

Involve adolescents and the community

Adolescents and community members should be actively involved in planning, implementing and supporting your intervention with the Adolescent Kit. As you move forward, take steps to ensure adolescents' and community members' ownership of your intervention. Use the processes that involve adults and adolescents in your programme as opportunities for them to build positive connections with each other.

1. Let adolescents take the lead

There are a lot of ways that adolescents can contribute to your work. Involve them from the start, by enlisting their support in collecting information about their situations, finding safe activity spaces, deciding on session schedules, and reaching out to vulnerable adolescents.

As you move forward, consult with adolescents regularly to learn more about their interests, concerns and needs, and to identify what they would like to achieve within their Adolescent Circles. Use this information to help adolescents to set goals regarding the **competencies** - knowledge, attitudes and skills - they would like to gain through their work, and to plan activities. Support them to set ground rules for their Circles, and to suggest ways to improve or adapt your intervention as you progress.



Empower adolescents as you work together. Allow adolescent girls and boys to take on different tasks and responsibilities, such as facilitating sessions, running energizers, taking care of activity spaces and managing supplies. Let them tackle more advanced projects and roles as they progress through the different stages (phases) of the Adolescent Circles approach, and encourage them come up with their own ideas for creative and innovative ways to work together. Support adolescents to focus on their own priorities, to decide which activities and projects they want to work on, and which issues they want to take action on! Insert icon for:

Let adolescents take the lead

Refer to the **Adolescent participation checklist** tool.

2. Involve the community from the start

From the start, it is also important to involve the community in planning and managing your intervention

Adults play a vital role in adolescents' lives.

Work to include parents, teachers, religious and community leaders and others in your intervention with the Adolescent Kit, and to bring adolescents and adults together.

with the Adolescent Kit. Without their commitment and input, you risk designing a programme for adolescents that may never get off the ground, or even worse, causes tension and conflict. As a starting point, it is a good idea to sit down with community stakeholders – parents, teachers, religious leaders and others – to explain what you are hoping to do with the Adolescent Kit. Ask for their views on how to best engage adolescents, how to reach the most vulnerable adolescent girls and boys, and ways that they could contribute to an intervention (for example through participation on the steering committee or leading certain activities). Discuss the types of activities they would like to see adolescents involved in, or skills they feel adolescent girls and boys could benefit from.

Community members can also be very helpful in giving you a sense of what is culturally appropriate (and inappropriate) and what activities with adolescents could cause tension. Try to understand adults' views toward adolescents and to take them into account when planning your intervention with the Adolescent Kit. Work to gain their commitment and support, and keep them involved as you move forward in your work with adolescents.



Refer to the **Consulting adults about adolescents** tool.

3. Involve community members in running interventions

Community members can play a number of key roles in running interventions with the Adolescent Kit. They can work as volunteers in the activity spaces, help to manage supplies and contribute as 'guest facilitators' to sessions. They can also help to directly manage interventions by working on the programme steering committee, and collaborating with adolescents to make decisions and plans.

Refer to **Supporting adults to work with adolescents** tool.

Encourage adults – parents, teachers, community leaders and anyone else who is interested – to get involved in your intervention. Hold community meetings to raise awareness about your work, invite community members to adolescents’ exhibitions and performances, hold regular meetings with parents and caregivers, and support adolescents to reach out to community members themselves.

4. Involve adults as mentors, teachers and cultural resources

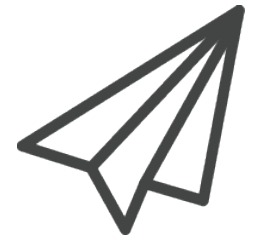
Community members can be great resources for adolescents who want to learn new skills and gain new knowledge. There may be experienced professionals, community workers or business owners who can talk to girls and boys about their work, or others who can teach adolescents skills



in particular areas, such as craftwork, sports or cooking. Adults can also share their knowledge of cultural traditions and historical events, and help adolescents to take pride in their heritage and identity.

Reach out to adults who can share valuable skills and knowledge with adolescents and find ways to involve them in your intervention:

- ▶ Work with adolescents to make a list of community members who work in areas that interest them, or have skills they would like to learn.
- ▶ Invite those adults to participate in sessions with adolescents where they can share some of their knowledge and teach the adolescents skills. This could be anything from storytelling to carpentry sessions, or orientations on particular professions such as hairdressing, health work or accounting.
- ▶ Encourage any adult who is interested to get involved! Nearly everyone has something they are good at or know about that they could share with adolescents– from dancing, cooking, playing traditional sports, parenting and telling stories, to language skills, expertise in professional areas, or knowledge about other countries and cultures.
- ▶ Consider organising a ‘learning workshop’ with adolescents to bring in different adults who can talk about their areas of expertise or teach a particular skill.
- ▶ Support adolescents (with their facilitators), to find and connect with adults and other young people who can support their learning and activities with the Adolescent Kit.



Adults as resources

Even during difficult times communities have people with energy and expertise who can support adolescents:

- ▶ Teachers and facilitators
- ▶ Coaches and athletes
- ▶ Artists
- ▶ Storytellers
- ▶ Musicians
- ▶ Elders and religious leaders
- ▶ Historians, scholars, traditional knowledge bearers
- ▶ Craft experts and builders
- ▶ Entrepreneurs and business owners
- ▶ Doctors, nurses, health workers
- ▶ Social workers, community workers
- ▶ People with expertise in tailoring, needlework, carpentry, computers, cooking, hair dressing, woodwork, mechanics and other areas adolescents are interested in
- ▶ Mothers, fathers

Community members can contribute on a one-time basis or more regularly – depending on their availability and the interests of adolescents. Encourage adult community members to interact with adolescent girls and boys in a participatory way (rather than simply lecturing), and to give adolescents a chance to try out and practice the skills they teach.

5. Find ways for adults and adolescents to connect

Adults’ support and involvement can make a huge difference to adolescents. In humanitarian situations

however, adolescents' relationships are often disrupted. In some cases adolescents may be separated from parents or other important adults in their lives. They may lack role models or trusted adults they can go to for guidance, or have troubled relationships with caregivers and other adults.

Supporting adolescents to connect with adults can help to reinforce their sense of themselves as members of their household, community or society. Adults too, can benefit from stronger relationships with young people, and may enjoy the energy and creativity adolescents bring to their time together.



Support adolescents to connect with adults, both within their families and household in and the wider community, by:

- ▶ Supporting them to develop and practice **competencies** – skills, knowledge and attitudes – that can help them to strengthen their relationships with important adults in their lives, such as caregivers and relatives; this could include activities that encourage empathy for others, help adolescents to communicate better or give them strategies for resolving conflicts peacefully;
- ▶ Helping them to identify adults who could serve as their mentors – by spending time with them, listening to their concerns, and encouraging them;
- ▶ Preparing them to collaborate positively with adults – for example, on steering committees, through community dialogues, within humanitarian relief efforts or peacebuilding initiatives;
- ▶ Encouraging them to conduct projects to examine the perspectives and stories of different adults in the community;
- ▶ Providing them with opportunities to connect with the wider community through exhibitions of their work, music, dance or drama performances, sports tournaments and other events – these can help to bring people together to have fun in challenging circumstances, as well as to highlight adolescents' achievements.

Adolescent representatives

Select adolescent representatives to steering committees through a fair, transparent process that everyone understands. Make sure that the most vulnerable adolescents aren't overlooked, and consider including equal numbers of boys and girls, those with and without disabilities, and adolescents from different age, ethnic, religious, language or clan groups, and geographic areas.

6. Support adolescents and community members to collaborate on decision making

Support adolescents to work with community members to manage interventions with the Adolescent Kit. This may involve collaborating with adults through formal decision-making structures such as steering committees,¹ or through their own adolescent committees. Refer to **Involving adolescents in management and oversight** tool.

Support adolescents to:

- ▶ **Participate in steering committees:** Encourage adolescents to choose representatives who can advocate for them within steering committee meetings and collaborate with adults on management decisions. Help them to understand the steering committee's rules and procedures and to develop positive and respectful working relationships with adults.
- ▶ **Organize their own management committee:** Support adolescents to form their own committee to help plan and oversee interventions. Adolescent committees can take responsibility for specific programme tasks, such as taking care of the activity spaces, maintaining supplies and collaborating with the Steering Committee to plan and manage activities.
- ▶ **Find other ways to participate in decisions:** Adolescents may have their own ideas for how they should be involved in managing interventions with the Adolescent Kit. Support them to come up with creative ways for collaborating with adults and for participating in programme decisions that affect them.

¹ The steering committee is the group of people who are responsible for overseeing and making decisions about your intervention with the Adolescent Kit. The Steering Committee may include representatives from UNICEF, implementing partners, local or national government officials, parents, and adolescents.

Don't forget! You will also need to work with your steering committee representatives (and other adults involved in your intervention) so that they are prepared to take adolescents' views seriously and to collaborate constructively.



Refer to **Supporting adults to work with adolescents** tool.

7. Work to build understanding between adults and adolescents

It is important to remember that there may be tensions between adolescents and adults in humanitarian situations, with distrust on both sides. Adults, particularly older generations, may be concerned about the ways in which adolescent girls and boys are challenging traditional roles, and how the 'normal' way of doing things is under threat. In conflict situations in particular, adolescents may be seen as troublemakers, or a source of problems, while in some cultures there may be limited acceptance of young people's right to express their views or participate in decisions.

In situations where there are divisions between adolescents and adults, try to foster more positive attitudes by providing them with opportunities to connect and collaborate together. Find ways for adults and adolescents to work together on joint cultural events and community development projects, as well as relief efforts, such as camp management committees, early warning systems and reconstruction efforts.

Try to create a sense of unity by providing opportunities for adults and adolescents to work and have fun together – and to feel like they are on the same team.

Monitor and adapt

Make sure that you keep checking in with adolescents as you work together, and that you adapt your intervention to meet their changing circumstances and interests. Remember that they know better than anyone about their own lives and needs.

People may come and go in humanitarian situations, so it is important to keep reaching out to the community to find ways to involve other adults in your intervention. In particular, engage with new arrivals in the community to identify people with skills or knowledge they can share

with adolescents, and who may be interested in helping out with activities or volunteering for different tasks.

Work with adolescents to come up with new ways of connecting with their communities, and to adapt the themes of their exhibitions, performances and other public events to issues of interest or relevance to people around them. As you move forward with your intervention, be ready to take advantage of any new opportunities to bring adults and adolescents together, and to strengthen relationships at home and in the community.