion's story will never be known, as long as the hunter is the one to tell it".*** Storytelling also gives a voice.
- Therefore, it is used to express oneself and voice concerns. It gives youths space to form opinions and a channel to voice them.
- Storytelling closes gaps. Stories are important for healing painful gaps. Exposure to people whose backgrounds, experiences, and cultures are different from our own is highly important— we can't learn about something if we haven't experienced it.
- Storytelling motivates, inspires and leads people into the future, providing them the courage to make changes. It is the best way to motivate young people to be more active, more involved and engaged in social life. Stories empower them to stand on their own feet and enhance their competences.
- Storytelling is an essential tool to embody the change youths are seeking. Stories are often the best way for youth organizations to communicate with the young people that they are working with and understand their needs.
- Storytelling can be a tool to overcome fear and limitations. When we are threatened by change, a story of hope can draw us beyond fear, into purposeful action forward. We

cannot eliminate fear, abolish uncertainty or avoid the prospect of change, but by telling a purposeful story, we can use these emotions to our greatest advantage.

- Storytelling demonstrates impact and outcomes. Youth work stories give young people authentic evidence of the value of practices used, unlike other monitoring methods imposed from the outside.
- Finally, storytelling becomes an efficient instrument to educate. Youth work storytelling is used to educate in a non-typical environment, providing valuable input in non-traditional settings or ways.

Hot Seating

Hot seating is an exercise for developing a role in drama lessons, rehearsals, and other creative arts. Although this approach isn't set in stone for art-based environments, you can adapt this technique for all sorts of situations.



A character played from one participant is asked by the group about his or her background, behaviour and motivation. The method may be used for developing a role in the drama lesson or rehearsals, or analysing a play post-performance. Even done without preparation, it is an excellent way of fleshing out a character. Characters may be hot-seated individually, in pairs or small groups. The technique is additionally useful for developing questioning skills with the rest of the group.

The traditional approach is for the participant playing the character to sit on a chair in front of the group (arranged in a semi-circle), although characters may be hot-seated in pairs or groups. It is helpful if the trainer or facilitator takes on the role to guide the questioning in constructive directions. To help participants begin you can try hot-seating participants in pairs (e.g. a pair of street urchins) or in groups (e.g. environmental protesters, refugees).

Role-playing and Simulations

Role-play and Simulations are forms of experiential learning that allow students to explore concepts, practice skills, relate to others, see multiple perspectives, and engage in various modes of learning in the classroom.

What is it? Play is a powerful learning approach, increasingly so in youth work. Experiential learning strategies such as role-play and simulations allow participants to take on different personas and interact within diverse learning settings.

Role-play games (RPGs) are a form of interactive storytelling where players assume the roles of characters in a fictional world and interact with each other and with the story through speech and physical actions. The objective of RPGs is to create a collaborative and immersive experience where players can explore different scenarios, characters, and situations.

RPGs are typically guided by a Game Master (GM), who sets the scene, provides descriptions of the setting, and referees the interactions between players. Players create their own characters, including their personalities, abilities, and motivations, and then use these characters to interact with the world and each other.

With role-play, participants assume different characters and act out scenarios, typically without any scripts. These spontaneous scenarios can be situated in reality or ones they are unfamiliar with. Participants must use creativity and critical thinking to further get "into" their role. Depending on the context and setup, role-play may take days to or even an entire training to complete.

A simulation is a form of role-play, but more structured. In simulations, scenarios are much more complex and more situated in real life. Also, participants may assume other characters, or just act out their real role in life. There might be more formal "game rules" to follow and fewer decisions to make. Once the scenario is created by the trainer, the simulation typically takes a day to complete.

Role-play and simulations significantly contribute to a participant's learning as they are able to consider multiple perspectives within a challenging environment. Trainers or Youth workers are able to cover more complex training topics in a way that moves participants from passive to active learners as they attempt to solve a problem within these next contexts.

To implement approaches such as simulations and role-play, collaborative activities should be structured so that every participant is able to fully participate and create meaning (Stevens, 2015). There are generally four stages to implement role-play or simulations in the training:

- *Preparation and explanation of topic by trainer*
- *Participant preparation for involvement in role-play/simulation*
- *Actual role-play or simulation activity*
- *Debrief and reflection*

The methodology of role-play games is built on the principles of improvisation, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. Players must work together to overcome challenges, develop the story, and progress through the game. The success of an RPG is largely dependent on the players' ability to work together, to imagine and describe the world, and to stay in character.

Role-play games have been used for educational, therapeutic, and recreational purposes, as they provide opportunities for players to develop skills such as teamwork, communication, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. The methodology of RPGs has been influential in other areas, such as game design, live-action role-play, and virtual reality experiences.

A role-playing game is an activity which can be used for many purposes, some of which are: to energize, to introduce topics which are difficult to discuss if they are approached personally from the participants, to create engagement with elements of games.

Participants who take part in role-playing games are not limited by their personal experiences but are encouraged to put themselves in the other person's shoes. This offers many advantages, such as freedom of expression, by viewing difficult situations from a mental distance. Moreover, this activity increases empathy and fosters not discriminatory behaviours towards people who might not belong in our group. Role-playing games are a popular way of engaging participants more, and introducing them to topics and situations that might not be possible for them in real life. From this exit of the comfort zone, it is very common that people have revelations that help them see the world from a wider lens.

DIGITAL YOUTH WORK

Digital youth work refers to the use of digital technologies and online platforms to engage and support young people in various educational and social activities. It is becoming increasingly important as more and more young people spend time online and use digital technologies in their daily lives.

In particular, the use of these technologies is massive in the United States, Europe and other highly developed areas of the planet. According to the Digital 2019 Global Digital Overview, there are 4,388 million Internet users in the world, with a penetration rate of 57%. In Europe, the number of Internet users is 86% of the population (724.7 million). 130% of the population are mobile phone subscribers (1,101 million) and 55% are social network users (462.5 million). As can be seen, the number of smart mobile devices exceeds the population in some cases. The world average of the number of hours spent per day using the Internet on any device is 6 hours and 23 minutes.

One of the key benefits of Digital Youth Work is that it allows for greater access to educational and social resources for young people. Online platforms such as social media, educational websites, and virtual reality experiences provide young people with a wealth of information and resources that they may not have access to in their physical communities (Johnson, Stavrositu & Brown, 2020; Najar & Al-Azawei, 2021).

Additionally, digital youth work can also help to promote social inclusion and reduce isolation among young people. Many young people, particularly those from excluded communities, may face barriers to accessing traditional in-person youth services.

Digital youth work can provide a more inclusive and accessible way for these young people to connect with others and access support (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009).

Furthermore, digital youth work can also help to promote digital literacy among young people. As the world becomes increasingly digital, it is important for young people to have the skills and knowledge to navigate and use digital technologies effectively (Papacharissi, 2010). Digital youth work can provide young people with opportunities to learn and develop these skills in a safe and supportive environment.

In conclusion, digital youth work is a valuable tool for supporting young people in various educational and social activities. It can provide greater access to resources, promote social inclusion, and reduce isolation, and promote digital literacy among young people.

The two words **"Youth"** and **"Digital"** are interconnected closely. Technology is present in all areas of a young person's life, and this fact needs to be considered when we enter any conversation regarding working with youngsters. Young people can be considered **"Digital Natives"** – a term created by Prensky (2001) – for various reasons. They are the first to have been able to master the use of the new ICT, and to a great extent this everyday use transforms their manners of information acquisition, consumption, communication, and media consumption habits, putting them on a completely different trail to the habits of older generations. Youth work, in general,

needs to be enriched with methods which encourage youth engagement, such as gamification, in order to capture the attention and interest of young people.

This need becomes more apparent when we discuss digital youth work. In the digital world, the distractions and temptations are infinite. In order to capture the eye of a young participant, the youth worker needs to come up with a treasure of methods that will help the message pass through. Digital youth work needs to be adaptive, open minded, flexible, and experimental. As mentioned in 2016 in the Screenagers International Research Project Report, ***"…if youth work fails to embrace the use of technology and social media there is a risk of becoming outdated and irrelevant to young people who use youth work services"*** (Harvey, 2016).

What is more, the duty of the youth worker is to provide their target group with empowerment to adapt and survive in a world where digitalisation is a reality. For this to be achieved, digital youth work needs to migrate to the environments where young people already operate, in order to destroy the walls between the youth worker and the young person, and in order to grow their digital skills (Berzin et al., 2015). Social media is a great example of digital tools that can be employed to reach youth regardless of their physical location (Chan, 2016).

According to the EU expert group on Digitalisation and Youth, established under the European Union Work Plan for Youth 2016-2018, digital youth work:

- Means using or addressing digital media and technology in a proactive way in youth work;
- Is not only a method of youth work, but a different sector altogether, which can be applied in any youth work setting;
- Has the same goal as youth work in general, and digital tools need to be used in a way that supports the goals of youth work;
- Can take place both in face-to-face situations and online settings, either as a tool or an activity;
- It follows the same values as "traditional" youth work.

Digital Youth Work in Practice – Role of the Digital Component

The digital component plays a significant role in digital youth work, as it enables youth workers to engage with young people in digital spaces and use digital tools to support their personal and social development (Druin & Hendler, 2020). Digital youth work can involve a range of activities, such as providing online counselling, delivering online workshops and training, creating and curating digital content, and facilitating online communities. A youth worker can, at the one side of the spectrum, choose to enrich the face-to-face experience, or to transfer the experience completely to the online plane.

When the youth worker is designing an action, they need to always consider how the online components can transform the learning experience of the young person, and how they can address the specific needs of the target group. Some recommended tools can be found below:

Tools and Recommendations

Following we show some Apps, Webs, Platforms and Software's that can be used free in the work with young people.

- **Slides** is a web-based platform for creating, presenting, and sharing slide presentations entirely in your browser. It's an online alternative to traditional presentation tools like PowerPoint or Google Slides, designed to be easy to use while also offering advanced features for dynamic and professional decks. https://slides.com/
- **Miro** is a web-based visual collaboration and teamwork platform that functions like a powerful digital whiteboard where individuals and teams can brainstorm, plan, design, and work together — whether they're in the same room or distributed around the world. https://miro.com/
- **Genially** is a cloud-based, interactive content creation platform that allows anyone — educators, trainers, communicators, and teams — to design dynamic and engaging visual content such as interactive presentations, infographics, quizzes, games, maps, and learning activities without needing coding skills. https://app.genially.com/
- **MindMeister** is a web-based mind-mapping and idea-visualization tool that helps individuals and teams brainstorm, organize, and collaborate on ideas in a visual, structured way — all within an online environment. https://www.mindmeister.com/
- **Quizlet** is a popular online learning and study platform that helps learners create, share, and study digital flashcards and interactive study sets across a wide range of subjects. It's widely used by students, educators, and self-learners around the world to practice, review, and retain information more effectively. https://quizlet.com/
- **Screen-o-matic or Screencast-o-matic** is a free to use tool to make a talking head or a screencast. A talking head is a video where you explain something and where you only see what happens before the webcam. A screencast is a video that records what is happening on your screen. Each video can be up to 15 minutes. After recording the video, you can save it as a video file or upload it to your YouTube channel. https://screencast-o-matic.en.download.it/
- **Thinglink** is an online tool to create interactive images by putting text, links, video and audio on your image. It is free to use tool: www.thinglink.com/edu
- **Youtube channel** is a place where you can upload your videos. Every video has its own link. You need this link to share with your students. You can make your videos public, private, or hidden.
- **Mentimeter** is a tool that lets you engage and interact with your beneficiaries in real-time. It is possible for surveys in real time, give opinions or simply for vote, using their smartphone (www.mentimeter.com).
- **Poll Everywhere:** An alternative to Mentimeter is Poll Everywhere, which is an interactive web-based audience response tool designed to make presentations, workshops, classes, meetings, and events more engaging by collecting real-time feedback from participants. It lets presenters create live polls, surveys, word clouds, Q&A sessions, and other interactive activities that audiences respond to using their smartphones, tablets, or laptops — either through a link, mobile web page, or SMS messaging. Responses are displayed instantly on the presenter's screen, helping spark discussion, check understanding, and include everyone's voice in the conversation. https://www.polleverywhere.com/.
- **Kahoot** is a free student-response tool for administering quizzes, facilitating discussions, or collecting survey data. It is a game-based classroom response system played by the whole class in real time. https://kahoot.it/

- **Padlet** is an application to create an online post-it board that you can use to display information for any topic. Easily create an account and build a new board. You can add images, links, videos, and more. https://padlet.com
- **Trello** is a visual project management and collaboration tool that helps individuals and teams organize tasks, projects, and workflows in a flexible, intuitive way. It uses a system of boards, lists, and cards—much like a digital set of sticky notes—to visually map out work and track progress. https://trello.com/
- **Google forms** is an easy-to-use tool that can be used to create questionnaires, participation information, and even to create a quiz.
- **IdeaBoardz** is a simple, free online collaboration and brainstorming tool that lets people or teams work together on ideas in a shared digital space. It's especially useful for remote or distributed groups because participants can contribute at anytime from anywhere by using a shared URL — no signup required. https://ideaboardz.com/

TRAINING AND FACILITATION SKILLS

Before you decide what kind of activities, workshops, projects or events you would like to implement with your group, it is essential to know more about their worldviews, what they know and feel about things, what they would like to learn, what are their communication styles, notions of equality, notions of acceptable risk, and self-fulfillment, are they familiar with non-formal education methods and what their level of the host language is.

It is crucial to demonstrate cultural awareness when working with refugees or immigrants. If you understand the cultural backgrounds and expectations of participants, you will be able to deliver more effective workshops. Show respect for their experiences and address their concerns, hopes and wishes. Observe behaviors and react to these by asking questions during activities. Keep in mind that you will be working with young people coming from very different places, experiences and expectations.

Make sure that every activity (including energizers) includes a debriefing and evaluation session. This is essential for those participants, who have little or no experience with non-formal education methods. **Be patient**, it will take time for them to get used to this kind of learning. **Focus** on getting to know each other and team-building activities before you start with educational workshops on different topics. **Work** with smaller groups, allowing you to be able to give attention to every participant. **Choose fun** activities with simple instructions. Complicated instructions, complex vocabulary and too much talking might *scare away* your target group. **Keep it simple!**

- Make sure that everyone understands the aim of the activity.
- Make sure that enough time is provided for understanding the task and expressing oneself.
- Do not make any kind of assumptions, be careful and aware of your own stereotypes.
- Give CLEAR instructions!

Depending on the level of working language among participants, interpretation might be needed. In such cases make sure to make it clear who and how is going to provide it. The interpreter on their part needs to ensure that everyone understands and has the opportunity to express themselves and feels free to ask for language support anytime they need it.

Ask for feedback concerning the understanding of tasks and activities at every stage. To overcome language barriers, you can go through the debriefing by asking the participants to answer the questions with only one word or by visualising their answers (with drawings or by other means). Make sure all participants understand the terms used in your workshop (e.g. human rights, gender equality, etc.).

When working with participants who are less educated ask them to map out or draw, use pictures, videos and tangible objects during your workshops. When working with participants who are well educated you can label pictures and objects with words or text and use handouts. Give tasks to all participants to ensure that everyone has an important role regardless of their background and experience.

To sum up: Adapt content to the interests and background of participants, use a variety of methods (allowing participants to learn by seeing, hearing, and doing), use visuals, be flexible, do not assume and be patient. *Keep it FUN!*

AND – most importantly: Include members of your group already in the planning phase of all your activities in order to make sure you meet their needs. Do **not** develop activities (projects, events, workshops) for the target group, but WITH the target group.

Some tips to consider when developing NFE based activities within youth projects

- Make sure there is a logical link between the issues young people face, the educational process you propose and the impact of your activity for participants and wider communities. Think about what your activity will change in your context.
- Identify learning needs and learning outcomes for your participants.
- Match your objectives with the types of activities you propose, the time available, the needs of your participants, and the number of participants.
- Plan and structure your educational process, in a way that sessions link to each other and young people learn something meaningful in a step-by-step manner.
- Prepare your activity sessions, so that you know what you will be doing, how, and who from your project team is responsible.
- In the educational activities, provide enough time to explore and engage with relevant topics. Do not rush learning and do not try to discuss too many different topics in too short a time. Ensure time for reflection, and not just experiencing. Through reflection, participants will consolidate their learning.
- If participants are expected to deliver follow-up activities, dedicate time for them to plan and equip your participants with the adequate skills for their follow-up.
- If the activity includes the exploration of complex or sensitive issues, ensure sufficient time and appropriate methods for participants to engage with them.

- Active learning: avoid too many frontal presentations, as participants may disengage or get demotivated (or be reminded of their bad school days). Vary your methods and adapt your content to your participants! Don't forget to consider participants' emotions, minds, and bodies.
- Consider as much as possible accessibility needs, to ensure everyone's participation in your activity. If your participants experience barriers that exclude them from taking part in your activity, actively seek ways to increase inclusion (for example, by removing participation fees, or by ensuring that all your participants can fully take part in each activity).
- The methods you use should allow participants to share and learn from their own experiences and the experiences of others in the group.
- If you are not sure you have within your organisation sufficient experience or expertise on the topic you wish to explore, search for a trainer or facilitator externally or cooperate with other entities.
- Ensure your project team includes a person responsible for the educational process and that most of the people in the team are young (under 30[23]).
- Provide time for participants to get to know each other and to develop trust within your group of participants.

Evaluate your activities. Adapt the evaluation method to your group of participants. Remember that in NFE, evaluation is done for your organisation to learn how to improve its activities and to have an indication of whether you reached the objectives set.

[23] In the framework of EU young people are defined as being between 13 and 30 years old.

PART 2

- Understanding Empowerment and Inclusion
- Empowering through Non-Formal Education
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Intergenerational Dialogue and Mentorship

UNDERSTANDING EMPOWERMENT AND INCLUSION

Empowerment is at the heart of everything we do in this toolkit. It's about giving girls and young women the space, confidence, and support to discover their strengths, make their own choices, and take an active role in their communities.

In the pages that follow, you'll explore different ways empowerment can be understood and applied, learn from real-life examples, and find tools to help young people build skills, voice their opinions, and turn their ideas into action. This section will guide you through the many faces of empowerment and inspire you to bring them to life in your work.

There are different definitions around empowerment and what exactly it entails. According to Naila Kabeer, Emeritus Professor of Gender and Development at LSE University, female empowerment, "is a process by which women are able to attain the ability and freedom to make strategic choices for themselves" (Kabber, 2010, p.43). This falls in line with Naila Kabeer's argument that lack of choice is "disempowering" and women's empowerment is "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability" (Kabeer, 1999).

However, **perceptions** of being empowered vary across time, culture and domains of a person's life.

For example: in **Belgium** empowerment is a relatively new concept and is related, mainly, to the empowerment of any socially disadvantaged group and is not specifically related to ethnic minority groups.

In **Italy**, on the contrary, this concept is very much linked with the feminist movement and the empowerment process of women in society at large.

In the **United Kingdom** empowerment has for a number of decades been viewed as a "political" ideology and is closely related to social policy and practice.



Empowerment is the process through which we actively work to get in touch with the essential power that we all carry within us. When we connect this inner power —the power within—with the power that lies within others, we can build the social power that collectively can dismantle and *transform seemingly unchangeable power structures. Adapted from CREA and Srilatha Batliwala*

"Empowerment is the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability. This implies having material, social and human resources to make strategic choices, and the ability to exercise agency, participation, voice and negotiation in decision-making, in order to gain achievements or meaningful improvements in life and well-being." UNFPA, UNICEF and Naila Kabeer

"Empowerment means that people, especially poorer people, are enabled to take more control over their lives, and secure a ***better livelihood with ownership*** *and control of productive assets as one key element."* (Chambers 1993).

"*Empowerment is how individuals/communities engage in* ***learning*** *processes in which they create, appropriate and share knowledge, tools and techniques in order* ***to change and improve the quality of their own lives and societies****. Through empowerment, individuals not only manage and adapt to change but also contribute to/generate changes in their lives and environments*". (UNESCO 1998)

"*Empowerment ... refers to the expansion in people's* ***ability*** *to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them*". (Kabeer 2001).

"*Empowerment is the* ***process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.*** *(...) Empowered people have freedom of choice and action. This in turn enables them to better influence the course of their lives and the decisions which affect them.*" (World Bank and empowerment)



Empowerment through Education / Non-formal Education

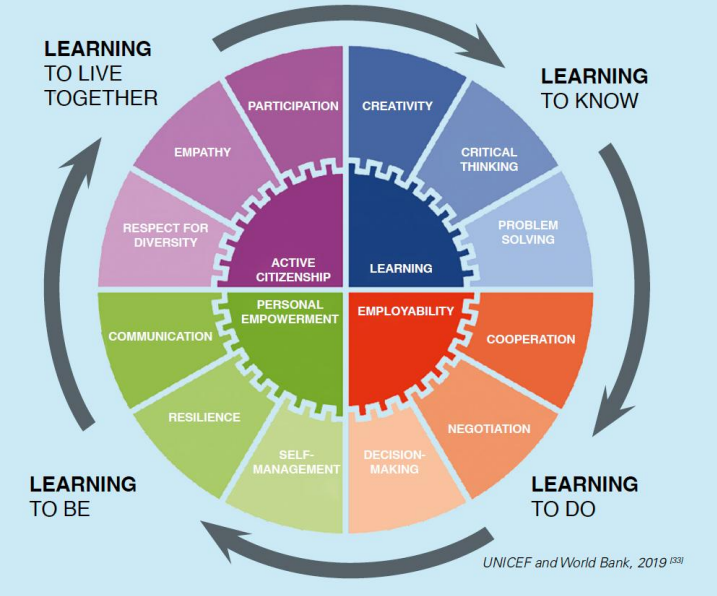
Today, women's empowerment relies heavily on education as a mean of achieving social, economic and political power and freedom. Since the world's educational needs are diverse and non-formal education can help meet them, youth workers should take time to reflect on how non-formal education can promote gender equality and empower women in particular.

According to Verstandig[24] (2013, *as cited in Huffington Post*), "Education is a fundamental part of women's empowerment—without it, women will not be stakeholders in their respective societies".

Education is a key to adolescent girls' empowerment, since it contributes to making informed choices about their bodies, their lives and their participation to change their world. Evidence has shown the effectiveness of three approaches that are already being implemented around the world to empower adolescent girls, and young people more broadly, both in and out of school settings: 1) protective asset-building, 2) comprehensive sexuality education and 3) life-skills education.

Let's focus on the third one, life-skills education. The **life skills education (LSE)**, even though, there is no globally accepted definition of life skills or of LSE, this approach has been widely promoted both in and out of school settings by civil society organizations and international development agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

WHO defines life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life."



The Life skills education based on UNICEF and World Bank (2019)

UNICEF defines life skills as:

"transferable skills that enable individuals to deal with everyday life, and to progress and succeed in school, work and societal life. They are comprised of skills, attitudes, values, behaviours and domain-based knowledge which need to be applied in harmony with each other. Life skill performances should be replicable across

diverse settings. They are understood to be able to be learnt throughout the life cycle and in widely different on texts and learning pathways such as formal and non-formal education, vocational education and training, the workplace and more generally during daily life in the home and local community."

[24] Toni Verstandig is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Verstandig Family Foundation and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. A philanthropist and foreign policy expert with extensive government expertise on Middle East issues.

The Role of Education in Empowering Women Across the MENA Region

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the significance of education, especially for girls and women, cannot be overstated. While some parts of the region, including Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries like the UAE and Qatar, are working to bridge the gender gap through extensive public sector investments in health and education, other parts of the region have experienced successive crises, such as the wars and conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Sudan, and Gaza, resulting in displaced students and teachers, destroyed educational institutions, and an inhibited ability to improve women's access to education.

Education is a key part of strategies to improve individuals' well-being and societies' economic and social development. Many people - especially girls and young women - are still excluded from education, and many more are enrolled in school but learning too little to prepare them for 21st-century job markets. In some countries, access to the secondary and higher education that helps create a skilled and knowledgeable labour force continues to be limited; even where access is not a problem, the quality of the education provided is often low. 'The most worrying aspect of the crisis in education is education's inability to provide the requirements for the development of Arab societies,' according to the 2002 Arab Human Development Report."

Access to high-quality education is a key way to empower and strengthen young girls and women, as it enables them to challenge restrictive gender norms and prepares them to take custodianship of leadership positions across the government and the private sector. Female ministers, such as Tunisia's Ouided Bouchamaoui, who is a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and the UAE's Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, exemplify the impact of education on women's leadership in governance and diplomacy. Women leaders across the region have brought a host of positive social and economic outcomes for their respective communities. Therefore, investing in education for girls will pave the way for a brighter regional future.

Educating a young girl or women is not just a tool for her personal growth but also a catalyst for societal transformation. An educated girl or women provides economic and social security, not only for herself but also for future generations. For instance, educated mothers are more likely to send their children to school, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Educated women become an effective impetus to secure the rights of young girls in their respective societies.

The marginalization of women in political, economic, and social spheres has contributed to ongoing cycles of violence and instability. According to political scientist Valerie Hudson[25], women's empowerment leads to societal stability, leading to gender inclusive decision-making, reduced GBV, enhanced social cohesion and more effective conflict resolution. Educated women can serve as peacebuilders, mediators, and leaders, challenging the patriarchal norms that perpetuate violence and exclusion. By investing in girls' and women's education, countries across the region can break this cycle, fostering a generation of young girls and women who are not only aware of their rights but also capable of advocating for peace and sustainable development.

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[25] Hudson, V. M., Caprioli, M., Ballif-Spanvill, B., McDermott, R., & Emmett, C. (2008). *The heart of the matter: The security of women and the security of states.* **International Security, 33**(3), 7–45. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40207140 JSTOR

By investing in girls' education, MENA can build a future where young girls and women are not just survivors of conflict but active agents of change, leading their communities towards a more peaceful, just, and equitable world. To this end, there is an urgent need for educational reforms that prioritize gender equality. This includes revising curricula to eliminate gender biases, training teachers to support girls' and young women's education, and creating safe learning environments that encourage girls to pursue their studies without fear of violence or discrimination.

Additionally, policies must be implemented to address the specific barriers that prevent girls and young women from accessing education, such as early marriage, poverty, and cultural norms that devalue education for women and girls. Community awareness programs can play a vital role in changing attitudes towards girls' and young women education, highlighting its benefits not only for individuals but for society.

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, recognised that women's literacy is key to empowering women's participation in decision-making in society and to improving families' well-being. Additionally, the United Nations has articulated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which emphasise education's essential role in building democratic societies and creating a foundation for sustained economic growth.

- According to recent studies, education contributes directly to the growth of national income by improving the productive capacities of the labour force.
- As female education rises, fertility, population growth, and infant and child mortality fall and family health improves.
- Increases in girls' secondary school enrollment are associated with increases in women's participation in the labour force and their contributions to household and national income.
- Women's increased earning capacity, in turn, has a positive effect on child nutrition.
- Children - especially daughters - of educated mothers are more likely to be enrolled in school and to have higher levels of educational attainment.
- Educated women are more politically active and better informed about their legal rights and how to exercise them.

From Practice to Impact: Non-Formal Education Cases Supporting Women's Empowerment in MENA

Guided by the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) Framework, the UNICEF MENA Regional Office supports country offices in promoting life skills and citizenship education through promoting a holistic approach to transformation of education by focusing on:

- **Learning and teaching** – LSCE is not about an additional subject: it is about changing the way we teach and what we want our children and youth to learn.
- **Systems** – LSCE needs to be at the core of the learning agenda, not just for youth, but at all level, starting as early as possible. This requires changing the curriculum, the way we prepare our teachers and the way we assess learning.
- **Promoting multiple pathways** - learning does not only take place in schools, but also in non-formal and informal settings, at home and at the place of work; innovation, creativity

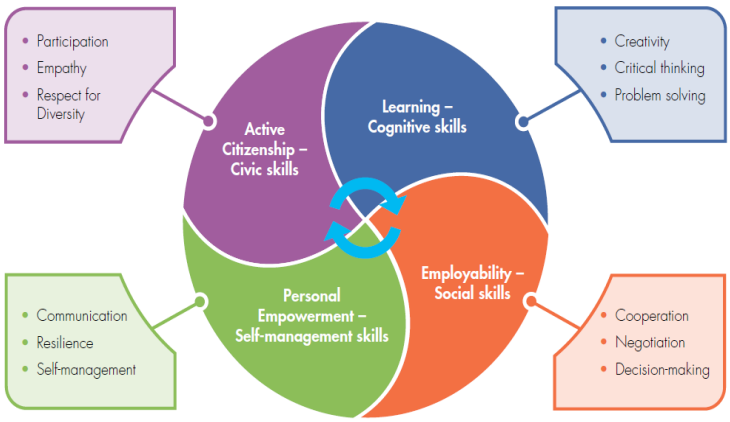
and strong partnerships between public and private sector are needed to keep the doors open for children and youth to move between different forms of education and learning

- Finally, an **enabling environment** - many excellent reform programmes often fail because we forgot the need to change day to day practices at the institutional level. For instance, how can we develop personal empowerment if children and youth do not have a voice in the day to day management of schools?

Keeping sight of this approach, the operationalization of the LSCE Initiative in MENA is ongoing, showing and already demonstrating results towards upstream engagement within the framework of national curriculum reforms (e.g. Tunisia and Egypt), the upgrading of national TVET systems (e.g. Lebanon and Libya), and the piloting of innovative contents and methods for skills development (e.g. Jordan, Morocco, and the State of Palestine).

Jordan Case: *Nashatati;* A cross-sectoral innovative approach for integrating life skills and social cohesion through after-school activities

The *Nashatati* Conceptual Model and the 12 Core Life Skills



Nashatati targets all vulnerable school-age children aged 6 to 16, across all 12 governorates of Jordan, with creative learning activities such as sports and games that develop life skills and foster social cohesion, healthy living and personal development. In developing this programme, UNICEF, Generations for Peace and MOE considered a number of data and sources on the situation for all children in schools to ensure the extra-curricular programme would respond to a number of needs and issues facing children in schools. Violence is widespread in the school system in Jordan, with 15 per cent of children reporting staying out of school at least one day per year for fear of bullying or being physically attacked.

The schools where *Nashatati* is implemented are selected based on defined criteria, including vulnerability of students, availability of a playground or safe outdoor space to accommodate activities, occurrences of violence (as the programme promotes social cohesion), and lack of existing extra-curricular interventions.

Nashatati and the impact on children and youth

- An increase of 20 per cent among target group members' confidence in speaking in front of others.
- An increase of 20 per cent of target group students reporting they would deal calmly with confrontation and not resort to violence.
- An increase of 21 per cent of participant students who agreed that they are willing to play and work with other students of different ages and nationalities.

Morocco Case: *The Personal Project*

The Personal Project consists of 10 activities for students at grade 6 (last grade of primary school) that take students through a journey of learning and personal development by reflecting on the different opportunities, and educational and vocational paths available to young students at community level.

These extra-curricular activities promote core life skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, self-management and decision making along with promoting responsibility and a desire to self-learn.

The Personal Project initiates a process of reflection, and adopts a step-by-step approach that links schools with surrounding communities and fosters active participation of children and parents. The methodology builds on project-based learning including dedicated sessions undertaken inside schools and is based on the use of different methods and approaches (e.g., lessons, projects, visits, etc.) including learning resources for students and training manuals for teachers.

Learning activities of the Personal Project	
1. Key steps for developing a Personal Project Describes a set of activities to prepare children to think and structure their opportunities	**6.** Dream job and personality A set of activities to match personal dreams and preferences for a profession
2. My personal environment – Who am I? What will I do? Describes a set of activities to discover opportunities for education and training pathways in the school area, and group work to explore their interests	**7.** Learn about the trades and employment pathways Game activity to explore professions in depth including meeting employed adults
3. Utility of the school A set of activities to explore and discover relevance of what children are learning and experiencing within school	**8.** My strengths and weaknesses A set of activities enabling children to discover their strengths and weaknesses in relation to their preferred education and job pathway
4. School disciplines and professions A set of activities to discover ties between school-taught subjects and professions	**9.** Entrepreneur in my class Inviting professionals within the classroom and enabling interaction with children
5. Future learning pathways Group work activities to discover possible education pathways offered by the education system and to choose timely activities	**10.** Jobs forum Children workshops to discover linkages between education pathways and categories of jobs based on provided material from school counsellors

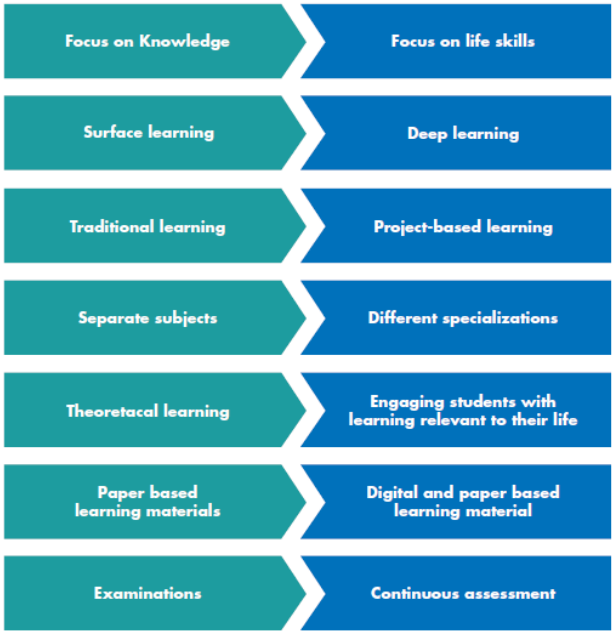
Example of an exercise as part of the Personal Project

In school, children are introduced to the work of firefighters. They discuss in groups the nature of the profession and its environment. They engage in activities that foster a set of personal skills and competencies that resonate with the skills needed in this profession. They receive information about the path and trainings that are required to become a firefighter. They also learn specifications of the job in terms of requirements, salary, promotions and career development by exploring and discussing opportunities offered to become firefighter in their geographic area.

During the exercise, children work in groups to come up with a set of questions to ask when they visit the fire station. During the visit they reflect on their assumptions and through interactions with the station personnel, including fire fighters, they have an opportunity to verify and confirm their assumptions and learn more.

Egypt Case: *Education 2.0 and the national focus on 21st century skills*

Education 2.0 promotes a vision of 'learning, thinking, innovating', where education is the means to create passionate and curious learners, open-minded communicators, and creative innovators to compete in national and international markets, and to contribute to creating a 'learning society' as well as the economic and social development in Egypt.



The Egypt's vision toward cultivating skills for the 21st century under the new education transformation plan provided the entry point for scaling up the LSCE Initiative at country level. Building on the LSCE new learning agenda on what to learn (life skills) and how to learn (i.e. open learning systems), UNICEF has engaged with the Ministry of Education and national stakeholders to mainstream LSCE within the national curriculum reform process. The graph below shows key moments of engagement since October 2017.

As a result of extensive upstream engagement within the framework of the Education 2.0, a new curriculum framework has been developed mainstreaming the twelve core life skills identified by the LSCE initiative, in addition to 'accountability' and 'productivity.'

A detailed roadmap was developed in partnership with the International Center for Pedagogical Studies (CIEP) to provide technical support to the Ministry of Education in the following areas:

- **Defining the learning objectives** for KG1-2 and Grade 1, articulating the core life skills adopted in the national curriculum framework;
- **Development of learning content and enhancement of teaching/learning materials**, including textbook design for KG1-2 and Grade 1, with emphasis on digital content and technology-supported teaching and learning;
- **Development of the national teacher training framework** based on the new curriculum.

While the reform process is still ongoing few lessons could be drawn to inform similar processes in other countries:

- The technical support provided by international and national experts showed the need for adopting a **country specific focus** relying on Arabic-speaking curriculum engineers;
- The rolling out of the curriculum reform requires **a phased approach** with the adoption of large-scale and innovative teacher development programmes;
- Transformation of classroom teaching and learning practices requires a **comprehensive and holistic approach** including the changing of contents, assessment methods as well as competency frameworks of teachers and teacher training programmes;
- Resistance at community level among teachers and parents needs to be factored from the onset and addressed through **participatory awareness and communication campaigns** to avoid a backlash on the new curriculum;

State of Palestine Case: *Experiential Learning Objects Bank (xLOBs)*

With the aim of providing practical support for teachers in shifting towards more learner-centred approaches for effective integration of life skills, Birzeit University in Palestine in partnership with MOEHE and UNICEF, initiated the development of a national 'Experiential Learning Objects Bank' (xLOBs).

Learning Objects are a set of innovative pedagogical activities and resources used to enhance teaching methods within classrooms and to improve students' life skills and learning outcomes. Each Learning Object is designed to stimulate active learning and develop core life skills such as critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving.

The Learning Objects consist of three key ingredients, which, when combined, produce an effective educational process:

1. **Learning resources** that can be delivered physically in the classroom or across the network;
2. **Learning activities** and applications of the knowledge in contexts that are meaningful and stimulating to students (learning activities are where learners internalize and reinforce what they learn);
3. **Instructional strategies** that glue and integrate the different elements of the learning object together. These strategies are designed to stimulate active learning, provide innovative learning spaces, support deep learning, and develop soft skills.

The XLOBS are fully aligned with the requirements of the Palestinian curriculum since they are designed to help students achieve the same learning objectives set by the Ministry of Education. They enable teachers to use interactive teaching methods, resulting in improved learning outcomes. This approach is currently integrated within the newly released Palestinian curriculum for Grades 1 through 4.

Examples of using Learning Objects in the classroom

Traditional approach: The teacher delivers a lecture, writing down relevant laws and formulas related to electricity and solving physics problems based on these. This approach develops procedural knowledge among students, but does not necessarily facilitate conceptual understanding or the application of the concepts to everyday life.

xLOBs approach: The learning journey starts with the presentation of a real electricity bill to the students, who are invited to reflect together on a number of questions: What do the different numbers on the bill represent? What is the size of the family who received this bill? What is VAT and why should we pay it to the government? Next, students are invited to estimate their family electricity bill for the coming month, based on their electrical appliances and usage. Then they begin developing a plan for reducing their bill, reflecting on the advantages of doing so.

Source: National Consultation on Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) in the State of Palestine Workshop Report (5-6 July 2017)



Empowering Communities Through Non-Formal Education: Global Case Studies

Non-formal education is a powerful tool for empowering communities and fostering sustainable development. This part highlights global case studies where non-formal education has made a significant impact, transforming lives and communities. Non-formal education provides individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills needed to address local challenges and improve their quality of life. It is often tailored to the specific needs of a community, focusing on practical skills, entrepreneurship, health education, and civic engagement. By supporting and expanding non-formal education initiatives, we can empower more communities to achieve sustainable development and social equity.

Global Case Studies:

BRAC's Education Program in Bangladesh: BRAC, one of the world's largest NGOs, has implemented a non-formal education program in Bangladesh that has educated millions of children, particularly girls from marginalized communities through its initiative the Social and Financial Empowerment of Adolescents (SoFEA) programme. The program focuses on basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills, providing an alternative education pathway for those who have missed out on formal schooling. BRAC's schools are flexible, allowing students to learn at their own pace and accommodating their work schedules. The program has been credited with significantly improving literacy rates and empowering girls to pursue further education and economic opportunities.

The National Women's Association of Bhutan: NWAB initiated the Non-Formal Education Programme (NFEP) in 1990 to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills aimed at empowering Bhutanese women (Dukpa, 2015). In 1992, programme management was transferred to the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC), shifting the focus toward promoting the national language, Dzongkha (Dukpa, 2015). Non-formal and continuing education has since been recognized as a vital tool for enhancing literacy, empowerment, and lifelong learning in Bhutan, particularly within its emerging democratic context (Dukpa, 2015). The programme's success led to the establishment of the Non-Formal and Continuing Education Division (NFCED) in 2006 within the Ministry of Education, strengthening its role as a strategic mechanism for lifelong learning. In the same year, a Continuing Education component was introduced to support adults who had not completed formal schooling (Schuelka & Maxwell, 2016).

Barefoot College and PROPEL in India: ***Barefoot College*** is a unique institution in India that trains rural women, many of whom are illiterate, to become solar engineers, artisans, and educators. The college's non-formal education model emphasizes learning by doing, allowing women to acquire practical skills that directly benefit their communities. Graduates of Barefoot College have installed solar panels in remote villages, providing electricity to thousands of homes and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. This initiative has empowered women to become leaders in their communities, contributing to sustainable development and environmental conservation. ***Promoting Primary and Elementary Education (PROPEL)*** is an education initiative recognized by UNESCO as a "showcase project" for promoting education and local empowerment for girls in developing countries. Founded in 1972, PROPEL uses flexible schedules, the absence of formal examinations, and modern, relevant pedagogical methods to educate approximately 120,000 children from 18,000 households across four blocks in 137 villages. The programme emphasizes strong community participation, which has been shown to improve

the quality of education. Most educators are local village women with limited formal education, reinforcing the programme's grassroots and locally responsive approach. PROPEL has successfully reached children—particularly girls—who would otherwise lack access to schooling, demonstrating that participatory teaching methods and community awareness can significantly enhance educational quality.

Farm Radio International in Africa: Farm Radio International uses radio broadcasts to provide non-formal education to farmers in Africa. The organization produces educational programs on topics such as agricultural techniques, climate change adaptation, and market access, reaching millions of listeners in rural areas. The radio programs are interactive, allowing farmers to ask questions and share their experiences. This approach has improved agricultural productivity, food security, and livelihoods, empowering farmers to make informed decisions and adopt sustainable practices.

Zapatista Autonomous Education in Mexico: The Zapatista movement in Mexico has established a network of autonomous schools that provide non-formal education to Indigenous communities in Chiapas. The curriculum is designed by the communities themselves and focuses on Indigenous culture, history, and language, as well as practical skills like farming and carpentry. The schools are managed collectively by the communities and operate independently of the state. This model of non-formal education has empowered Indigenous people to reclaim their cultural identity and resist marginalization, while also addressing their educational and economic needs.

ProLiteracy in the United States: ProLiteracy is an organization in the United States that supports adult literacy programs across the country. Through non-formal education, ProLiteracy helps adults improve their reading, writing, and math skills, enabling them to achieve personal and professional goals. The organization also provides training and resources to local literacy programs, enhancing their capacity to serve learners. ProLiteracy's work has empowered thousands of adults to pursue higher education, secure better jobs, and participate more fully in their communities.

Impact of Non-Formal Education on Communities

- **Economic Empowerment:** Non-formal education equips individuals with the skills needed to start businesses, improve agricultural practices, or secure better-paying jobs. This economic empowerment leads to increased household income, improved living standards, and greater financial independence.
- **Social Inclusion:** Non-formal education promotes social inclusion by providing learning opportunities to marginalized groups, including women, Indigenous people, and those in remote areas. It helps to bridge the gap between formal education and those who have been excluded from it, fostering a more equitable society.
- **Sustainable Development:** Many non-formal education programs focus on sustainability, teaching communities how to manage natural resources, adapt to climate change, and adopt environmentally friendly practices. These programs contribute to long-term community resilience and environmental stewardship.

Top Youth Empowerment Activities to Inspire and Engage Young Leaders

Youth empowerment activities offer practical methods to boost confidence, develop leadership, and foster responsibility. Youth empowerment equips young people with decision-making skills and confidence, allowing them to create positive change in their communities. Activities like leadership training, mentorship, and creative self-expression significantly enhance teens' confidence, resilience, and sense of purpose. Engagement in volunteer programs and advocacy training fosters a sense of social responsibility and active citizenship among young people.

1. Understanding Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment involves:

- Equipping young people with decision-making abilities and skills for positive change.
- Recognizing their potential and providing necessary tools.
- Providing quality education as the foundation, arming teens with knowledge and skills to navigate their world.

A vital aspect of youth empowerment is enabling teens to find their voice. When they feel heard, engaged and motivation increase. Programs like LEVEL UP educate teens about their power and control, reinforcing that their opinions matter.

Parents, teachers, and mentors play a pivotal role model in shaping young people and other young people into responsible adults. Empowering youth means believing in their potential to achieve remarkable things with the right support and opportunities.

These activities encourage young people to take charge of their lives and positively impact their communities, helping each young person realize their potential.

2. Benefits of Youth Empowerment Activities

Youth empowerment activities offer numerous benefits that can transform young lives. A significant advantage is the boost in confidence and motivation teens experience. Recognizing and supporting their ambitions helps teenagers develop a sense of purpose and drive to pursue their goals.

Involving youth in community initiatives helps them develop essential skills and confidence. These activities enhance empathy, social responsibility, and provide invaluable hands-on experiences for personal growth.

Activities promoting self-expression, leadership skills, and positive risk-taking act play the most important thing role in helping teens navigate adolescence in the middle ages and emerge as confident, capable individuals.

3. Promoting Self-Expression

Self-expression is a cornerstone of youth empowerment. Teens can creatively express themselves through:

- ***Writing***
- ***Painting***
- ***Photography***

These activities help them communicate their thoughts, feelings, and individuality, fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Creative self-expression enhances self-esteem and fosters creativity among adolescents. Encouraging teens to explore their creative side, whether through words, art, or music, can profoundly impact their self-confidence and overall well-being.

4. Developing Leadership Skills

Developing leadership skills is another critical benefit of youth empowerment activities. Youth programs allow teens to:

- Take on tasks that build their leadership capabilities and accountability
- Engage in advocacy training to participate in civic issues
- Articulate their views and influence community discussions

Opportunities for teens to take on leadership roles foster accountability and confidence. Encouraging young individuals to lead helps them develop the skills needed to become effective leaders in their communities and beyond as part of a team.

5. Encouraging Positive Risk-Taking

Positive risks empower teens to be themselves and make independent choices. Youth empowerment activities encourage them to pursue their interests and new experiences, building confidence and resilience, creating a positive impact.

Such experiences can lead to personal growth and a stronger sense of self, highlighting the difference in one's perspective.

6. Effective Youth Empowerment Activities

With a grasp of youth empowerment benefits, it's time to explore effective activities to inspire and motivate teens. Vision board creation, youth-led initiatives, and mentorship programs empower youth by providing opportunities to set goals, take ownership of ideas, and receive guidance from experienced mentors.

Youth volunteer programs inspire young people by connecting them with diverse communities and helping them acquire new skills. These activities encourage teens to actively participate in their communities, fostering responsibility and civic engagement.

Participating in these activities helps teens develop leadership skills, build confidence, and create positive change in their lives and communities. Here's a closer look at how each activity can empower teens.

7. Vision Board Creation

Vision board creation helps teens visualize and set goals for their future. By making vision boards, they can articulate aspirations and outline concrete plans to achieve them, encouraging big dreams and focus on goals.

8. Youth-Led Initiatives

Youth-led initiatives allow teens to take ownership of their ideas and positively impact their communities. These projects encourage peer collaboration and foster responsibility. By starting their own initiatives, teens can address various issues and contribute to positive change.

These initiatives also help young individuals develop leadership skills by encouraging them to lead projects. Taking on leadership roles teaches teens to navigate challenges and develop problem-solving skills, preparing them for future endeavors.

9. Mentorship Programs

Mentorship programs connect teens with experienced individuals who offer guidance and serve as role models. Through mentor relationships, teens receive inspiration and practical advice, helping them navigate challenges and make informed decisions.

Support from mentors can significantly enhance a young person's sense of autonomy and self-confidence. These programs provide the tools needed for teens to succeed and empower them to take charge of their own lives.

10. Building Resilience and Well-Being

- Building resilience and well-being is crucial for teens' overall development.
- Spiritual Encouragement Workshops
- Spiritual encouragement workshops provide teens with inspiration and strength through the word of God.

These sessions focus on sharing uplifting scripture, fostering faith, and encouraging young people to find confidence and resilience in their spiritual beliefs. By reflecting on biblical teachings, teens can develop a deeper sense of purpose, hope, and inner peace, which supports their mental and emotional well-being.

In these workshops, activities like group discussions, scripture memorization, and personal reflection help teens connect with their faith and understand how God's promises can empower them to overcome challenges.

Encouraging young people to lean on their spirituality promotes positive self-esteem and nurtures their overall well-being without involving practices like yoga. These activities help teens develop coping skills, build resilience, and improve their overall well-being.

Engaging in activities that enhance mental health helps adolescents navigate emotional difficulties and develop problem-solving abilities. Positive risks empower teens to overcome fears and develop coping strategies, fostering resilience and self-efficacy.

Participation in physical fitness challenges promotes physical health and fosters social connections among participants, enhancing their sense of belonging and well-being. Here's a deeper look at these activities.

11. Physical Fitness Challenges

Participating in physical fitness activities promotes overall health and well-being in teens. Physical exercise releases endorphins, enhancing mood and reducing stress. Group fitness activities foster a sense of community and motivation among participants.

Physical fitness challenges encourage teamwork and social connections, enhancing a teen's sense of belonging and well-being. These challenge help teens develop physical and social skills, contributing to overall resilience.

12. Supporting Dreams and Goals

Supporting teens' dreams and goals is crucial for youth empowerment. Goal-setting workshops and career exploration programs help teens articulate their aspirations and develop actionable steps to achieve them. These activities provide the necessary guidance and support for teens to succeed.

Mentorship programs are also vital in supporting teens' dreams and goals. By sharing experiences and providing practical advice, mentors help teens develop problem-solving skills and confidence in their abilities. Engaging activities help youth internalize their goals and aspirations.

Participating in empowerment activities helps teens develop essential life skills to navigate challenges and realize their full potential. Here's a closer look at goal-setting workshops and career exploration resources programs.

14. Goal-Setting Workshops

Structured goal-setting workshops help youths break down their aspirations into actionable steps, increasing their chances of successful outcomes. These workshops teach teens to create specific, measurable objectives that guide their progress toward a common goal. By articulating ambitions and outlining practical steps, teens stay focused and motivated.

Creating vision boards as part of goal-setting workshops helps teenagers visualize aspirations and set concrete goals for the future. Using images and quotes on a vision board enhances motivation and provides clarity for their goals.

Effective communication and honesty from adults in these workshops help young people build self-awareness and make informed decisions.

14. Career Exploration Programs

Career exploration initiatives give teens first-hand experiences in various fields, helping them make informed career choices. Such programs provide valuable insights into different professions, helping teens understand the skills and education required for various careers.

These programs enable youth to investigate various careers and make informed future choices. Exploring many programs and different career paths helps teens understand their interests and develop a clearer vision for their future. This knowledge empowers them to make decisions that align with their passions and strengths.

15. Community Engagement and Social Responsibility

Community engagement and social responsibility are vital components of youth empowerment. Participating in volunteer opportunities and advocacy training sessions helps teens develop a stronger sense of community and civic responsibility. These activities foster cooperation among organizations, schools, and community groups, creating a supportive environment for young people.

Creating culturally responsive programs ensures inclusivity for all community members. Community initiatives help teens understand their role as active citizens and encourage them to contribute positively to society through this program.

Let's explore how volunteer opportunities and advocacy training sessions can empower youth and join youth.

16. Volunteer Opportunities

Engaging in community service allows teens to connect with their surroundings and understand the importance of active participation in society. Teens can volunteer in various forms, such as working with local charities, participating in environmental clean-ups, or helping in community centers.

Volunteering benefits the community and enhances personal growth by developing skills, boosting self-esteem, and fostering empathy. Encouraging teens to take action through volunteer opportunities cultivates a lifelong commitment to social responsibility and civic engagement.

17. Advocacy Training Sessions

Education is a strong predictor of political participation, equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills. Schools can better prepare students for political participation by holding pre-voter-registration drives and teaching civic studies early.

Advocacy skills enable youth to articulate their views and influence decisions affecting their lives, promoting active citizenship. Advocacy training empowers teens to speak out on pressing issues, fostering a generation committed to social change.

Summary

- Youth empowerment activities are essential for helping teens develop the skills, confidence, and sense of responsibility they need to succeed.
- By promoting self-expression, developing leadership skills, and encouraging positive risk-taking, these activities provide a solid foundation for personal growth and community engagement. Effective activities such as vision board creation, youth-led initiatives, and mentorship programs offer practical ways to empower youth and create positive change.
- Building resilience and well-being through mindfulness workshops and physical fitness challenges, supporting dreams and goals with goal-setting workshops and career exploration programs, and fostering community engagement and social responsibility through volunteer opportunities and advocacy training sessions are all crucial for empowering teens.
- By engaging in these activities, young people can realize their full potential and make a positive impact on their communities and beyond.

INCLUSION

In a world marked by disparities, transformative inclusion strategies are crucial. More than just policies, they're catalysts for change, uplifting individuals with disabilities, women, and youth. As we strive for a society where everyone has equal rights and opportunities, we face numerous challenges, from systemic barriers to societal biases. The path to inclusion demands a steadfast commitment and innovative strategies. It's about celebrating diversity and recognizing our strength in differences. Special education is a beacon of hope, guiding students with disabilities towards empowerment. The story doesn't end there; it's also about economic and social empowerment for women and harnessing the dynamic spirit of the youth.

In today's rapidly changing world, youth workers face a powerful challenge: ensuring that every young person feels included and not left behind. Within this framework, inclusion is a transformative approach that reshapes youth work so all young people can participate, grow, and thrive.

Inclusion: More Than Just Being Present

In youth work, **inclusion** means making a conscious effort to guarantee equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of background, identity, or ability. It goes far beyond simply welcoming diversity. That's why it is very important to understand the difference between *Inclusion, Integration, Diversity* and *Accessibility*, in the first place.

While **integration** typically asks individuals to *fit in* to existing structures, inclusion actively reshapes those structures so everyone can participate on equal terms (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). On the other hand, while **diversity** tells us *who* is in the room, inclusion tells us whether everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute. Even **accessibility**, essential as it is, remains only a starting point. A wheelchair ramp in a youth centre removes a barrier, but true inclusion happens only when programmes fully engage young people with mobility difficulties in meaningful ways.

In an inclusive youth setting, all young people will feel a sense of belonging, knowing that they matter for who they are, and that they are accepted on their own terms. Inclusion will be "core and seamless" and not an "addition to what we are doing". At its essence, inclusion involves working from youth work or community principles where the focus is on empowerment, engagement, upskilling and capacity building, equity, social justice, and advocacy. It is based on values rooted in the principles of social justice.

If our approach is inclusive, diverse, and responsive, it will be evident across all areas in an organisation from youth work activities to policy and planning. An intrinsic goal will be the active involvement of people from minority and marginalised identities across the organisation – in staff, volunteers, management and at Board level, as well as youth members. Moreover, as our practice becomes more inclusive, diverse, and responsive in our organisations it will also influence how diversity and inclusion is accepted and embraced in the wider community.

To achieve this, inclusive attitudes and values amongst staff and volunteers, along with increased understanding, will in turn lead to good practice. Notwithstanding all the learning and signposting of indicators outlined in this resource, **if an organisation is inclusive and responsive it is usually evident within a few minutes of entering a youth setting – it is a feeling we get that shines out to us with its intent and commitment.**

Creating a space that is responsive to the needs of young people from minority and marginalized identities – including those with intersectional identities - will mean that inclusive practice is spread throughout the organisation. Many organisations can describe themselves as inclusive based on practice within some of their youth groups and through some of the staff and volunteers. However, **for our work to be inclusive, diverse, and responsive it needs to be evidenced in all our groups, and a whole organisation approach needs to be in place.**

Acknowledging and valuing the identities of minority and marginalised young people will happen in a variety of ways. **It will involve journeying with young people as they negotiate their own sense of belonging and acceptance for who they are, especially when they take on different identities in different social spaces,** such as being out as LGBTQI+ in one environment and not in others; finding ways to fit into different cultural norms depending whether they are in their home culture or an outside culture, such as the youth group; or negotiating social settings where they feel their life experiences are not understood by their peers (being a young career for example).



Inclusive education for students with disabilities

In a world that constantly evolves, education stands as the unshakable pillar supporting personal and societal growth. Yet, for students with disabilities, the educational landscape often presents less of a bridge and more of a series of hurdles. **Inclusive education** for students with disabilities transcends the realm of privilege and enters the domain of undeniable rights. It's about reimagining learning spaces—classrooms, curriculums, and campuses—as territories where diversity isn't just tolerated but celebrated. It's where barriers are acknowledged and dismantled, paving the way for a learning environment where every student feels valued, respected, and equally equipped to thrive.

How inclusion strategies are reshaping lives for women

In a world where the glass ceiling has often limited the ascent of many ambitious women, transformative inclusion strategies are not just creating cracks in that barrier; they are shattering it entirely. By fostering environments where women's voices are heard, valued, and acted upon, these strategies are reshaping societal norms and redefining what's possible for half of the population traditionally sidelined by the patriarchal system.

For instance, through targeted empowerment programs, women are gaining access to quality education, skill development, and employment opportunities that were once a distant dream. But it goes beyond economic independence; it's about recognizing and asserting their rights, challenging stereotypes, and taking charge of their destinies. It's about creating spaces where being a woman is not synonymous with being limited or less.

Inclusion strategies for women extend into every sphere, from the boardrooms, where their insights drive innovation and growth, to the political arena, where their leadership and perspective are guiding societal change. This transformation is not just about women; it's about the ripple effect their empowerment has on families, communities, and economies at large.

Empowering the youth through inclusion

The youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow; they are the agents of change today. Their energy, innovation, and resilience are the driving forces behind societal progress, but only if they are nurtured, encouraged, and included. Transformative inclusion strategies recognize the potential of the youth, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances, and invest in unlocking it.

By creating platforms for quality education, skill development, and civic engagement, these strategies ensure that the youth are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world. They focus on holistic development, from intellectual and emotional growth to social and ethical awareness, preparing the young generation not just to cope with the world's challenges but to actively contribute to solving them.

Inclusion means that every young person, whether a student with disabilities or someone battling socio-economic constraints, has a stake in the future. It's about ensuring that their ideas are heard, their talents are honed, and their dreams are achievable. It's about building a foundation of knowledge, confidence, and empathy that empowers them to be conscientious, connected, and committed citizens.

Inclusive Practices

No project is perfect and often striving for perfection can be a barrier to being good. Introducing inclusive practices is a process and something you can implement gradually over time. It is vital to start from a point of honest reflection to work out where is the baseline that you're starting from. This activity can help you establish your starting position and is purely for your own benefit.

Think of a recent project you delivered in your organisation. Consider the questions below to assess how inclusive your previous project was. What did you do well? What was missing? What could you do better? You may want to do this exercise with your colleagues and peers. You may do this in the style of a workshop, in a meeting, or as a desktop exercise.

- → How diverse was your project team and support team?
- → How much information did you have about your target groups and how did you cater for different people's needs?
- → How welcoming were you to new participants with different backgrounds, identities, and perspectives?
- → How well did you facilitate the active participation of all participants without discrimination, prejudice or judgement?

→ What structures did you introduce to provide a safe(r) space for people from marginalised and minoritised groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, people of colour, LGBTQI, women, people with disabilities)?
→ Does your organisational culture make the people involved feel (un)safe and (un)comfortable?
→ How did the topic of inclusion feature within the content of your project?
→ In which ways could you have been more effective by taking inclusion into account?

Inclusion Check list

Logistics

- **Do a mapping process**: consider what potential access needs you might encounter during and in the preparation for your project.
- **Refer positively to inclusion in your project communication**: make sure you say explicitly within your communications and call for participants that you encourage people with different needs to apply, that you will work collaboratively to be inclusive of people with access needs, and that you recognise the value of including people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- **Ask about needs at the start**: in the application process, ask all participants what their needs are.
- **Provide communications in different formats**: consider whether you can offer logistical information in different forms, for example large-print documents or translated documents.
- **Consider alternative to written application forms**: this means having application processes that don't just rely on writing.
- **Be reactive**: not everyone will feel comfortable disclosing their needs in the first instance, especially if they have experienced discrimination in past projects.

Finances

- **Factor in additional costs**: this could include the cost of providing taxis in exchange for public transport, ensuring accommodation is accessible, or covering the cost of interpreters and personal assistants.
- **Ask participants and team members what they need**: ask them what they would need, in an ideal world, to make sure their needs are accounted for.
- **Be flexible with participation fees**: can you set participation fees on a sliding scale based on ability to contribute? Can you introduce a flexible structure so fees can be reduced or removed for those who need it (with a discreet process)? Can you set up a solidarity system where those who can contribute more have the option to do so? Can you eliminate participation fees completely?
- **Pay for costs up front**: it's important to offer ways to book people's travel and pay for visas in advance, whether your organisation makes bookings directly or you offer payment in-advance.

Team & Atmosphere

- **Promote diversity and representation in the team**: this can help participants feel more included and have role models to identify with.
- **Establish clear, predetermined boundaries between team and participants**: team members naturally hold power over participants, as much as we like to think of everyone as equal.
- **Invest in building the capacities and expertise of your team**: offering training, mentoring or development programmes to your team around inclusion allows them to be more aware of difference, diversity, and intersectionality.
- **Foster a common understanding within your team**: this includes different aspects of your project, including what needs it addresses, what are the objectives and goals, and who are the key stakeholders.
- **Remember, actions speak louder than words**: team members should be sincere and be transparent about the goals, reasons and methods of what they are doing when involving or engaging diverse youth. Ensure coherence between the promotion of inclusion and team members' actions, language and practices.
- **Prioritise communication**: create open channels of communication between team members, and between the team and participants. This should be appropriate to the project, ensure a focused approach (quality over quantity), and consider different needs.
- **Create specific spaces for different groups** (e.g., LGBTQI+ space, women's space): this offers a solidarity space and sanctuary for specific groups away from the systemic and everyday oppression these groups face.
- **Have a safeguarding policy and designate trusted persons in the team**: having an organisational or project-specific safeguarding policy that outlines procedures for dealing with a safeguarding incident or disclosure of abuse should be in place, and all team members should be aware of it.
- **Be open to feedback**: create a positive feedback loop where participants can give feedback to the team, and they know it will be considered. We cannot know everything, but we can always improve, and feedback helps us do this. If team members are struggling with receiving feedback, remember there is training on this topic.

Participants

- **Find allies**: approach different communities or partner up with organisations working with specific target groups or that are already working in specific circles to access hard to reach communities.
- **Consider which platforms you use for publicity**: share calls for participants widely by doing research and finding out which platforms you can use to reach participants. This will differ depending on the region and target groups.
- **Consider diversity and objectivity in the selection of participants**: having multiple people reviewing the participants' applications allows different perspectives to be considered and challenges affinity bias.
- **Create a glossary**: this should consist of words and terms that are frequent related to the theme of your project.

- **Allow for self-identification and go beyond binaries**: participants should be able to self-identify. It can be good to give an option for 'preferred name' in application forms, in addition to the name shown in their passport.
- **Offer translation or informal interpretation**: identify any groups that may not be able to participate without translation and include this provision in your project delivery.
- **Identify an escalation process**: this is a process to deal with oppressive or discriminatory behaviours and is essential in a project.
- **Co-create ground rules**: a group agreement outlines the core values, expectations and behaviours in written form, which is co-created together with the participants.
- **Introduce a mental health charter**: understand and monitor the mood and the energy of the participants at different moments during the day or through specified check-in points.

Content

- **Take an intersectional approach**: intersectionality allows you to shape the content without fear of missing out certain groups and adds nuance to the topic of inclusion.
- **Harness the participants' personal experience**: one of your strongest tools in approaching inclusion as a topic is allowing participants to share their experiences in a safe and structured way.
- **Don't speak on behalf of other people or groups**: if you are discussing the experiences of a specific group, try to invite people with lived experience to share their realities instead of speaking on behalf of them.
- **Use experts wisely**: if you are struggling with a topic or think you need someone with specific expertise, use an external trainer, speaker or consultant.
- **Get a second opinion**: if you are unsure whether a session or certain content could perpetuate stereotypes or you have concerns about the potential consequences of tackling a topic, speak to someone else for advice and support. This can be someone from inside or outside of your organisation.
- **Be clear about content in advance**: this means that participants can know what to expect and to make them aware of timings. This can offer security to many and allow people with specific access needs to plan their participation. This is important especially for those that require assistance from others in sustaining their needs.
- **Have procedures in place to deal with discriminatory language or behaviour**: it is the responsibility of the team to challenge discriminatory comments or behaviours quickly and firmly.
- **Do not be afraid of stopping or changing a planned session** to challenge such behaviours or comments, even if you're worried about the timings of the programme.
- **Have procedures in place to deal with triggers**: if exploring sensitive topics or themes that could trigger past negative or traumatic experiences, tell the participants in advance so they can make a choice to leave beforehand.
- **Be aware of norms and ability to participate in activities**: consider how the needs of your group will be addressed in your sessions, especially when it comes to energisers and physical activities.
- **Analyse diversity in your external guests/representation**: if you are having expert input or organising a panel discussion, consider what the demographic of the

representation says. If a panel consists of all men, or all white people, or all people from one socioeconomic background, then it is not reflective of the diversity in society. Not only does this elevate only certain voices and experiences but will likely not elicit diverse or interesting discussions.

- **Use well-known methods when exploring sensitive issues**: if you are exploring an issue that is sensitive and unfamiliar to you, look to pre-existing methods that are available from reputable organisations and adapt them to your context.
- **Go beyond an intercultural evening**: be creative when thinking about spaces that could be used for participants to reflect on their similarities and differences.
- **Schedule time for daily reflections**: offer space for participants to reflect on their experiences in a project and an activity's programme on a daily basis.
- **Collect good practices**: don't start the work from scratch each time round – collate inclusive practices and new initiatives you've tried at the end of each activity for use in future projects.
- **Conduct an undertaking an inclusion audit**: using an external inclusion auditor, you can seek a critical analysis of the programme of your project prior or during the programme.

Online Activities

- **Ask about digital competences and available devices or internet connection**: during the application process, ask what participants would need to be included from a digital perspective, in addition to their other needs. Try to avoid asking people to disclose access needs for the first time in a public setting.
- **Offer training in advance**: if there is capacity, provide optional group or one-to-one training sessions for the participants about how to use the relevant online platforms and IT equipment needed for the project.
- **Have a test session**: in advance of the activity, offer a drop-in space for participants to use the platform on which the activity will be taking place.
- **Provide equipment**: if within the means of an organisation, having an equipment lending service where participants can borrow equipment such as laptops, headsets and dongles can facilitate digital inclusion and overcome financial barriers of online participation.
- **Create structures for communication**: agree and implement hand gestures to facilitate non-verbal communication. This will make the person speaking more aware and allow them to better read the room, which can be a challenge during online activities.
- **Utilise the function of your platform**: try not to slip into the habit of everything being in plenary in online activities. Breakout rooms are your friend. Be aware on some platforms you have the option of having random groups or assigned groups, and this should be decided in advance for each session.
- **Use closed captions and read things out**: to help people with hearing or language difficulties, offer the option for closed captions.
- **Assign a logistics person or team**: managing the logistics of an online session is a full-time role. It includes sharing content, arranging breakouts, managing speakers, and responding to participants' specific tech or connection issues.
- **Respect breaks**: some people's access needs mean that longer breaks are necessary. Be aware some people will have to take screen regular breaks too. Just because a meeting is online doesn't mean it's acceptable to remove or reduce breaks.

- **Get off the screen**: tasks that participants do by themselves, for example by taking a walk outside or moving around the house, can overcome screen fatigue and allow people to take better care of their own needs in the moment. Allow the options for participants to leave and re-join when they need to.
- **Encourage but don't enforce meeting norms**: there can be access reasons why people are unable to have their video on or make it difficult to switch the mute on and off.
- **Pick your platform carefully**: select your platform with the needs and abilities of your group in mind, as well as any organisational policies, for example around data protection. You could try: BlueJeans, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Gather Town, Whereby, Wonder or Google Meets.
- **Use tools for interactive methods**: these can help you keep your online activities interactive and consider different learning styles. Most have a basic function and a paid function. You could try: Padlet, Trello, IdeaBoardz, Mentimeter, Slide etc.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Achieve better mental wellbeing and end stigmatisation of mental health issues, thus promoting social inclusion of all young people.

A significant and increasing number of young people across Europe are expressing their concern at the prevalence of mental health issues such as high stress, anxiety, depression and other mental illnesses amongst their peers. Young people cite the immense societal pressures they face today, and express a need for better youth mental health provision.

Goals:

- Encourage the development of self-awareness and less competitive mindsets by fostering appreciation for individual skills and strengths.
- Safeguard the rights to work and to study of people with mental health issues both during and after illness to ensure their ability to pursue their own ambitions.
- Develop an inclusive intersectional approach to mental health provision for all, especially marginalised groups.
- Provide all professionals working with young people as well as family and friends with quality mental health first aid training.
- Provide inclusive, respectful and well-funded treatment by incorporating high quality mental health provision across all medical institutions.
- Focus on prevention measures that ensure young people are equipped with the knowledge and the skills required for better mental wellbeing.
- Fight stigma about mental health issues by developing awareness programmes.

Why Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing Matters for Young Changemakers

Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing are important in so many ways, including:

1. For Resilience and Perseverance

Youth change-makers often face challenges such as resistance, criticism, and setbacks in their efforts to create social change. A strong foundation in mental health helps build their personal toolbox to encounter these frustrations, cope with them, and even nurture their sense of resilience, allowing them to better manage adversities, and keep pushing toward their goals without burning out.

2. To Stimulate Creative Problem-Solving

Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing fosters creativity and cognitive flexibility, which are essential for coming up with innovative solutions to complex social issues. When youth leaders feel supported in their mental health, they have an enabling environment to explore new ideas, approach problems from new angles, and better leverage their inherent skills and creativity as a tool for change.

3. Towards Sustaining Long-Term Impact

Social change is often a marathon, not a sprint. Poor mental health can lead to burnout, discouragement, and the inability to sustain long-term initiatives. By prioritizing their mental health, youth changemakers can stay motivated and engaged over time, ensuring that their efforts are effective and enduring, leading to lasting and meaningful change in their communities.

4. For Healthy Relationships and Collaboration

Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing are essential for building healthy relationships and working in teams. Collaboration is often key to social impact, and at times, mental health challenges (for e.g., anxiety or depression) can negatively impact the way individuals communicate and connect with others. With the right support and care, they can continue to build strong relationships, practice empathy, and navigate different situations effectively.

5. For Self-Compassion and Avoiding Self-Destruction

Many young changemakers feel immense pressure to succeed, which can lead to perfectionism and self-criticism. Prioritizing mental health helps them practice self-compassion, manage their expectations, and avoid destructive habits that could derail their efforts.

6. Towards Empowering Others

As changemakers, youth often inspire and lead others in their communities. By taking care of their own mental health, they set a positive example and create a culture of mental health and psychosocial well-being among their peers. This not only strengthens their movement but also normalizes mental health as a priority for all.

And so much more! Simply put, a strong foundation of **mental health is foundational for young change-makers**.

Maintaining Mental Wellness as an Advocate

Balancing the energy you spend caring for others and yourself is vital for both your work and wellbeing! Each young person deals with their experiences differently. Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed and like your feelings are impossible to handle. Other times you may feel like you can handle your feelings, but they are always in the back of your mind bothering you. It is important to recognize that you have internal and external skills, knowledge and support that you can draw upon to find help and healing.

Maintaining Mental Wellness as an Advocate can be divided into three sections:

1. Caring for Your Emotions

To strive towards better physical and mental health, learn how to identify your emotions and how to handle them – this is also known as emotional regulation. Here are some ways to do this:

Check in with Yourself Regularly. Learning to become aware of how you feel is the first step towards managing your feelings. Make space each day to ask yourself: What feelings have I experienced today? What are the top three common feelings I have experienced this week? Think about what may have contributed to how you felt, good and bad, to help you identify triggers that make you feel bad or those that give you a boost.

Keep Reminding Yourself that All Feelings are OK. Learning to accept how you are feeling and to not dismiss your feelings is important. Remember that it is normal and healthy to feel a range of emotions. Sometimes, however, emotions lead to negative thoughts that affect how you act and cope. It can help to reframe this kind of negative thinking.

Find Positive Ways to Cope. When you experience negative or difficult feelings, it's important to find positive and safe ways to help you get through them. This could include listening to music, eating healthy meals, talking to a friend, or moving your body. Another activity is to write down three things you find fun and enjoyable and three people in your life who always help you feel good. Keep these as your go-tos when you feel you are having a difficult time.

Respectfully Communicate What You Want and Need. Feedback from youth advocates around the world reveal a common theme: Sometimes, it can be hard to say no or to ask for the things you need. In fact, being assertive is a learned skill, and as with any skill you become better at it with practice. As a youth activist and advocate, you might be good at communicating what you think and standing up for issues or others. How might you apply those same skills to communicating and advocating for your own needs?

Manage Stress. Everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives, and different techniques can help you handle this in a positive way. Slow, deep breathing is one of the simplest and quickest ways to calm the body when you feel overly stressed or experience strong difficult feelings.

2. Determining When You Need Help

It can feel scary to admit that you need support, but doing so is a sign of courage and strength.

Remember: You don't need to reach a breaking point before you ask for help.

Here are eight signs that you might need support with managing your feelings or supporting your mental health and well-being:

- → Finding it hard to get out of bed or feeling tired all the time.
- → Withdrawing from and avoiding friends or tasks you need to do.
- → Losing interest in usual activities.
- → Having trouble concentrating.
- → Experiencing irritability.
- → Feeling sad most of the day, nearly every day.
- → Having thoughts or feelings of wanting to harm yourself or feeling like there is no point to life.
- → Experiencing any of the above for more than a couple of weeks.

3. Finding Help

It's important to know where to get information and support when you need them. *You are never alone.* Different support structures and methods are available to you at different points along your advocacy journey. Building a strong toolkit filled with supportive resources can help during difficult times.

You already have some tools that have taught you how to breathe, reflect on a situation or feelings, and gently move through adversity. If at any point you feel you are having a true mental health crisis, call your local emergency number or your medical contacts for referrals. If, however, you are not facing an emergency, you can find support in your friends and colleagues. When you need:

7. **Comfort**: talk to a friend who you trust
8. **Guidance**: turn to an adult you trust
9. **Support**: talk to a community leader or someone in your community who supports you
10. **Perspective**: interact and engage with other young people going through similar situations.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE AND MENTORSHIP

Intergenerational dialogue refers to meaningful conversations and interactions between people of different age groups — especially younger and older generations — that promote mutual learning, respect, and shared understanding. It's not about one generation *telling* the other what to think, but about **reciprocal exchange** of experiences, insights, and perspectives across age lines.

Mentorship — in this context — is a structured or semi-structured supportive relationship where individuals from one generation (often older adults) offer guidance, support, life experience, and professional or personal development advice to younger people, while also learning from the fresh ideas and skills (e.g., tech skills) younger generations bring.

Why It's Important

1. Bridges Generational Gaps

Intergenerational dialogue counters age-based stereotypes and misunderstandings by fostering **empathy and mutual respect**. Younger and older people gain deeper awareness of each other's realities, challenges, and aspirations, reducing ageism and fostering inclusion.

2. Strengthens Communities

When generations engage regularly — not just occasionally — communities become more cohesive and resilient. Shared projects and conversations enhance social cohesion and help people feel valued and connected.

3. Promotes Mutual Learning and Growth

Both generations bring unique assets:

- **Older generations** often provide wisdom, life experience, historical context, and emotional intelligence.
- **Younger generations** contribute innovation, tech fluency, and fresh perspectives. This mutual exchange enriches learning and supports lifelong development for all involved.

4. Fosters Personal Empowerment

For young women and youth, mentorship can mean improved confidence, social skills, career navigation, and access to networks. Older mentors can help mentees build resilience and agency, while thriving themselves through feeling purposeful and connected.

5. Contributes to Well-Being

Regular purposeful interactions across generations have been linked with improvements in mental and emotional health, cognitive engagement for older adults, and increased sense of belonging for youth

Benefits — Practical Impacts

Benefits for Younger Participants	Benefits for Older Participants	Societal Benefits
Builds confidence, social skills and career insight	Reduced loneliness, sense of purpose	Stronger social cohesion and inclusion
Broader worldview and empathy	Opportunity to share legacy and wisdom	Reduced age-based stereotypes
Exposure to life experience and networks	Learning new skills (e.g., digital literacy)	Enhanced community problem-solving

How It Can Be Organized

1. Structured Mentorship Programs

- **One-to-one pairing:** Pair young women with mentors from older generations based on interests, goals, or fields.
- **Group mentoring:** Mix small groups of youth and adults for collaborative learning and peer support.

Tips for success:

- Provide **training** for mentors and mentees on communication and expectations.
- Create a **clear framework** with goals, roles, and timelines.
- Encourage **mutual learning** — the relationship should not be solely top-down.

2. Interactive Dialogue Forums

- Design spaces (in person or online) where different ages can engage on shared topics:
- Community challenges (gender equality, sustainability)
- Career pathways and leadership
- Cultural practices and social norms

These dialogues should be **inclusive, safe, and structured**, with skilled facilitators encouraging respectful listening and shared reflection.

3. Community & Learning Activities

Examples include:

- **Workshops or storytelling circles** where life experiences and values are exchanged.
- **Joint skill-sharing sessions** (e.g., digital skills for elders, life skills for youth).
- **Volunteer or project-based collaboration** — gardening, advocacy campaigns, arts and culture.

Good Practices

✔ **Prepare participants** — use non-formal education methods to build facilitation, listening, and communication skills.

✔ **Normalize continuous engagement** — dialogue works best when regular, not one-off

✔ **Ensure equity** — give young women equal space and voice, and avoid tokenistic involvement.

✔ **Adapt to context** — tailor formats to cultures, community needs, and participant comfort.

? Is It Possible?

Absolutely. Intergenerational dialogue and mentorship have been successfully implemented in diverse settings — from community programs and schools to NGOs and advocacy networks. They're grounded in the principle that **every generation has value to offer**, and that meaningful exchange can empower individuals and transform communities. The key is **intentional design, facilitation, and commitment** to mutual respect and learning.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation



The most common framework to describe collaboration of "youth" and "adults" is the "Ladder of Youth Participation" by Roger Hart.

The Ladder of Participation is a model developed by Hart (1992) which identifies eight levels of young people's participation. This tool is important for recognizing the level of young people's participation. This ladder is designed to encourage anybody willing to work with young people to rethink the process of participation and inclusion of young people in any activity.

Roger Hart's "Ladder of Youth Participation" is a framework widely used to understand levels of youth involvement. The **top rung (8)** emphasizes **cooperation between adults and young people in decision-making**, where both generations share responsibility, plan together, and implement decisions collaboratively. This principle ensures that youth voices are not just heard but **actively shape outcomes**, promoting empowerment, ownership, and meaningful engagement.

Tip for Trainer/Facilitator

The ladder of participation helps the trainer or anybody who is organizing or holding a project for young people to critically evaluate the process. Moreover, he or she can reflect on the level of inclusion of young people in different activities or actions. Also, it can help each person to evaluate its personal awareness about the level of someone's participation. It is not rare to think that as trainer or organization, you are including and encouraging youth participation when in reality it's just one of the levels of participation. Facing the ignorance of the different levels, it is crucially important to become self-conscious about misjudging and labeling activities and actions as participation, when in reality it's just one level of participation.

Levels of non-participation (seeming involvement)

Manipulation	Ex. An example of manipulation is a situation where children are consulted but given no feedback at all. The most common method is for children to make drawings of something, such as their ideal playground. Adults collect the drawings and in some hidden manner synthesize the ideas to come up with 'the children's design' for a playground. The process of analysis is not shared with the children and is usually not even made transparent to other adults. The children have no idea how their ideas were used.
Decoration	Ex. Giving t-shirts to young people to represent someone's idea or motto without consulting them or asking them about their opinion on the matter. Young people are used as decorative figures in fake creation of youth-inclusive activity.

Tokenism	Ex. Tokenism might be a way to describe how children are sometimes used on conference panels. Articulate, charming children are selected by adults to sit on a panel with little or no substantive preparation on the subject and no consultation with their peers who, it is implied, they represent. If no explanation is given to the audience or to the children of how they were selected, and which children's perspectives they represent, this is usually sufficient indication that a project is not truly an example of participation.

Levels of participation

Assigned but informed	Ex. Adults decide on the project and young people volunteer for it. Young people understand the project and adults respect their views.
Consulted and informed	Ex. Young people sometimes work as consultants for adults in a manner that has great integrity. The project is designed and run by adults, but children understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously. An interesting example is available from the corporate world, a useful reminder that genuine participation experiences are important for all children in all settings. At Nickelodeon, a television company based in New York, new ideas for television programs are sometimes designed in consultation with children.
Adult-initiated shared decisions with young people	Ex. A community coordinator asks young people for event ideas for Youth Week. The young people suggest having a skating event. The coordinator and young people work together to make decisions and apply for funding.
Young people-initiated and directed	Ex. A group of students gets permission from the principal to run an environmental day. The students make the decisions and the schools provide support.
Young people-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Ex. Young people decide the need one-stop-shop in their village. They partner with adults from different organizations and together lobby the government for resources.

Conclusion

Non-formal education is more than a methodology—it is a mindset that places people, experiences, and participation at the center of learning. Throughout this toolkit, non-formal education has been presented as a flexible, inclusive, and transformative approach that responds to the real needs, realities, and aspirations of girls and young women. By valuing lived experiences, encouraging active engagement, and promoting learning beyond traditional classroom settings, non-formal education creates opportunities for meaningful empowerment to take place.

The tools, methods, and case studies shared in this toolkit demonstrate that empowerment is a process that requires intentional design, safe and supportive spaces, and skilled facilitation. Whether through theatre, digital youth work, experiential learning, or intergenerational dialogue, non-formal education enables girls and young women to build confidence, strengthen critical life skills, and find their voices as active participants in their communities. At the same time, it challenges harmful stereotypes, fosters inclusion, and promotes a culture of mutual respect and solidarity.

By highlighting regional realities—particularly within the MENA region—this toolkit emphasizes that empowerment strategies must be context-sensitive and community-driven. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, sustainable change emerges when youth workers, organizations, families, and institutions work together to remove barriers and support girls and young women in shaping their own pathways. The examples presented illustrate how non-formal education can be adapted to diverse social, cultural, and educational environments while maintaining its core values.

This toolkit is intended to be a living resource—one that encourages reflection, adaptation, and continuous learning. Users are invited not only to apply the methods described, but also to co-create new practices with young people, ensuring that their voices remain central to every process. Empowerment is not something that can be delivered; it is something that grows when trust, participation, and opportunity come together.

Users of this toolkit are encouraged to approach it with flexibility, creativity, and openness. The methods and examples presented are not meant to be applied rigidly, but rather adapted to the specific needs, contexts, and realities of both facilitators and participants. Every group of young people, girls and young women brings unique experiences, strengths, and challenges, and meaningful learning happens when activities are shaped together with them. By listening, experimenting, and reflecting, youth workers can transform these tools into powerful learning experiences that truly resonate. In doing so, this toolkit becomes not just a guide, but a starting point for continuous growth, collaboration, and lasting impact.

In a world facing increasing social, economic, and cultural challenges, investing in young people, girls and young women through non-formal education is both a responsibility and an opportunity. By embracing inclusive, participatory, and learner-centered approaches, youth workers and communities can contribute to more equitable, resilient, and engaged societies—where every girl and young woman is supported to believe in herself, claim her space, and actively shape her future.

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