



Tools to support community transformation

A1 HIDDEN ISSUES – INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

Tools in this section of *Reveal* provide background information on hidden issues for facilitators. Tools in other sections are designed to be used with communities.

Revealing the need to value and equip young people: information for facilitators

Questions for a facilitator to consider:

In what ways are young people's lives today the same as the lives of young people ten or twenty years ago? In what ways are they different?

What attitudes do older people hold towards young people? Are young people valued and respected, or looked down upon?

What are the challenges and pressures facing young people today?

If young people do not feel valued, and are not listened to and empowered, what risks might they face?

Are some young people migrating away from our community? Why are they leaving? Are they aware of the risks involved?

Young people are an important and valued part of our families, churches and communities. With the right opportunities and encouragement, young people often bring hope, openness, energy and compassion to situations. They often have ideas for how things can change for the better, and the determination and energy to bring about that change.



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However, young people today face many pressures and challenges. They may need encouragement, inspiration and support to discover their identity, skills, and self-worth. They may need to be empowered and equipped to make informed decisions. In some places, some young people are becoming discontent and discouraged. They may lack hope, confidence, identity and opportunity. They may be at risk of exploitation and harm.



Sometimes churches and communities find it difficult to know how best to connect with and equip their young people. There may be fear towards young people, and older people may struggle to understand their interests, activities and language. This fear may result in broken relationships, and in prejudice and discrimination. These things are often not talked about openly. They are 'hidden' and need revealing.



Understanding the words we use

Youth or young people: in some contexts, these terms refer to the time between childhood and the full independence of adulthood. In other contexts they are defined by specific age ranges. For example, in some cultures they refer to people aged between 15 and 24 years of age. In others, they include people up to their mid-thirties. In some cultures, anyone who is unmarried is considered 'youth'. Please use a definition that is appropriate for your context.

Chat room: an area on the internet or other computer network where people can write to people in different places, in real-time.

Social media: ways in which people share opinions, information and personal messages with groups of people over the internet.

Awareness raising	Children & youth
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Corruption & governance	
Disaster risk management	
Discrimination & inclusion	
Food & livelihoods	
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Influencing decision-makers	
Migration & trafficking	
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What does the Bible say?

God loves young people! As with all people of all ages, young people are made in the image of God, precious in his sight, and loved deeply and unconditionally by Him.

The Bible sets out instructions for how families should relate: while children and young people are called to honour their parents, parents are instructed to treat children and young people fairly and with respect. For example, Colossians 3: 21: “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.”

The Bible also includes examples of young people to whom God gave great responsibility and leadership. For example, Daniel was a young man (Daniel 1 v 4) used powerfully by God. Daniel remained faithful to God in a foreign land and culture. Josiah the boy-King led his people back to God (2 Kings 22: 1-2), and in his youth, David took the stand for Israel against Goliath (1 Samuel 17: 29-33). The prophet Jeremiah begins by saying that God said to him “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you...” (Jeremiah 1: 7). Youth and inexperience are not barriers to God’s calling.

In Acts 2, Peter addresses the crowd, quoting from the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams...” God’s Kingdom is for people of all ages, and God speaks through people of all ages.

In 1 Timothy 4:12, we see that young people should not be looked down upon, but instead we should seek to learn from them. Paul says to Timothy ‘don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.’

For Bible studies on this issue, please see **Section B** of *Reveal*.

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Understanding the importance of engaging young people, and the challenges they may face

Every young person is unique, with different interests, gifting and skills. And the challenges they face will differ across families, communities and countries. However, there are some that are common to young people throughout many cultures and communities:

- The teenage years bring particular challenges. Teenagers experience both physical changes to their bodies, and emotional changes, including sudden swings in their mood (how they are feeling), caused by surges of hormones. They may also be struggling to find their identity, facing pressures from friends, and at the same time developing a sense of independence. It can be a confusing time for young people. Some teenagers may face pressures to experiment with alcohol, drugs or smoking. Parents may find that teenage children want to spend more time alone or with friends. They may feel misunderstood, and may reject a parent's attempts to talk to them or show affection. Or they may appear sullen and moody. Young people need calm, consistent and loving role models to support them, and walk with them, through the teenage years.
- Many young men and women face uncertainties about their futures. In many communities, there are few employment and training opportunities, and youth unemployment is high. This can lead to feelings of discontentment, boredom and resentment. Some young people may seek to migrate to nearby towns or cities, or other countries, in search of employment and a 'better life'. While migration offers some opportunities, there are also risks involved that need to be carefully considered. There is also a danger that, without opportunities for engagement in employment, young people risk being mobilised for harmful activities such as conflict.



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- In some churches and communities, young men and women lack status, autonomy and responsibility. They may be mistrusted and feared. They may not be valued or listened to. Where young people feel unloved and unvalued, they are more likely to decide to leave a community. However, when young people are affirmed, valued and given responsibilities and opportunities to take part, everyone benefits.
- Through the internet, young people across the world have access to a huge amount of information. Much of this is helpful and good. For example, people can learn about many things and even learn new skills. The internet can also provide ideas for education, livelihoods and businesses etc.



However, people of all ages need the skills to use the internet responsibly and wisely. There are many opinions and ‘worldviews’ that need to be read with wisdom and discernment. Pornography is more accessible than it has ever been before. Through ‘chat rooms’ and social media, vulnerable people can be befriended by people who seek to harm them through radicalisation or exploitation.

The internet can also create a lot of pressure on young people as they compare their lives to the lives of other young people across the world. They will see people who appear happier and wealthier than them, and who appear to have many more opportunities than them, and may aspire to be like them. However, the reality of reaching that ‘dream’ may be full of dangerous risks such as hazardous journeys, people-trafficking and exploitation. Also, the information people present on the internet is often about ‘happy’ events in their lives, hiding the reality that life can be difficult for all young people, wherever they live. There is an urgent need for people of all ages to learn the skills to ‘filter’ (assess and decide upon its truth and worth) the information they read and hear, and the people they meet, through the internet. Adults need to become informed of the harm their children and young people may be facing, which is increasingly unlike any of the risks they may have faced as children.

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- In many contexts, young people are vulnerable to human trafficking. See the *Reveal* tools on human trafficking for more information.



- Some young people not only face challenges because of their age, but also face discrimination on the basis of their gender, class, disability, race or ethnicity. These vulnerabilities and inequalities need to be tackled together.

What is our response?

Young men and women need love and encouragement. We need to value them with our words and actions. We need to build relationships with them so that they feel able to communicate how they are feeling, their hopes and their fears. We need to equip them to be able to ‘filter’ and assess the information they read and hear, and to make good decisions. Young people need to be directly engaged in all issues concerning their lives, and need to be offered roles and responsibilities in our churches and communities. And we need to work towards communities where all people are enabled and equipped to reach their God-given potential.

Using *Reveal*

There are tools within *Reveal* to help churches and communities engage with their young people. Section A2 includes activities to help people listen to and understand young people. There are also tools in this section to raise awareness of the risks and opportunities of migration, and vulnerability to human trafficking. Section B includes a Bible study on valuing young people. Section C2 includes a tool on protecting our communities from human trafficking.



Finding out more

- Tearfund (2007) *Footsteps 72 – Family life*
tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_71-80/footsteps_72/

Related tools:

- A2 – Listening to and understanding young people [A2: Children & youth-4]
- B – Loving our young people (Bible study) [B: Children & youth-3]