



## Introduction

There is no universal definition of who are considered youths. The United Nations defines youth as young people between the ages of 15 and 24. However, the definition of youths can vary from country to country. For the purposes of this module, it will follow the WFDYS' definition of youth which is between the ages of 18 and 30. But in several countries, the age of youth can extend as late as 35. Youths are defined as such because they are in a transition between leaving compulsory education and entering the workforce, especially towards more independence. But the age range of youths often depends on a country's socio-cultural, political, financial, and economic dynamics.

As of 2012, youths account for nearly half of the world population, coming in at 50,5%. However, youths are not well represented in many areas, such as politics and societal decision-making processes. Only 2% of the world's parliamentarians are under the age of 30, and 2 out of 3 countries do not typically consult with youths on decisions that can potentially impact their lives and futures. For example, climate change will have an adverse impact on the stability and future of youths, especially in developing countries, where 80% of the youths live.

With youths having a large presence in the world, it is important to have youths participate in all avenues of decision-making opportunities. There are many reasons and benefits to ensure the inclusion of youths in any decision-making processes you are part of.

The United Nations have made several resolutions since 1965 regarding the important role the young people play in our world and to promote an increased participation and representation of youths in different aspects of life and during the decision-making processes. The role of youths is integrated in all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 Agenda as well.

### **Why is it important to set up a youth association / section?**

An organization should have a youth wing or section, so the youth have a chance to develop their own skills in their own space. This will become easier for them to develop confidence, courage and understanding the system of an organization. The youth wing/section should have their own general assembly, so they can learn the function of the general assembly, and democracy processes. They should also have some bylaws or internal rules discussion, but it is essential that it is bounded by the organization's statute or constitution. The organization president should be in attendance to highlight the cooperation and encourage a better positive image of the organization from the youth. This might encourage some youth to submit themselves as a candidate for a position on the board instead of the youth wing/section.



1. Potential benefit for the deaf community in educational, social, political, and economic areas
2. Demonstration of support for the whole deaf community
3. Empowerment of people through the sharing of information and knowledge
4. An opportunity for youth to share challenges experienced and opportunities
5. Expand networks with other country's youth association
6. Provide an opportunity for young people to develop further skills
7. Nurture the next generation
8. Project opportunities and ability for direct communication with WFDYS

## **How adults and youths work together**

It is very important for the older generation to understand the youth's background, environment and finding the appropriate approach. Such as, involving the youth in decision making process, allowing them to share their thoughts if they wish to share. Involve them in a project and allow them to gain some responsibilities and eventually if they made a mistake, allow it to happen, and have a discussion to reflect and evaluate the situation. It is very crucial that the youth feel they are allowed to try.

It is very important to involve the youth from the very beginning, so that they could contribute to ideas, goal making and experience the whole process together. The key is to work together, as a team. By achieving this, the youth are motivated and encouraged to continue their work, even when they grow older past the age limit, they might be motivated to join the organization board. This benefits the organization as the person has wealth of experience and skills on board. This is a good example of 'youth are our future' – an organization can have a good and strong future if they make a good and strong investment now. The organization's board members need to understand that they can shape how the future looks by their action today.

It is very crucial that there is a good strong communication or link between the organization and the wing/section so that both groups are aware of what is going on. An example situation would be inviting the president or chair of your youth wing/section to your organization's board meeting (they should be invited at every meeting) where they are allowed to voice their opinion but have no voting rights. Eventually, the president could deliver the report in person, which encouraged a rapport between the board and the president.

The president of your country's National Association of the Deaf is encouraged to maintain good and regular contact with the youth president/chair to ensure that the youth are achieving the mission or vision of the organization!

There are five steps / things that can improve the relationship between your national association and the youths in your country.



## 1. Cleaning up the clichés

Some stereotypes of youths and adults are discussed from their respective point of views. For youths, the prevailing stereotypes are usually about their hurriedness, short-term thinking, or lack of skills. They are a negative overview of youths, but they can be redefined as taking initiative, being creative and eagerness to learn. Similarly, the youths can have negative stereotypes of adults, which can be slow, prefer routine and/or choosing to ignore youths. Alternatively, the adults can be reframed as strategic, having experience and potential opportunities for teaching.

Additionally, both youths and adults often will say that the other side doesn't understand them or that they don't know. This clichéd stereotype is also an opportunity for building new knowledge within the organization if both youths and adults can try to share their perspectives and try to understand each other.

## 2. Practice empathy

Practicing empathy for adults means envisioning and trying to put themselves in the position of youths.

## 3. Identify the weaknesses and strengths

It is important to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of your deaf association regarding the youths. Could your weaknesses be improved by the contribution of youth? Consider how you can support the youth. You can use SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) for this purpose.

## 4. Communicate

Communication often is the best strategy to resolve any misunderstandings, lack of information or even learning new knowledge. A good communication skill is important to be able to empower the youth. Features of a good communication skill include:

- Discuss instead of explaining
- Evaluate together, starting by 'how can we do better next time?' 'What did we do great this time?'
- Asking them for their opinion.
- Constructive feedback (use sandwich approach)

## 5. Understand what leadership means

What is leadership? Why it is important for youths to be involved? You should encourage youth to develop their leadership skills.



## How to establish a youth association/ section

You can either establish and operate a Youth Section under your country's National Association or make it independent from your country's National Association of the Deaf (NAD). It doesn't matter if you wish to establish and operate a Youth Section or make it independent from the NAD, it really depends on support and resources.

### 1. Set up a Working Group

- Define the purpose and goals of the Working Group
- Plan action items in line with the timeline
- Set up a good communication system between youth, community members and the NAD
- Set up meetings and group work
- Prepare for the consultation process with youth and community members (a neutral approach to gathering information)

### 2. Consultation Round 1

Consult with different groups of members such as youth and sub-groups within the community

- Share the vision and goal of establishing a youth association / section
- Lead with discussion questions ie:
  - Identify the strengths and areas of improvement of youth community members
  - What do they want to see in the short and long term?
  - Identify the challenges and opportunities
- Gather ideas, suggestions, and feedback from the discussions
- Importance of receiving support and acknowledgement as part of the process to validate the youth association/section

Keep in mind that when organizing consultations, it is essential to include a diverse range of people (gender, race, region, sexuality etc.) to provide insight including multiple perspectives. There are no set numbers when setting up consultations – your Working Group can decide how many consultations to hold and how many persons should be part of each consultation – this is dependent on you feeling that you have sufficient information from the community so that their views are incorporated. More discussion questions examples you can use for your consultations:

- What issues need to be considered when setting up a youth association / section?
- Who will be involved?
- How will the wider community respond to the establishment of a youth association / section?
- How will you sustain interest in the youth association / section?
- How will you ensure diversity and inclusiveness?
- What training options can you deliver for young people?
- Do you have the management skill and capacity necessary to manage staff?
- Do you have the financial capacity to support the establishment of a youth association/section and continue ongoing operations?



- Do you can operate the association as an independent organization, or should it be a section of the NAD?

### **3. Relationship with your National Association of the Deaf (NAD)**

- How often should you communicate with the NAD?
- What kind of resources or support do you want from the NAD?
- Is the NAD willing to support the goal of establishing a Youth Association / Section?
- Is the NAD happy to share information (it may be useful to investigate the background of the NAD)?

If you are not sure who your NAD is or need some advice as to how to connect, please contact WFDYS for more information.

### **4. Prepare and develop**

After you have completed consultations with youth, community members and the NAD, you will have a lot of information that will help you to prepare and develop a solid structure with associated content for a youth association / section.

- Develop Action Plan
- Set youth association / section' s vision, mission, and purpose
- Set short- and long-term goals
- Draft Terms of Reference or a Constitution
- Develop criteria, composition, and structure
- Develop and promote public messages for the community

There are many ways to develop an Action Plan, there is no standard Action Plan, and the Action Plan doesn't have to be followed exactly, it can be amended so it is relevant to your country. Also, it may be worthwhile looking at your NAD's internal rules, statutes, or constitution. A tip – it is easier to apply for a Youth Ordinary Membership if some of your goals align with WFDYS' vision as it demonstrates you know the expectations.

Remember that this process may take time to implement and develop so that solid content is developed – it could take days or months depending on how much time you invest in the process and how well your working group shares the workload and supports each other.

This also may prompt some informal consultations with youths during the development phase. This can apply to local, regional, and national level – just remember that this information is just a guide. It is worth looking at your national association to see if they can be helpful/you can use some of their ideas.



## 5. Consultation Round 2

You can consult with the same group of members such as youth and sub-group community members from round 1. It could also be worthwhile to bring in some new members as they provide fresh eyes. Share the draft content that you have been developing:

- Action Plan
- The vision, mission, and purpose
- Short- and long-term goals
- Draft Terms of Reference or a Constitution
- Criteria, composition, and structure

You should also discuss i.e.: membership, decision making, governing board, operation as an independent body or under the NAD. Listen, gather, and make amendments before final revision.

## 6. Amend and Finalize

- Action Plan
- The vision, mission, and purpose
- Short- and long-term goals
- Terms of Reference or a Constitution (including governance, decision-making, membership)
- Criteria, composition, and structure
- Proofread and check with members
- Start preparing Call for Expressions of Interest
- Start the process to establish a Youth Association / Section formally
- It might be overwhelming with many documents, just remember to make sure to do many checks and don't rush anything. Take time to read thoroughly.

## 7. Call for Expressions of Interest

An Expression of Interest is a good approach to promote the new Youth Association / Section and recruit youth people who are interested in joining the new association when it is established. The promotional material may be referred to as an Expression of Interests, Board Member Nominations, Board Candidates Nominations or similar, depending on your preference. Make sure you include clear information about what to expect when joining, the goals and the motivation of the person to join when they prepare their video submissions. There are several ways to manage this process:

- Set up an external group to look after the Expressions of Interest
- Ask NAD to assist and work with independent youth to manage
- Ask community members to manage this (but they must be neutral)



## 8. Establish a Youth Association / Section formally

There are a few ways to establish a youth association / section – depending on what youth people prefer and what structure you want – independent or a section of the national deaf association. You can also discuss these issues with your WFDYS Regional Youth Secretariat for advice or support or even ask WFDYS for support. Options are:

- Host a General Assembly facilitated by a community member or a member of the NAD as a show of support
- If you prefer a section, the NAD may be able to help with the election process and then ratify the results
- Do both

Make sure the structure and content of the following is approved and validated by the majority of youth people within your community:

- Action Plan
- Vision, mission, and purpose
- Short- and long-term goals
- Terms of Reference or a Constitution (inc governance, decision-making, membership)

Importantly, elect the candidates based on Expressions of Interest received. Lastly, make a public statement.

## 9. Build a healthy relationship between new board members

It is important to encourage board members to get to know each other and set boundaries from the beginning. You should have a clear purpose of your youth association. Show respect for each other. It is also important to have good teamwork, good negotiation skills and good leadership skills. Remember to delegate tasks. Some more minor tasks should also be assigned from the start, such as arranging informal meetings, and social community events.

## 10. Start a new journey

It is a major achievement for the national community when a youth association / section is established. Just remember to enjoy your role and do your best for the whole community. Now it is a good opportunity for you to apply for Youth Ordinary Membership (YOM) with WFDYS. There are many benefits of joining WFDYS as a YOM: rights to vote at WFDYS Youth General Assembly, host a camp bid, send representatives to camp, direct communication with WFDYS and more. Benefits of being a YOM is a wonderful opportunity for youth to broaden their horizons and experiences on the international level. WFDYS have some relationships with other organizations internationally so there may be some workshops or webinars to participate in too.



How to apply for Youth Ordinary Membership:

- Contact WFDYS (email: [info@wfdys.org](mailto:info@wfdys.org)) for a Youth Ordinary Membership form
- You will need to fill out the form and attach required documents such as statutes, internal rules, board background and verification form signed by your NAD (WFD Ordinary Member)