

*A Concise Handbook  
for Secondary Schools*  
Ver 1.1 January 2026



# Youth Empowerment Clubs (YEC) A Concise Handbook for Secondary Schools

VER. 1.1

Rome, January 2026



## FMSI - Marist International Solidarity Foundation

P.le M. Champagnat, 2  
00144 Roma, Italia  
+39 06 54 5171  
+39 06 54 517 500  
C.F. 97484360587  
email: [fmsi@fmsi.it](mailto:fmsi@fmsi.it)  
website: <https://fmsi.ngo/>

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This handbook is inspired by a rights-based and participatory approach to youth empowerment in schools, outlined in **Stand Up, Speak Up & Act – A Guide for the Participation of Children & Young People in the Marist Mission.**

# WHAT IS A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUB?

A **Youth Empowerment Club (YEC)** is a school-based space where young people come together to learn, share ideas, and take action on issues that affect their lives, their school, and their community.

Youth Empowerment Clubs are inspired by a **rights-based approach** to participation. This approach recognizes young people as **active participants and agents of change**, not only as beneficiaries of adult decisions.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE



*The Youth Empowerment Club aims to empower young people to participate meaningfully, express themselves freely, and take responsibility, within a safe framework supported by adults.*

This reflects a rights-based vision of participation, which recognises that young people have the right to express their views and to be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO JOIN A YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUB?

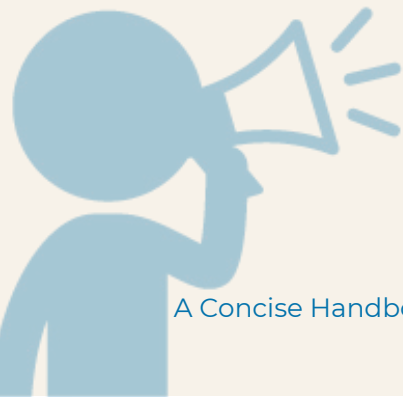
## A RIGHTS-BASED FOUNDATION

Youth Empowerment Clubs are grounded in international and regional child rights frameworks.

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** recognises every child's right to express their views freely and to participate in matters that affect them. The **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** also affirms children's rights while placing strong emphasis on responsibility.

It highlights that every child has responsibilities towards their family, community, society, the State, and the international community.

Youth Empowerment Clubs help young people understand the balance between rights and responsibilities, encouraging active, respectful, and responsible participation.



Participation helps young people grow. When young people are listened to and involved:

- they build **self-confidence and self-esteem**
- they develop **communication and leadership skills**
- they learn to express opinions respectfully
- they become more aware of **their rights and responsibilities**
- they contribute to a safer and more inclusive school environment

Experience shows that meaningful participation also strengthens protection, as young people are more likely to speak up when they feel safe, respected, and valued.

Youth Empowerment Clubs respond directly to priorities identified by schools and students, including child rights awareness, protection, inclusion, and student voice.



# WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUBS DO?

Activities should be chosen together by club members and adapted to the school context.

## LEARNING AND DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES

- Child rights and responsibilities
- Participation and leadership
- Gender equality and inclusion
- Bullying prevention and peer support
- Wellbeing and mental health

## ACTION-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES

- Awareness campaigns in school
- Peer-to-peer sessions
- Service or solidarity initiatives
- Dialogue with school leadership

## CREATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE ACTIVITIES

- Drama, role play, storytelling
- Music, poetry, art, posters
- Debates and dialogue circles



These activities use participatory methods such as dialogue, group discussion, creativity, and service to the school community.

# CONNECTING WITH OTHER YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CLUBS

Youth Empowerment Clubs are not meant to work in isolation. They are part of a **growing network of clubs** that share similar values of participation, inclusion, protection, and responsibility.

Connecting with other Youth Empowerment Clubs helps young people:

- learn from the experiences of students in other schools
- discover new ideas and activities
- feel part of a wider movement of empowered young people
- strengthen confidence by sharing their voices beyond their own school

Club members are encouraged to think creatively about how to **animate discussions and exchanges** with other clubs. This can include:

- joint discussion topics or shared themes
- online or in-person exchange meetings (when safe and possible)
- sharing messages, posters, or creative work
- celebrating common events or awareness days together

Building a network of clubs strengthens participation and shows young people that their ideas matter not only locally, but also within a wider community.

# FORMATION AND ORGANISATION OF THE CLUB

## MEMBERSHIP

- Participation is **voluntary**
- Clubs are mainly for **secondary school students**
- Clubs can be **mixed, girls' empowerment, or boys' empowerment**
- All members are treated with respect and without discrimination

## MEETINGS

- The club meets **at least once a week**
- Meetings should be regular, predictable, and held in a safe space

**Participation should always be voluntary, inclusive, and respectful.**

# LEADERSHIP AND ROLES IN THE CLUB

Youth Empowerment Clubs encourage young people to take active roles, supported by adults.

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- Members may elect roles such as Chairperson, Secretary, or Coordinator
- Leadership roles are rotated regularly
- Decisions are discussed together

## ROLE OF ADULTS

Adults support the club by:

- ensuring safety and safeguarding
- accompanying discussions and activities
- providing guidance when needed

**Adults do not control the club, and young people are not left alone. This shared responsibility supports confidence, autonomy, and protection.**

# INCLUSION, PROTECTION, AND SAFETY

Every Youth Empowerment Club commits to:

- **Inclusion:** no exclusion based on gender, ability, background, or status
- **Respect:** listening without mocking or judging
- **Safety:** activities must not put students at risk
- **Confidentiality:** personal stories are treated with care

**Important:** We respect each other, uphold our rights and help keep everyone safe.

If a serious concern is shared, it must be reported to a trusted adult and followed by school safeguarding procedures.

Participation strengthens protection systems and helps prevent harm.

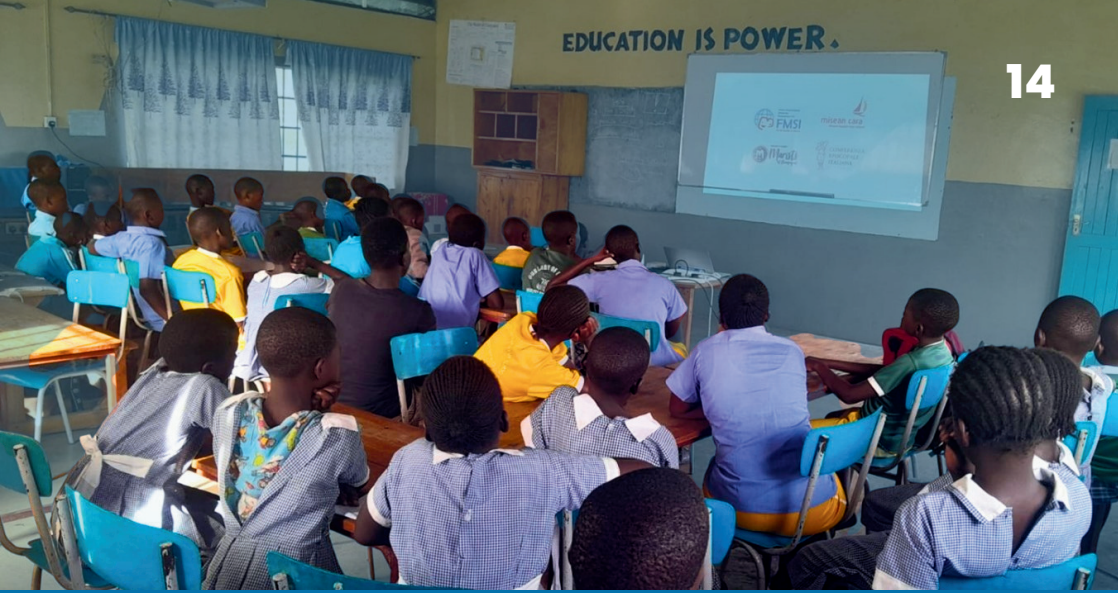


# A SIMPLE STRUCTURE FOR WEEKLY MEETINGS



- Welcome and check-in
- Energiser or icebreaker
- Main activity or discussion
- Agree on small actions or next steps
- Closing and reminder of support options

**Meetings should be participatory, adapted to young people's age, and encourage everyone's voice.**



# FINAL MESSAGE

Youth Empowerment Clubs are spaces where young people:

- learn to participate
- grow in confidence
- develop responsibility
- experience inclusion and protection

**Participation is not an extra activity. It is a right and a powerful way to prepare young people to become responsible and engaged members of society.**

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*We believe that **all young people** have the **right to be heard, respected, protected, and empowered** within a supportive environment.*



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