

KEY STEP 3: ASSESSING RISKS

3.1 Risk assessment & mitigation strategy



How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

Young people may have different attitudes to risk than Plan – or they may not have thought about risk at all.

Plan International may be in a position of power compared to the group/organisation – this brings risks for them that they need to consider.

The organisation/group may not have the financial systems and controls you usually require to grant money to them.

Taking people through situations that might occur rather than talking about risk in the abstract makes it easier to identify real risks.

Ask the question: what risks might you be taking by becoming a partner of Plan International? Be honest about the risks you feel you are taking in partnering with them and what you need to do to mitigate them.

Be prepared to take some risk when there will be a financial arrangement.

What could you do differently?



Things to consider

Don't overestimate the risks just because the organisation/group is organised differently from other partners – find out how they do things rather than checking if they do things the same way as you do.

Youth groups/organisations may not be organised like a larger NGO but often their accountability mechanisms are strong because they have strong legitimacy with their members.

When it comes to financial matters, little and often can be a good approach with simple reporting or compliance formalities.

**Useful tools:
Grant making
to youth-led
organisations**

3.2 Safeguarding

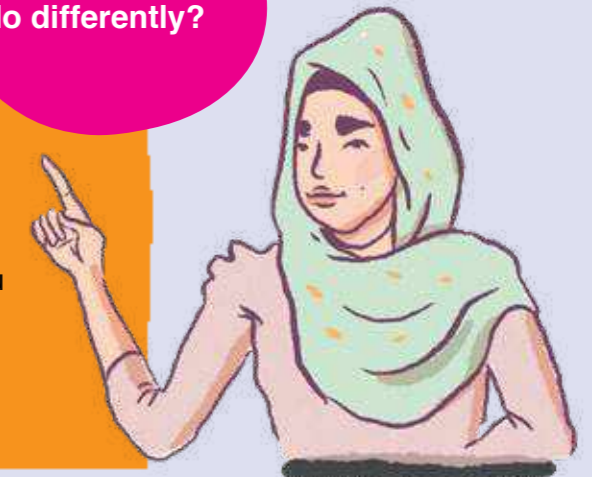


How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

Although they are no longer considered as children, young people are vulnerable to abuse. However, the legislation protecting them is different and may be absent or inadequate.

Youth organisations often lack access to mainstream civil society networks which makes them more vulnerable in e.g. shrinking space contexts.

What could you do differently?



Be aware of the legislation around safeguarding young people (if any) in your context.

Talk sensitively to young people about the need for safeguarding children they interact with – and about how they look after themselves and keep safe.

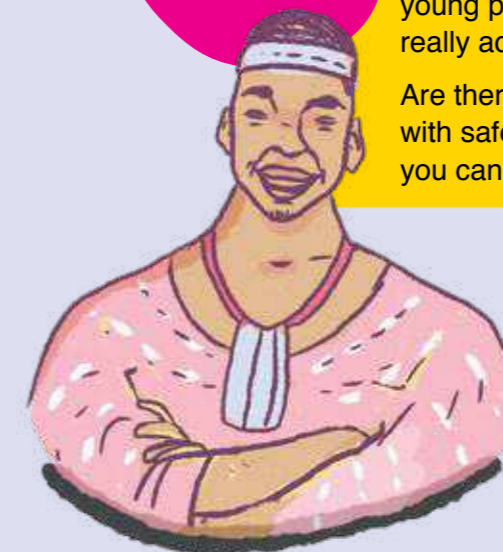
Focus on what they can do rather than acting as though you will be protecting them.

Different genders and excluded groups may be affected differently/require different safeguarding measures.

Things to consider

There may be no separate legislation to protect young people – does legislation aimed at adults really address their needs and vulnerabilities?

Are there other organisations that have experience with safeguarding and supporting young people that you can draw on?



KEY STEP 4: SIGNING AGREEMENTS

Partnership Agreement / MoU development



How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

The organisation/group may not be registered so a legally binding agreement may not be possible.
 Young people may find formal legal language difficult to understand.
 It may not be clear at the beginning how the partnership will develop and exactly what you will do together.

Decide together on the formality of the agreement needed for what you want to do together – a collaboration letter may be enough.

If the law or financial regulations require a formal agreement, look creatively at how you can achieve this. You could consider signing with a ‘supporting’ organisation but this should only be if no other option is possible.

Write the document in clear, simple language – use the local language if possible.

Consider writing the document together.

Allow flexibility but agree and be clear on minimum criteria that must be met on both sides.

Agree how decisions will be made and by whom.

Ensure that key corporate requirements (safeguarding, fraud clauses, code of conduct) are an integral part of the collaboration letter.

What could you do differently?



Things to consider

Make as long a commitment as you can.
 You could have a flexible overarching document and then more specific 3 or 6-month workplans.
 Who signs in a non-hierarchical organisation/group? If there is change of leadership in group / organisation or in Plan International, reiterate the letter of collaboration in meetings and make sure there is a common understanding of the purpose and nature of the partnership.



KEY STEP 5: MUTUAL OVERSIGHT

5.1 Communication Protocols



How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

Young people may not be able to meet at regular times. They may prefer to communicate by phone, text or social media rather than by email or letter.

Ask how they would like to communicate and how often.

Agree how you will record and track decisions.

Make sure they can communicate through one or two people that they know and trust. If those people need to change, take time to rebuild the relationship.

Identify preferably young staff in Plan who will collaborate or communicate with them.

What could you do differently?



Things to consider

Don't jump to conclusions if things go wrong or people do not do what you have agreed. Sit down with them and find out why things are not working. Be prepared to tear everything up and start again.



5.2 Reporting



How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

Young people may not want to read or write long reports.
Plan's ways of doing things may seem bureaucratic and a waste of time that could be spent actively doing things.



What could you do differently?

Agree together why reporting and reflecting on what you are doing is important and how it can improve action.
Make reporting part of a cycle of doing, learning and reflecting.
Agree together what needs to be reported on, why and how.
Keep it short – agree the minimum required.
Regular meetings might work better than written reports – agree the agenda together, document learning and decisions and plan next steps jointly.



Things to consider

What about using videos, images and emojis rather than words?
Podcasts might be a good way of reporting so people can listen on the go.
Let people use the language they are most comfortable with and pay for translation.
Consider graphic visuals for meeting reports.
As Plan staff you need to be open and flexible to make changes in Plan's requirements and processes for reporting.

KEY STEP 6: REGULAR FEEDBACK & ANNUAL REVIEWS

6.1 Feedback



How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

Young people may not be confident to give honest feedback and may fear repercussions. This may be because of previous experience with other organisations or because they perceive a power imbalance because of differences in age, size of organisation or access to resources.

Tell them about the annual partner survey and show them that it is confidential.
Discuss other ways they could give feedback confidentially.

Make a commitment to treat complaints seriously.
Always respond to and show how you have taken into account the feedback you are given.



What could you do differently?



Things to consider

Consider developing a youth-friendly version of the partnership survey that is more visual and entertaining.
Apps that let you develop polls or quizzes may be a good way to get instant feedback from young people.
You could set up a mutual oversight group with representatives from both organisations.

6.2 Reviews



How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?

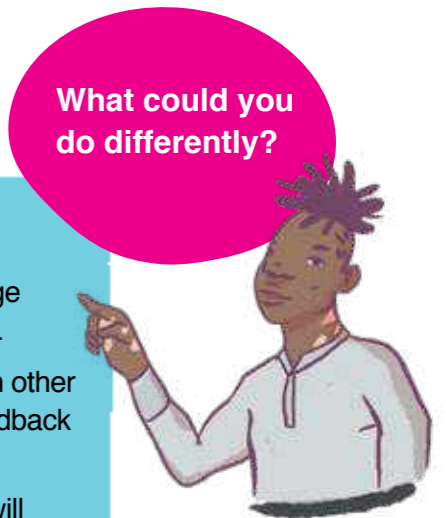
The differences are the same as for feedback and reporting (above).

Make the annual review as interactive as possible by co-creating them.

If possible and youth have time and interest, engage them in monitoring other Plan International projects.

Youth organisations/groups may enjoy meeting with other similar groups and be more forthcoming in their feedback if they can talk about it with others.

Be clear about what has been learnt and how this will change things going forward.



What could you do differently?



Things to consider

As 5.2 and 6.1 – polls, visuals, infographics and activities may work well to get people talking and engaged.

KEY STEP 7: EXIT & SUSTAINABILITY

7.1 Sustainability planning

How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?



The organisation/group may be very young and dynamic making it hard to plan for the long-term or be sure about how it will develop going forward.

Financial stability is very difficult to achieve.

Young people's organisations/groups may have high staff/member turnover as people get jobs, move to find work, have changes in their life circumstances.

Alternatively, some youth organisations end up being run by 'older' people because there is nowhere for young people to move on to.

Youth organisations are often member-based so member engagement is a key part of sustainability.

Encourage a practice of reflection or learning that will support the organisation's development. This should be an integral part of the reviewing process. This should include thinking about possible futures.

Support them to think deeply about what sustainability means for them and be prepared to support them to work to achieve this.

Make sure they participate in any proposal writing/project development – practice is important.

Go together to meet potential donors.

Provide extra support when key people leave.

Avoid decision-making which only involves one person from each organisation.

Include reflection on member engagement and include it in sustainability planning.

If possible establish seed funding for their sustainability and link them with potential partners for sustainability.

What could you do differently?



Things to consider

What will you do if:

A person beyond the age limit the organisation has set stays on as leader?

A small group of people begins to take power within the organisation?

Constant turnover of people makes it difficult to work together?

In all these cases, you will need to find sensitive ways of raising the issue with the organisation while making sure they make their own decisions about how to deal with the situation.

Discuss sustainability at each annual review – how long do they want to continue? What do they need in order to survive?

Consider starting with small levels of funding/activity and increasing as the organisation shows that it can manage financially and operationally.

Mentoring by experienced peers or respected elders can be a useful way of supporting growth and sustainability.

What is your role in building the sustainability of the organisation? How can you support without creating dependency?

7.2 Closure/ Exit

How might youth-led groups be different from other partners?



Young people who have experienced loss or desertion are vulnerable when a relationship ends suddenly.

It may be difficult to articulate at the beginning what a 'good ending' would be and there is a risk of dependency or sudden collapse of the organisation.

See 7.1

What could you do differently?

Always consider the future as well as the present – are you supporting autonomy and self-reliance or are you creating dependency?

Be honest and realistic about how long you can commit to supporting the organisation/group.

Encourage the group/organisation to build relationships with other organisations/donors that might support them.

Be clear about what the partnership is aiming to achieve and what success would look like – do this regularly, not just once.

At closure, review and get feedback from the organisation about how the partnership went and what Plan International could do better when working with other youth-led organisations. Build this learning into your practice..



Things to consider

Have a contingency plan for if a quick unplanned exit becomes necessary – this might be final grant to give the organisation time to find alternative funding or support from another agency.

If the organisation/group could get funding direct from the donor should Plan International still be acting as an intermediary?

Should we be encouraging donors to give funding to youth-led organisations directly? [The answer is yes!]

Grant management and financing
See Grantmaking to youth-led organisations





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To learn more about our actions for children, visit www.plan-international.org