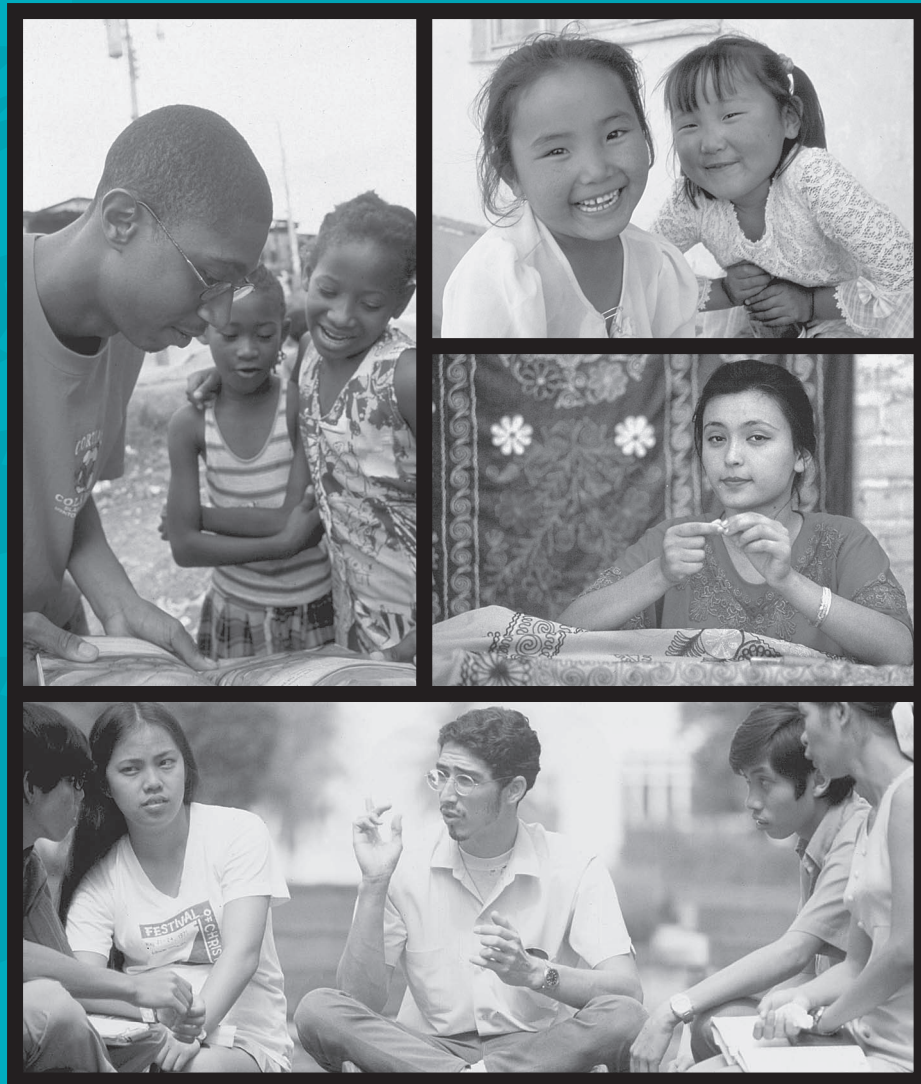


WORKING WITH YOUTH: APPROACHES FOR VOLUNTEERS



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Why a Volunteer Manual on Working With Youth?	1
Peace Corps Experience Working With Youth	2
Key Lessons That Inform This Manual	3
How to Use This Book	4
Acknowledgments	5
PART ONE: BEING WITH YOUTH	7
Working With Youth in Different Circumstances.....	7
A. In-School Youth	8
B. Out-of-School Youth.....	10
C. Differently Abled Youth.....	12
D. Street Children and Youth.....	14
E. Working Youth	16
F. Refugees and Internally Displaced Youth.....	16
G. Orphaned Youth	17
PART TWO: CREATING CREDIBILITY, ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY, AND BUILDING CAPACITY	19
Credibility: Understanding Your Community’s Youth Environment	19
Sustainability: Challenges and Responses	22
Building Capacity	24
Volunteer Roles	25
Communicating With Youth.....	25
Communicating With Parents or Guardians.....	27
A. The Volunteer as Mentor	29
B. The Volunteer as Youth Promoter	30
C. The Volunteer as Community Youth Developer	31
Basing Activities on Sound Theory and Experience	33
Stages of Adolescent Development.....	34
Approaches to Youth Development.....	38
Family Life, World of Work, Active Citizenship	39
Family Life	40
World of Work	42
Active Citizenship.....	44
40 Assets, Eight Asset Types	45
External Asset Types.....	45
Type 1: Support.....	46
Type 2: Empowerment.....	47

Type 3: Boundaries and Expectations.....	49
Type 4: Constructive Use of Time	51
Internal Asset Types.....	52
Type 5: Commitment to Learning.....	52
Type 6: Positive Values	54
Type 7: Social Competencies.....	56
Type 8: Positive Identity	58
Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating a Youth Development Activity.....	60
Planning and Implementing a Youth Development Activity.....	60
What Makes an Effective Youth Development Activity?	62
Youth Participation: What Is It?.....	64
The Community Action Cycle	69
Evaluating Along the Way.....	75
Saying Goodbye	78
PART THREE: TOOLS, TECHNIQUES, AND GAMES	81
Assessment Tools	81
For Volunteers	81
Youth Development Assets in Your Community	81
Observation.....	85
Asking Questions.....	86
Informal Interviews.....	87
For Youth.....	89
The Community Map.....	89
The Venn Diagram	89
Brainstorm	90
Group Interviews With Community Youth	90
In-Depth Interviews With Youth.....	90
Compiling Information	91
Presenting the Information.....	91
Planning Tools.....	92
Solution Tree	92
Choosing a “Winnable Victory”.....	93
Force Field Analysis: Assets and Obstacles	94
Task Analysis.....	95
Advisory Boards.....	95
Implementation Tools.....	96
Managing Group Dynamics	96
Facilitating Group Discussions.....	96
Some Icebreakers	98
Managing Conflict	99
Computer Activities	101
The Incredible Flying Dinosaur!.....	101
On the Road...in _____	101
Cookies!.....	102



Ecology Leadership Training Activities.....	103
Sensory Walk	103
Snapshot.....	103
Green Umbrellas	103
Habitat Lap Sit.....	103
Solid Waste Management.....	104
Fishing Dilemma.....	104
Coastal Treasure Hunt/Snorkeling	104
Reforestation Game	104
Girls' Empowerment Activities.....	106
<i>Girls Can Do Anything!</i> Banner	106
Participant-Led Discussions	106
Debate	107
Panel of Distinguished Women.....	107
Closing Ceremony	108
Evaluation Tools.....	109
Daily Evaluation of a Workshop	109
Musical Questions	109
Evaluation Posters.....	110
Likert Scale Questionnaire.....	110
Games, Songs, and Other Activities.....	111

PART FOUR: PROMISING ACTIVITIES 113

Activities	113
Some Thoughts on How to Read This Section	113
Adolescent Community Baseline Needs Assessment	117
After School Theater Group.....	119
Big Buddies Club	122
Bus Tour	125
Camp GLOW: Girls Leading Our World	127
Camp Peace Corps	130
Comprehensive Language Improvement Plan (CLIP).....	132
Computer Skills Training	135
Earth Day on the Street	138
English Language Drama Festival	141
English Language Summer Camp.....	143
Environmental Camps for Youth Leadership	146
Expressive Art: Communicating and Connecting	151
First-Aid Workshop.....	153
Future Farmers' Club	155
Geography Game	157
Girls' Community Basketball Training	160
Girls' Empowerment Workshop.....	162
Girls' Magazine	165
Healthy Bodies, Healthy Schools.....	167

Health Newsletter..... 168
Holiday Carnival 170
Library Club 172
Life Skills Training 173
Making Wooden Trash Bins 175
Men’s Health Clinic 177
Mural Painting With Youth 180
Peer Training Seminars for Reproductive Health Education 183
Produce and Sell Dolls 188
Reproductive Health Football Camp..... 190
Take Our Daughters to Work Day Conference..... 192
Take the Students to Work Day 195
Volunteer Open House – #1 198
Volunteer Open House – #2 202
Water Restoration Project..... 203
Women’s Essay Contest 206
Youth Credit Union 208
Youth Football Tournament..... 212
Youth Leadership Conference 214
Youth Mountain Club..... 216

PART FIVE: RESOURCES 219
Information Collection and Exchange (ICE) 219
Organizations..... 220
Bibliography 221
Endnotes 223



INTRODUCTION

WHY A VOLUNTEER MANUAL ON WORKING WITH YOUTH?

Since the first Volunteer stepped off the airplane in Accra, Ghana, in 1961, and in other countries around the world since then, local youth have been watching and interacting with Peace Corps Volunteers. Local young people offer Volunteers opportunities to develop enriching relationships that can satisfy Volunteers' aspirations to make a meaningful difference, participate in family life activities, and have fun.

Youth work crosses all sectors of Peace Corps projects. At various times during your Peace Corps experience, you will have opportunities to make a positive impact on the local young people. If your primary assignment is in the youth development area, we urge you to use this book to gather ideas for activities to support the goals and objectives of your Peace Corps Project Plan. If your primary responsibilities are in another sector, this book is for you too. Increasingly, youth are being recognized as an important and worthy group to target in development activities. This book can help you connect your project to young people.

Sustainable development must include young men and women. Helping youth build their knowledge and skills is an important investment in the future and should be part of every Volunteer's work. Fortunately, young women and men are like sponges. When given the opportunity, they can absorb and retain a wealth of information and experiences that can strongly influence their development and that of their families and communities.

This manual is intended to complement knowledge, intuition, and good intentions in your encounters with youth. It can support your efforts by helping you make more informed and thoughtful decisions as you engage young people in discussions and activities. Through advice and information from Volunteers, staff, and experts, this manual will provide you with creative and innovative



ideas for activities that are founded on development principles and gathered from experience throughout the world.

This manual is not only an information resource, but we hope also a source of encouragement and inspiration. We hope you will use it to look at your work through a different lens and further discover the potential of young people.

[When] we launched our youth-focused project crossing all sectors, the rationale was pretty simple and clear. All our Volunteers work with youth in some capacity during their service... and though youth here are often the most underutilized segment of the population...they are the most enthusiastic and open sector of our society...They can retain information, knowledge, and experiences which can...influence them as individuals and society at large. They are more open to new ideas and are much less resistant to changes than adults.

—APCD, TEFL
Program Manager,
Kazakhstan

PEACE CORPS EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH YOUTH

Recent estimates place Volunteers reaching over 225,000 in-and-out-of-school youth each year. The Volunteers work in all sectors: Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Business Development, and Youth Development. It is estimated that at least 40 percent of all Volunteers reach in-school youth while about 20 percent of all Volunteers reach community-based youth with information, skills training, opportunities, and nurturing relationships.

Many Volunteers who work in Youth Development Projects are doing life skills training and teaching healthy lifestyles and practices. This includes human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), alcohol and substance abuse prevention, and health peer education. Sports are popular points of connection. Volunteers also help young people become acquainted with and prepared for the world of work. They provide literacy and numeracy education that extends to setting up and supporting libraries and reading programs. Vocational skills development has included teaching entrepreneurial and employability skills and, in recent years, computer training. Volunteers work to engage young women and men through community service, environmental action, and leadership training. They also reach out to out-of-school, out-of-work youth. Over the years, more orphans and vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities, have become beneficiaries of Peace Corps projects.

Volunteers in all sectors have found ways to include youth in their projects. Agriculture Volunteers have involved youth in hillside agriculture and fish culture extension projects. Business Development Volunteers have worked to build youth marketing skills and helped improve organizational management of youth organizations. Environment and Education Volunteers have created camps and clubs to increase natural resources awareness and build English language skills. Health Volunteers have engaged young men and women in peer health education projects.

KEY LESSONS THAT INFORM THIS MANUAL

The most effective and sustainable work with youth, their families, and communities is represented in three important principles that form the underlying theme of working with youth:

1. Positive youth development

To help young people thrive:

- Surround them and their families with experiences, education, opportunities, and relationships that support development.
- See young men and women as resources to be developed rather than problems to be solved.

2. Youth participation

In projects and activities that affect them:

- Youth should participate at all stages of the life of a project or activity—planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Youth must receive the support and training necessary to succeed in contributing in ways that prepare them to be competent, caring, active, and responsible adults.

3. Asset-based community development

To help communities:

- Recognize that people are more energized when the focus is on aspirations and opportunities.
- Build on capacities, gifts, and strengths that are already in place.

WHO ARE “YOUTH” IN THIS MANUAL?

The descriptions and suggested activities are intended for youth between the ages of 10 and 20 years old. To avoid excessive use of one term, we refer to them as “youth,” “young people,” “young women” and “young men,” “adolescents,” and sometimes “kids” and “children.” We are also aware that there is great country-to-country variation in the use of these terms.

The United Nations system, in collecting demographic statistics, defines “youth” as those persons who are 15 to 24 years old. It is helpful to recognize that Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines “children” as persons up to the age of 18. This was an intentional effort to protect as many in this age grouping as possible.



The practical lesson here is that all activities have to be appropriate to the age, sex, culture, and developmental stage of the individuals involved. Part One of this manual is designed to help you address this. You may need to be more consistent in your use of terms in your locale. For example, it may not be appropriate to refer to 16 year olds as “children” in one sentence and “young adults” in another.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Working With Youth can be used in a variety of ways. You may want to read it completely starting with **Part One: Being With Youth**. This section provides information about the young people you may encounter in your community, lessons the Peace Corps has learned about working with youth, information about youth development, and suggestions to guide your planning.

Part Two: Tools, Techniques, and Games provides specific tools to use when conducting activities with young people. In **Promising Activities**, Volunteers share detailed descriptions of activities they implemented in their host communities and suggestions for others who want to try them.

Or you might prefer to pick up this manual and browse through it when you have a few minutes, starting with the sections that seem most relevant to your Peace Corps Project Plan, the needs of your community, or your own interests.

For example, if you are in an area where many youth live and work on the street, you may find that the section **Street Children and Youth** (p. 14) helps you understand and relate to them differently as you move around your community.

Reading **Volunteer Roles** (p. 25-32) will provide you with information about the multiple roles all adults can play in the lives of youth and help you convey the importance of positive role modeling to your Counterpart and other host country adults.

Looking for some community entry ideas that relate to youth? Consult **Creating Credibility, Addressing Sustainability, and Building Capacity** (p. 19-24) for ideas about how to build relationships with young people and gather information about the youth environment in your area.

When you are ready to take action, be sure to consult **Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating a Youth Activity** (p. 60-76) for ways to include youth work in your Peace Corps Project Plan. Then look through **Promising Activities** (p. 97-185) for some specific ideas to discuss with your Counterparts and Associate Peace Corps Director (APCD). If you are excited about an idea, but unsure if it would work in your community, consult **I Have a Great Idea. What Should I Do?** (p. 63).



Do you like to start with a theoretical framework? If so, you may want to begin with **Basing Activities on Sound Theory and Experience** (p. 33).

Looking for a quick activity that will build leadership skills? In addition to **Promising Activities**, look over the **Tools, Techniques, and Games** section (p. 81-111), which will give you some ideas and guidance on processes and activities to do with youth for assessing, planning, and managing group dynamics.

Want to do something just for fun this afternoon? See **60 Things to Do on the Spot** for a reminder list of all that stuff you did as a kid and may have forgotten about (p. 111).

However you decide to approach Working With Youth, we hope that you'll come back to it often and that it will inspire you to create meaningful connections with the youth in your community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The creation of this manual was a highly collaborative process. In addition to theory and expert opinions, it includes the experiences of the Volunteers working with youth around the world. In all cases, the projects would not have been possible without the dedicated work of their Counterparts, Volunteers who preceded them, and the local Peace Corps staff. The Peace Corps acknowledges the following people who contributed, enhanced, and reviewed the manual: Sandy Callier, Ana Maria Castro, Ana Coghlan, Juan Coward, Terri Elders, Carol Elsesser, Anita Friedman, Shari Howe, Erin Mone, Amber Myers, Michaeline Schuman, Yumi Sera, Chuck Wattles, Teri Wingate, Tameka Salis for research, and Betsy Devlin-Foltz for writing, in collaboration with Paul Sully, Community and Youth Development Specialist, the Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research, Peace Corps/Washington.

