



**Youth participation and youth-adult partnerships**  
Key to promoting reproductive health and addressing HIV and AIDS

**Youth Participation:** the active inclusion and engagement of young people at each level of decision-making pertaining to programs and policies, especially around those that address young people's needs.

**Youth-Adult Partnership:** Emphasizing an equitable working relationship between youth and adults, this term refers to a situation where "adults work in full partnership with young people on issues facing youth and/or on programs and policies affecting youth." Youth-adult partnerships are one form of youth participation.

**It's our right and it makes for more effective and sustainable programs.**

Young people have a fundamental right to be involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs that affect our lives. This right, and the resulting responsibility, is the basis for youth participation and youth-adult partnerships. In addition, involving us actively and meaningfully, including young people living with HIV (YPLHIV) is key to achieving better program results and outcomes.

True youth participation comes with active recognition that we are assets and resources in devising solutions in the global response to HIV. Involving us through youth-adult partnerships improves our knowledge, skills, and confidence. Equipped with support and training, we are the best advocates for our own sexual and reproductive health needs, and we provide policy makers and program managers with relevant perspectives and expertise particular to our lived realities. This, in turn, makes programs and policies more sustainable, relevant and targeted.

**With nearly half of all new HIV infections occurring among young people 15-24, relevant and effective interventions are urgently needed.**

The alarming levels of HIV infection among young people, tell us that we must capitalize on the wealth and breadth of knowledge, skills, and ideas that young people bring to the table. Youth-adult partnerships provide an excellent way to harness young people's creative ideas into effective programs. Strategic partnerships linking youth-led and youth-serving organizations with services and education to improve the quality of youth reproductive health and HIV and AIDS programs must be supported, with appropriate human and financial resources.

Effective youth participation requires commitment from adults and youth alike. In order to avoid tokenism in these partnerships, sufficient preparation should be undertaken to determine the needs of all stakeholders. Luckily many organizations have documented their successful practices in youth-adult partnerships, and good examples abound.

For specific ideas on how to effectively involve young people in program or policy work and for examples of effective youth-adult partnerships, please visit the Commitments Desk at the Youth Pavilion in the Global Village and check out our website: <http://youthaids2008.org>.

*Partially adapted from "Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation" YouthNet/Family Health International in collaboration with Advocates for Youth. For more information, see FHI "Youth Participation and Leadership" [www.fhi.org/en/Youth/YouthNet/ProgramsAreas/YouthInvolvement/index.htm](http://www.fhi.org/en/Youth/YouthNet/ProgramsAreas/YouthInvolvement/index.htm) and Advocates for Youth "Youth Involvement in Prevention Programming" [www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iaq/involvement.htm](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iaq/involvement.htm)*

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The Mexico YouthForce promotes and facilitates meaningful youth participation and youth-adult partnerships to raise the visibility of youth HIV and AIDS issues before, during, and after the XVII International AIDS Conference through concrete action.

The Mexico YouthForce is a wide-ranging coalition of non-governmental and international organizations, coordinated by Advocates for Youth, Ave de Mexico, the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TakingITGlobal, and Youth Coalition. The YouthForce is supported by UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Summit Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and Plan International.