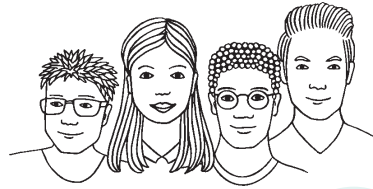


MODULE 3



Self-organising youth group in the MA

This module is for Young volunteers of the organization and staff or volunteers responsible for contact with the youth group

Introduction

For young people to be structurally involved at all levels of decision-making and implementation in the MA, they need to be well organised. This will support the democratic process of youth participation and prevent ad hoc participation by individuals.

This module is developed for young volunteers and youth groups in the MAs in EN. It will help you to improve the self-organisation of young volunteers and the youth group in the MA.

It includes the following sections:

1. Self-organisation by young volunteers in youth group in the MA in 10 steps
2. Challenges and opportunities
3. Team building in the youth group
4. Roles of young volunteers
5. Interactions with young volunteers: dos and don'ts

1. Self-organisation by young volunteers in youth groups in 10 steps

Being a member of the MA requires an understanding that organising a youth group can have different approaches. As such, you need to consider that you are autonomous but at the same time affiliated with the MA, and that you are working on the same cause – improving sexual and reproductive health and sexual rights in your community. One positive to bear in mind is that you are not starting from scratch. Young people have already started the movement, established your MA and have achieved some results in advancing SRHR. This means that the MA could share the experience and give your support and resources to organise yourselves. The young people should take actions to build upon what was already achieved and to push the MA to take measures that are appropriate to the current context and the needs of young people. On the other hand, you may feel this autonomy is lessened because you need to synchronise your vision, mission and strategies with the current frameworks of the MA. It should be made clear from the start how much autonomy you have within the MA. For IPPF, the age bracket of young volunteers is between 15-24 years.

There are many ways to organise a youth group. It is a process, it will not always be easy, and not everything needs to be perfect from the outset. But there are some core elements that need to be in place:

- Good collaboration between young people and between young people and the adults in the MA
- Setting achievable goals: Everyone should know where there is still work to do and how to keep on track
- Have regular meetings, face to face and online
- Enough resources: financial, physical and human resources
- Having someone in the organization that will be there for support

Once you have decided to organise, you can consider the following steps:
Note that the sequence of the steps can vary according to the context.

STEP 1. Recruit members/ call for young volunteers



More young people than ever before wanting to volunteer in their communities, in many different capacities. The greater diversity of young volunteers, the better, as they can have very different roles (see module 4) –There may already be a group of enthusiastic young volunteers, but the likelihood is that you will need new ones for different roles, too. So your next step is to get the word out about what you are doing. How you will do this will depend on how open and inclusive you are to all young people. For example, you need to ensure to remove barriers to disabled young people joining. Finding new members can be as simple as making an announcement in school, university or youth club meeting, or as complicated as running a campaign with radio public service announcements or a website linked to mobile messaging facilities and interactive digital TV platforms may help. There may also be national volunteering platforms you can use.

- If you have to start from scratch, start looking around and ask your young relatives, and among adult staff of the MA or children of close family friends.
- With all these possibilities, however, it's important that you don't forget the power of word of mouth. Getting your peer volunteers to promote the youth group is the best way to ensure that you have the members you want and need. This is often especially true when dealing with "at-risk" youth, who may not even attend school regularly.
- Any young person you approach, has her/his own motivations. It is important you start from the enthusiasm of young people and help them to find a place and opportunity in the youth group/ organization that addresses their motivation.
- While many young people have positive views of volunteering – such as the opportunity to help people out, be a good citizen and a way to gain skills and experience, unfortunately some still regard volunteering as limited to menial jobs in charity shops or hospitals, or as boring or uncool. At the same time, many young people already give time in their community but do not regard their efforts, in sports coaching or other fields, as volunteering. Overwhelmingly, young people are willing to volunteer if fulfilling and interesting roles are provided. More positive experiences of voluntary activity will be the best way to combat negative stereotypes of volunteering. Young people in focus groups say that volunteering opportunities need to present themselves as progressive, respected, relevant and beneficial both to themselves and to the community. These are all things to bear in mind when promoting voluntary opportunities. More young people could get involved if they had a greater awareness of: The potential benefits of volunteering. What they can gain from the experience. What is available. How to get involved. Young people say they would be motivated to volunteer by being told more about what they can gain from it themselves. So it is advisable to explicitly spell out in any advertisements or promotional material, the benefits to them as well as the benefits to the community. Highlighted benefits could be skills development, work experience, a reference, accreditation or something to put on a CV.
- Age of new volunteers: According to IPPF's policy, you are a young volunteer up to the age of 24.
- The MA can also take the initiative to invite young people to start a group





Case study: Care Home project in the UK

Two students were recruited by referral from a college and joined the Volunteering in Care Homes pilot project in the UK.

They were recruited and volunteered as a pair. This pairing off turned out to be successful and all new volunteers were paired with one other, sometimes more experienced, young volunteer

Volunteering in pairs, especially during the first period, proved beneficial because:

- volunteers could help, support and reassure each other
- volunteering in a pair enabled the volunteers to engage with more than one activity and reduced reliance and pressure on single volunteers
- each volunteer could cover for the other during any times of sickness, holiday or absence, giving volunteers a break without letting down residents.
- it helps develop and shares skills and knowledge;
- it enables sharing of resources and transport;
- it enables volunteers to develop friendships and supportive relationships;
- and it increases resilience, commitment, motivation and thus also retention.



Case Study: Mobilizing and retaining young volunteers

pro familia Germany was established in 1952. Today the organisation functions in 16 independent regional divisions. Since May 2017, a Youth Coordinator has been in post and around 50 young volunteers make up the young network pia – pro familia in action, which is active in different local structures and on national level.

From issue to mission

As pro familia is a well-established and a highly professionalised organisation in a big country, it was important to find a way to attract young volunteers to build youth participation in a participatory process. As financial and human resources are always an issue, and since the independent divisions of pro familia have different structures and different areas they are most active in, they wanted to find a way to get people to engage within the pre-existing structures to learn how structures could be changed to make them more welcoming and inclusive for young volunteers, and thereby improve retention without the need for significant financial investment.

Keep it smart and simple: Use existing events and build new spaces

pro familia began by organising a side-event for young people at the annual meeting of the national organisation where every division of pro familia can send young delegates to participate. This led to the formation of a small group which was to take a first communication "action" on a specific topic. After the annual event in 2017, they organised monthly Skype calls to plan the topic of the month for social media activity. The discussion also considered other events inside the structure of pro familia where young people could be included and how to build sustainable youth participation in the organisation. A resource was developed and sent out to the counselling centres. Divisions that had some resources to spare started by organising kick-off events. More and more opportunities were made available for young volunteers to participate in events organised on national and regional

level. Staff and members of the organisation were increasingly encouraged to think about how to build sustainable youth involvement, and young volunteers were invited to present the growing youth network. The impetus for our online connection was to bring together young people willing to engage in fostering structural change within pro familia in order to include young volunteers. This foundation of young volunteers would in turn be able to build more and more local groups organising events locally and staying connected nationally to exchange ideas and connect for bigger nationwide events. The MA provided some how-to guidelines:

- 1) a group can be created either by people from the same city that happen to all be in contact with the youth coordinator OR if there is one person that wants to create a group, they can organise a kick-off event to attract more people
- 2) there needs to be a regular event (monthly or every second week for example) or at least one future event young volunteers can participate in that you can already announce at the kick-off
- 3) the youth coordinator is there to answer any questions and give advice
- 4) youth participation has a dedicated section in every edition of the pro familia magazine (4 times a year)
- 5) youth participation is a regular part of the pro familia newsletter

At least one person should stay part of the national structure in order to exchange ideas and give support to the developing youth groups. In order to maintain the connection between staff and volunteers, all directors of regional divisions are informed about the topic of the month in the youth network and they can include their own topics and themes in the network – like an interactive organisation process.

Pia pro familia would recommend this process to other MAs because it uses financial and personal resources very efficiently and relies on the ability of young people to think critically and develop ideas that can be transformed into action. It creates a strong sense of belonging to the MA.

The biggest challenge is to accept that this mechanism allows things to develop organically.

You cannot predict the exact result at the beginning, as the mechanism depends heavily on the people involved in the process. For this mechanism to work, young people need to feel welcome to express their ideas. People need to listen to them. You need to be prepared to buffer some of the most critical voices and challenges via the Youth Coordinator and board members. You need to choose your words wisely when you are looking for new volunteers.

STEP 2. *Finding a safe space to meet*

You need to have a location where you can meet. If the location isn't absolutely clear, you might want to discuss with your MA what makes most sense for the group.

Think about the following:

- Would we and young people we want to recruit feel comfortable going there?
- Would there be any financial costs to our group?
- Would this venue be willing to help us out with resources, including using their computers, furniture or kitchen etc.?
- How difficult would it be for young people to get to this place?
- Is it going to be accessible after working hours or at times when young people are available to come

Discussing these questions (and others that members of your group might think of), will give you more clarity on how and where the youth group can meet and work

Meetings can also happen online.

STEP 3. *Coordination, rules and regulations part of the agreement of the MA*

Once you have established that you specifically want to volunteer for the issue of SRHR, you have an agreement with the MA, and secured a safe space it is time to organise things internally. To do so, the group should agree on some basic rules and regulations. These will have to prescribe what it means to be a member of the group, what the roles and responsibilities of the different members are, how decisions will be made, what behaviour will not be tolerated, how to elect a youth representative to the board or to conference etc. These rules can be revisited from time to time, and amended depending on the needs and the size of the group. For more tips, please take a look at [Annex 5 YSAFE Rules and Regulations](#)

Before developing your own rules and regulations, ask to read the MA's Constitution and policies. You can ask for help from the MA board to present the documents. In this process you will learn about governance, begin to understand how to organise the work of your group and be aligned with the MA. Don't forget to ask for the safeguarding policies and procedures. See more on this under 2.

Challenges and opportunities: What to do when there is a conflict or a case of harassment/abuse.

To ensure consistency and progress, it is helpful to appoint one or two people to coordinate the young volunteers or youth group of the MA. These people should be democratically chosen by young volunteers. Young volunteers should be encouraged to stand for this position, to try themselves (even if they haven't been in any leadership positions before) The tasks of the coordinator include:

- holding regular meetings with young volunteers and the MA
- ensuring the development of work plans
- coordinating and supporting the activities of young volunteers/youth group
- acting as a spokesperson for the young volunteers in the MA

STEP 4. *Define clear goals with group members*

Each youth group needs to define their identity. Before they establish their objectives, youth group members need to sit and discuss the following questions that will help them define: who they are; why they have decided to be SRHR activists; what they want to be and achieve; how they view themselves; what they can do within the limitations of the MA and what they want to change.

In other words, at the beginning you should agree on the purpose of the youth group. This will lead you to define your goals and objectives. You should focus on an achievable objective that will improve the sexual and reproductive health and improve the sexual rights of young people in your community. You might want to focus on an issue that is related to the needs of young people and which has not been addressed, or not addressed adequately.

As the youth group is part of the MA, the objectives need to be in line with the vision and mission of the MA.

- The better organised you are, the more likely it is your group will succeed.
- How should we go about doing that? Gather information and think about, what has been done before, what is still missing and what hasn't been tried before?
- Develop a plan (see annex) and share and discuss it with the MA

For more advice see <http://youthworkinit.com/tag/goal-setting/>

STEP 5. *Make agreements for collaboration with your Member Association*

Agreement with MA on whether there is a need for a more organised approach to youth participation in the organisation e.g. regular meetings with adult staff, preparation of board meetings etc. It is important to make some agreements together about how you will work together; what the human and financial support will be and how you will communicate with each other. You also need to get a clear understanding of and commitment to the policies, including the child protection policies of the MA. Depending on the strategic plan of the MA, you can agree on your roles and responsibilities in the MA.

One of the issues that need to be addressed is ensuring that young people are appointed as board members (20 %) of the MA in a transparent and democratic process. But this is not where youth participation should end. A youth group can achieve many more important goals. Furthermore, when young board members are appointed, it is important they maintain good relations by interacting with the rest of the youth group. See more in **Module 4: Young volunteers in governance.**

STEP 6. *Find out what resources are available to your group*

- Since your youth group and/or your volunteers are members of the MA, there should be resources available to help you. Find out what they are, and how you can access them.
- In addition to the MA, there may be other sources willing to support a youth organisation. Grants or mini-grants might be available from the (local) government, private sources or local coalitions; other organisations with similar goals might be willing to help you out. This support can come in many different forms, from money to a meeting place to free advertising. Ask around; see which resources similar organisations in your local area have managed to access, and ask how they got them. The United Way might be able to point you to some resources as well.
- Think about what you need and who might be able to help you get it most easily. Call the local radio station and ask what their policy is for producing and airing public service announcements (PSAs). And so on.

STEP 7. *Obtain and use those resources*

- Once you've found out what is possible, go for it! And don't forget to send a thank you note to whoever helps you out.
- It can be hard (and sometimes daunting) to ask for money or help from other people or organisations. This can be especially true for young people, who might find the idea of approaching a bank manager particularly overwhelming. Remember, though, that you're not asking for help for yourself, you're asking them to support a cause you believe in. So muster your courage and give it a try. One thing is sure: if you don't ask, you won't get the help your organisation needs. Set up a financial system, in collaboration with the MA, to monitor your expenses.

STEP 8. *Orient, train and meet youth group members*

- The SRHR knowledge of current and new young volunteers needs to be refreshed regularly. Depending on the roles and responsibilities of the youth group/young volunteers, a plan for capacity-building should be made. An induction programme for new members is a crucial component to be sure of their commitment. This should include information about the MA, rules and regulations, projects and programmes. "Aged out" youth group members can be particularly helpful in this. EN has developed a useful manual for this: A Volunteer can do anything (you can request a copy of the Manual from ENRO)

- Training sessions, seminars or workshops should not be limited to the SRHR field, but also cover different topics to attract a large number of young people who don't know about SRHR. This will also allow you to be competitive with other youth NGOs.
- It's important to have regular meetings with youth group members or young volunteers to ensure everyone is included and knows what is happening in the MA, as well as what the latest plans are and what kind of activities young volunteers can be involved in. A member of the MA staff should regularly attend this meeting
- According to the needs of members, the MA should be able to provide training and support to the youth group

Get to work!

- Now that you've decided what you want to do, get to it! With the hard work of planning behind you (at least for the moment), it's time take a deep breath and get stuck in!

STEP 9. Regularly and systematically have meetings and discussions with the MA

- Ensure that the MA assigns young volunteers real responsibilities and real work. If this done, and coupled with real support, there is a good chance that it will lead to real accomplishments. This often means starting small, and then as they young people become more adept and experienced, you can slowly make their responsibilities more challenging. In this way, competence should grow alongside confidence. Ensure that young volunteers are not used as free labour.
- Make sure that roles and rules are clearly defined: which decisions can be taken jointly, which can be taken by young people and which by the MA staff. Some decisions are out of the MA's hands as you need to be informed about that, too. All involved need to be straightforward and transparent. If not, you can quickly and easily lose the respect of young people.
- The MA should invite you to take part in decision-making processes, while developing strategies, annual work plans, conducting monitoring and evaluating of the activities, both when preparing the Annual Report and implementing activities. In doing so the MA should provide enough information and time so that you can consult the youth group and develop your position.
- Remember that every IPPF MA needs to comply with the accreditation standard of 20% board members under the age of 25.
- Finally, remember that both as the leader of the youth group and a staff member of the MA, you are a role model to the young people with whom you work. What you say and how you act (even outside of your "official" capacity) will not only influence their opinion of you, but also influence their decisions and actions in the future

STEP 10. Celebrate your successes!

Even if something wasn't the huge success you hoped it would be, everyone should give themselves credit for what is accomplished. Organising a youth group of any kind is hard work. Be sure to celebrate all of your small successes along the way. Not only do you deserve it, but celebrating will also help keep energy high, so that your group can move on to bigger and better things. The MA should also acknowledge the work and success of the youth group and young volunteers.



Extra reading

[Young time bank \(2006\) Involving young volunteers: A Toolkit](#)



Check-list

To ensure you are on the right track towards to a more structured approach for young volunteers /youth group of MA

To assess how well are you as young volunteers/youth group functioning, you can use the following checklist. Tick the elements that you already have in place and those you want to develop further. You should fill this in with a group of young volunteers

Category	We have	We need to develop 1. need to develop but is not urgent 2. development not perceived as needed 3. significant development is required	Comments
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Organizational capacity		1	2	3	
All young volunteers understand the youth group's vision on youth participation					
All young volunteers have contributed to the work plan of the youth group/young volunteer group					
All young volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities					
There is a clear plan for recruitment of new young volunteers; gender balance/social background etc.					
Young volunteers regularly meet face to face or online					
There is a democratic system in place to select coordinators and board members					
There are clear rules for selection to represent the young volunteers nationally and internationally					

Capacity building		1	2	3	
All young volunteers have had an induction session					
There is a capacity-building plan in place based on the needs and wants of young volunteers/youth groups					
Young volunteers/the youth group have access to relevant documents and are kept up to date on new resources on SRHR					

Collaboration with MA		1	2	3	
The youth group/young people are involved in the planning and policy development of the MA					
The MA provides support to young board members					
The MA ensures transparent annual budgets and other resources to young volunteers/ youth groups					
There are special measures taken so that young people can participate in the organisation (time etc.)					
The MA ensures young people have their own space and access to internet/computers					
Incentives?					
The MA ensures that young volunteers will not take over the work of staff members as cheap labourers					
Etc...					

Once you have filled in the checklist, share it with the young volunteers, the youth group and the MA. Make plans to prioritise and fill in the gaps.



2. Challenges and opportunities

a. Ageing out

After the age of 25, young people can no longer be elected to represent young people on the board and in governance. There are no formal mechanisms in place to transition them to other activities in the Federation, although many former youth volunteers/board members continue to engage in the MA as volunteers or in a range of other organisations, networks and issues.

Solution: The youth group together with the MA should capitalise on the potential of this group of young volunteers and should have a system in place to acknowledge and support them. After ageing out, the former young volunteers can remain engaged as volunteers of the MA and they can run for the Board seats. They can also remain active as volunteers or staff members in the MA or in a range of other organisations, networks and issues.

For instance they can become coaches/mentors for new (young) volunteers

b. Commitment of young volunteers

Young volunteers can be very busy with other activities, study, work, family, hobbies etc. They may not always be consistently available for all the activities.

Solution: It is important to find ways to keep the young volunteers interested. Their contribution should be enjoyable. It should also give them the opportunity to grow and help support them in their lives both now and in the future. They should never get the feeling that they are being 'used' as cheap labourers. Make time for fun activities and a system of remuneration of their activities

c. Conduct exit interviews when peer educators leave

Discuss with volunteers who leave the programme/youth group to find out what they liked and disliked about their role as peer educators, what recommendations they would make for programme improvement, and whether they still want to have a future role as adviser or mentor.

d. Power dynamics among young volunteers/in the youth group

Cohesion within the youth group and among young volunteers is crucial. There is no place for power play between young volunteers based on education, background, gender etc. All volunteers are equally valuable, no matter their contribution.

Solution: It is important to collaborate on developing a code of conduct which includes dos and don'ts of how young volunteers should engage with each other. Any form of discrimination or stigmatisation, sexual harassment, bullying (including online bullying) is not acceptable. This should be part of the induction and (refresher) training for young volunteers.

e. What to do when there is a conflict or a case of harassment/abuse?

This scenario can occur can happen in any group or organisation. There can be conflicts between youth members and between a youth member and someone from the MA. This is a difficult situation.

Solution: Keep all conversations transparent and professional, objective and pleasant, avoiding accusatory or judgmental remarks. Just because there is a conflict doesn't mean you should forget your reputation as a youth group/MA. All parties involved should be allowed to express themselves. As a coordinator, you need to address a conflict between youth members in a quiet respectful and objective way. It is important to get someone who knows about conflict resolution, and who is trusted by all parties, to mediate. Establish together how would like to move forward. The key is to get a commitment from the different parties to make change in order to move forward. However, if the relationship between both parties has deteriorated significantly, they are likely to want to put an end to it. Even if one party decides to leave, try to part positively.

In the event of abuse and harassment by an adult staff member or volunteer or a young volunteer, every MA has to have a safeguarding policy in place. Be well informed about the policy and who is the contact-person. Safeguarding policies should also be used to create an environment where there is no negligence or unnecessary exposure to avoidable risks for young people in the youth group and those you are working with. These policies are not designed to stifle the youth group's activities, to limit the spirit of adventure and enjoyment in your programmes or to start witch-hunts, and these policies are by no means designed to replace trust with suspicion and contempt between staff. Adopting a young person-centred approach means that children and young people should be involved in the development and implementation of safeguarding policies, because they often know best when they feel safe and what can be done to prevent harm. However, it is the responsibility of the adults and professionals involved to make sure that young people are kept safe.

Involving the young volunteers will help to promote an environment where their welfare is paramount and will help to establish a culture of honesty and openness. It is important that all members of the youth group know what they can and cannot do.

This example to do/not to do list is based on one from Dance4Life

What to do	What NOT to do
<p>Know the values of the organisation</p> <p>Know the cultural context you work in and how to behave accordingly</p> <p>Be open-minded and flexible about what young people need</p> <p>Treat all young people as equal</p> <p>Create open and transparent communication Encourage people to speak up</p> <p>Believe young people and trust them</p> <p>Use respectful language</p> <p>Seek consent for any activity</p> <p>Remain calm in difficult situations</p> <p>Listen to the concerns of others</p> <p>Seek solutions together instead of making decisions for young people</p> <p>Inform people about the risks of engaging in the activities</p> <p>Know the protocols and who to ask for help in case of (suspected) abuse</p>	<p>Have a sexual relationship with another trainer or co-facilitator</p> <p>Drink alcohol or smoke with participants</p> <p>Upload photos without permission</p> <p>Invite a participant to your (hotel) room</p> <p>Force anyone to do something against their will</p> <p>Intervene in personal relationships</p> <p>Manipulate participants for your own interest</p> <p>Embarrass others</p> <p>Break confidentiality (unless required by law)</p> <p>Laugh at people for their mistakes</p> <p>Engage in any activity that could be construed as sexual harassment, including sexting</p>

f. Young volunteers leaving the youth group

Young volunteers in your youth group cannot all have the same commitment and the same amount of time to invest in the youth group and its work. Sometimes young people spend a couple of months while others spend years as a member. However, we would expect our volunteers to finish what they have started and to announce that they are leaving in a timely matter.

Suggestions: Accept differences and allow young people to come and go according to their availability and interest. You should be open-minded and accepting of volunteers who have completed their commitments and want to move on to something else.

Do, however, always conduct exit interviews to find out what the young volunteer liked and disliked about their experience, and get ideas about how to improve the youth group.

Try to address all challenges on time. While volunteering, talk to each other about what is needed, whether the time and place of activities is convenient for the group, and whether everybody feels that their voice is heard when planning and making decisions.



Extra reading

[IPPF \(2016\) Globally Connected: Being a Young Volunteer in IPPF](#)

[UNFPA \(2008\) Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation](#)

A young volunteer can do anything! Resource pack for young volunteers in the IPPF European Network - please request a e-copy from the Youth Unit at the IPPF EN Regional Office.

3. Group dynamics and team building in your youth group

To ensure that your youth group can interact, communicate and work effectively, it is important to ensure equity and mutual respect. Having fun has a lot to do with enjoying being part of a team. On the other hand, “team players” can help us achieve better results when compared to more self-centred members or little cliques in your group. Help young people to relax, meet friends, make new relationships to have fun and to find support.

- As leader(s) in the youth group, ensure that you make the effort to find out how young people feel, not just what they know and can do
- Promote acceptance and understanding of others
- Actively comprehend, retain and respond. Be open to answering questions and check people’s understanding

Communicate clearly, concisely and unambiguously

There are some important principles to remember about team-building activities. First of all, they usually require at least two teams, as the name suggests, but occasionally you might choose to divide everyone into pairs or other small groups. There are many different ways of dividing groups, but it is essential that the everyone in the group should feel accepted. A simple numbering system will avoid the pitfalls of allowing the children to pick their own teams meaning no one feels rejected by the group.

Working together and all agreeing to do one’s best will help to create a good atmosphere. Taking time for solving problems is crucial for positive group dynamics. This is not a one-time activity, but something that needs to be done on a regular basis. Sharing responsibility should be done on an ongoing basis. Celebrating success and having fun together will contribute to good teamwork and will influence power dynamics in a positive way.

Sometimes team-building games can help when there are some problems or when cohesion in the group needs to be strengthened.

Some of the best team-building games and activities are very simple. They must also promote trust and a willingness to help each other out.

There are many manuals for team-building skills for youth groups. Here are some examples:
<https://youthgroupgames.com.au/category/3/team-building/>



More reading

Choice (2009) Youth - Led Organisations and SRHR : A step by step guide to creating sustainable youth-led organizations working on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

