

COMMUNITY HEALTH COMMITTEE MANUAL

Youthlinc
creating lifetime humanitarians



Everything you need to know to run a successful committee

YOUTHLINC VOCATIONAL COMMITTEE MANUAL

A complete guide for Mentors, Alum Leaders, and youth volunteers leading vocational projects abroad.

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PART 1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Purpose of the Community Health Committee

In Youthlinc Community Health Committee exists to:

- Support long-term health education efforts of Youthlinc's International NGO partners
- Equip youth volunteers to become confident facilitators of health knowledge
- Provide accessible, culturally appropriate preventative health education
- Strengthen sustainable health practices within communities
- Build community capacity through knowledge-sharing rather than medical intervention

This committee is NOT about providing medical treatment.

As your original manual states clearly, Youthlinc does **not** conduct medical clinics or provide medical care (). Instead, we focus on:

- Prevention
- Education
- Behavior change
- Community empowerment
- Sustainable, simple health improvements

1.2 Community Health Committee Goals

Community Health Committees aim to:

- Reduce preventable disease through prevention education
- Increase confidence around hygiene, nutrition, first aid, and family health
- Support women's health initiatives such as Days for Girls, menstruation education, and cycle beads
- Provide tools for healthier daily living
- Strengthen community understanding of mental, physical, and environmental health
- Empower local health champions who can continue teaching after Youthlinc departs

1.3 Understanding Community Context

Community Health education must consider:

Informal Health Systems

- Many communities rely on informal networks such as:
 - Family elders
 - Traditional healers
 - Local clinics with limited supplies
 - Community knowledge passed orally

Barriers to Health

- Common realities include:
 - Limited access to clean water
 - Poor sanitation
 - Inconsistent access to medical supplies
 - Stigma around sensitive health topics
 - Mixed literacy levels
 - Cultural norms surrounding menstruation, mental health, sexuality

What This Means for Teaching

- Volunteers must understand:
 - People may have strong beliefs about illness that differ from Western explanations
 - Lessons must honor local practices and avoid judgment
 - Health topics can be sensitive and require extra dignity and care
 - Visual learning is essential where literacy is mixed
 - Prevention education should empower, not shame

1.4 Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Mentor

- Guides overall planning and sustainability considerations
- Ensures all projects align with Youthlinc values
- Oversees safety, logistics, and lesson quality
- Oversees proper medical practices being taught

Alum Leader

- Works closely with the Mentor
- Supports committee communication and deadlines
- Ensures all projects are fully prepared
- Helps train the committee

Committee Members

- Create lesson plan to teach
- Gather, organize and pack supplies
- Practice applicable skills and lessons
- Support community members and the team respectfully in country
- Participate in meetings and project preparation

PART 2: TRAINING TO LEAD HEALTH SEMINARS AND PROJECTS

This section teaches committee members *how* to lead vocational skills in a way that is respectful and engaging.

2.1 The Youthlinc Teaching Model

Youthlinc volunteers are NOT the “experts”. They are Guides, Helpers, and Energy Builders.

Youthlinc’s Teaching Values:

- **Humility**- “I am here to learn with you.”
- **Participation**- “You already have knowledge.”
- **Clarity**- “Short sentences and simple steps.”
- **Connection**- “We teach with kindness and respect.”
- **Adaptability**- “Plans change;we stay flexible.”
- **Interdependence**- “We collaborate with local partners.”

Philosophy of teaching in low-resource and Cross cultural settings:

- **Understand that people already have knowledge:** We are not “bringing business skills.” We are building on what already exists.
- **Participation is better than Lectures or strict instructions:** Youthlinc teachers should avoid “lecturing”. Instead they should:
 - Ask questions
 - Lead activities
 - Facilitate discovery
 - Encourage creativity
- **Less Talking and more doing:** Every lesson must be:
 - Hands on
 - Visual
 - Interactive
 - Simple to follow- especially across language barriers
- **Honor Local Knowledge:** to help build dignity, avoid mistakes and increase participation, Volunteers must ask questions such as-
 - How is this done in your community?
 - What do people usually buy?
 - Who do you trust when buying products?
- **Understanding Cultural differences or barriers:** Many adults around the world culturally treat students with politeness and respect. In some cultures or situations may defer to youth- to handle this carefully. When teaching Volunteers should do the following:
 - Be prepared and organized to present

- Dress and present yourself professionally
- Never interrupt or talk over people
- Never sound superior
- Always show respect

2.2 Leading Human Centered Activities

Health topics can be sensitive. In some cultures you may find certain health topics to be taboo or nuanced, it is important to talk about lessons without bringing shame, judgement or embarrassment.

- Avoid judgmental language
- Normalize common health issues
- Never shame or embarrass participants
- Avoid saying “You should...” or “This is wrong...”
- Use phrases like:
 - “Many people experience this.”
 - “Let’s explore another idea.”
 - “There are different ways to approach this.”

2.3 Working With An Interpreter

Volunteers must learn and practice how to teach and facilitate activities while working with interpreters across language and cultural barriers.

- **Talk to your interpreter or share lesson plans with them before your presentation:**
The more your interpreter understands about the lesson before they assist you in presenting the better their interpretation will be. It helps to be on the same page with them before you start your lessons.
 - We recommend providing a copy of your lesson to your interpreter before your health fair or seminar.
- **Speak in small chunks:** 3-7 words, that complete a thought or sentence but include the context.
 - Example:
 - Instead of “today we are going to look at three different kinds of costs, which are fixed costs, variable costs...”
 - Try smaller chunks:
 - “Today we will discuss three types of costs” (Pause)
 - “Start up cost.” (Pause)
 - “Operating cost.” (Pause)
- **Look at Participants, NOT the interpreter**
- **Pause long enough for Interpretation:** Interpretation is cognitively draining, wait patiently for your interpreter.

- **Use gestures and body language:** body language can assist in context cues during your presentation, when talking try to exaggerate what you are saying by pointing, miming, or showing pictures. Visuals, in addition to an interpreter will help provide complete understanding.
- **Ask your interpreter for local examples:** Your interpreters not only know the language but they also understand the community and culture.

2.4 Classroom Management

Youthlinc Participants often teach, adults, young adults, teens, children, mixed genders and mixed literacy levels. Sometimes you may find that a single class may have a group that has any combination of participants. In any case classroom management requires intentional structure.

1. Move Every 7-10 minutes

- Attention spans shorten when people are sitting for a long time and when listening through translation
- Every 7- 10 minutes:
 - Stand
 - Do a visual sort
 - Use picture cards
 - Ask for hand-raising
 - Utilize small group activities

2. Use Three Learning Modes: Every activity succeeds when all three modes appear

- Visual- Pictures, icons
- Kinesthetic- movement activities
- Auditory- spoken explanation

3. Praise 5x More Than You Correct

- Example phrases of Praise:
 - “Wonderful idea.”
 - “Very smart thinking.”
 - “Your community knowledge is strong.”
 - “Thank you for sharing.”
 - “Great teamwork.”
- Corrections are gentle:
 - “Let’s explore this together.”
 - “Maybe we can add something here.”
 - “Let’s think of it another way.”

4. Check for Understanding in Simple Ways:

- Avoid:
 - Phrases like “Do you understand?”
 - Quizzes or Tests
 - Direct comparison or negative competitions

- b. Use:
 - i. "Show thumbs up / sideways / down."
 - ii. "Point to the right picture."
 - iii. "Repeat this motion."
 - iv. "Teach your neighbor one idea."

5. Breakout Groups:

- a. Try a mix of Small and Big group discussions
 - i. Small Groups may help shy participants more than large groups.
 - ii. Let them build confidence in private, then share publicly.

2.5 What to Do when Something Goes Wrong

Even the best of plans can fall apart. Here are some things you can do in real time when this happens.

1. If an activity is too confusing:

- a. Say "Let's try a simpler version" and implement fewer items, fewer steps, or model an example.

2. If participants become shy or silent:

- a. Ask:
 - i. "Can someone show with drawing?"
 - ii. "Can you point instead of speaking?"
 - iii. "Would small groups like to discuss first?"

3. If someone challenges or contradicts the volunteer:

- a. Invite them into leadership, rather than resisting.
- b. Say:
 - i. "Thank you — that's an important point."
 - ii. "Help us understand more about your experience."

4. If the interpreter changes your meaning:

- a. Step aside quietly, and discuss with your interpreter. "Can we align on the vocabulary before we continue?"

5. If time runs out:

- a. Decided to do one of the following
 - i. "We will finish this tomorrow."
 - ii. "Let's focus on the MOST important idea today."
- b. You may need to make this decision as a committee or consult your Team Leader and project schedule

6. If participants are frustrated:

- a. Slow down
- b. Use pictures
- c. Break it into smaller steps

2.6 Adapting Lessons for All Literacy Levels

Teachers MUST assume a mix of literacy levels in every class level.

- **Use:**
 - Icons instead of text
 - Drawings instead of writing
 - Physical objects (fruit, soap, tools, bowls)
 - Color-coded cards
 - Hands-on matching games
 - Repetition, repetition, repetition
 - Oral storytelling
 - Demonstration before explanation
- **Avoid:**
 - Long written instructions
 - English-based worksheets
 - Writing on the board without explaining each symbol
 - Asking people to read aloud

PART 3: COMMUNITY HEALTH COMMITTEE PROJECTS

3.1 Guiding Questions for Project Planning

Ask:

- What health issue does this address?
- Is it community-identified?
- Is it age-appropriate?
- Can it continue sustainably?

3.2 Health Education Seminars or Health Fairs

- Basic health lessons (often during English/STEM camp)
- Advanced lessons (health fairs, adult sessions)
- Community Health Fairs

Work with your In Country Coordinator, Team Leader, and Community Leaders to identify the best schedule for Community Health lessons.

1. **Health Lessons** – it may be helpful to think about these as Basic and Advanced
 - a. Basic health lessons are for the children and cover simple health and hygiene topics. They should be fun and interactive. A good length is 10-15 minutes and then repeat the lesson. A good plan is to present these as your English/STEM camp lesson! Work with your team leader on this.
 - b. Advanced health lessons are for older adolescents and adults. They are more detailed and in-depth. Your in-country coordinator (ICC) can let you know topics of interest to your village. A good length is 15 minutes plus time for questions and discussion. Advanced lessons are most often presented at the Health Fair. Work with your team leader to get the information you need and to design and schedule the Health Fair.
 - c. Other venues to present your lessons might include during Vocational Committee time while the villagers work on their projects, at a close-by village or school, during Ecological Committee teaching time if a topic is related, or whenever the need arises.
2. **Health Fair** – a Youthlinc Classic
 - a. Work with your ICC through your team leader to schedule and organize this.
 - b. There are several ways to organize this. Examples:
 - i. One half day (2 to 3 hours) for adults (and older adolescents) for the whole village.
 - ii. Two half days – one half day for the whole village, and another for both men's and women's fairs presented separately.
 - c. Breakout sessions can be used to teach smaller groups.

- d. The fair becomes a community event and can be quite fun but expect a bit of chaos.

3. Health Projects – Examples

- a. Days for Girls Kits and Teaching
 - i. These contain washable, reusable menstrual pads. They have enabled girls in many developing countries to continue school while menstruating, as they often do not have access to or cannot afford modern products.
 - ii. The kits are made by the NGO Days for Girls (DfG) and should be ordered and paid for through their website (www.daysforgirls.org).
 - iii. If they are well established in your country (YL countries Guatemala, Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda and somewhat in Cambodia as of 1/2023) they will provide, at little cost, a DfG person from your country to do the teaching! This is a very effective way to go and is highly encouraged. You will need to teach about the kits if they are not in your country.
 - iv. At least one person from the committee must complete the associated DfG training (under Health Education, Ambassadors of Women's Health Training). This is an excellent resource for teaching about the kits and women's health.
- b. Cycle Beads
 - i. These are bracelets with different color beads for the stages of the menstrual cycle.
 - ii. Helpful in determining when to expect your period and when to avoid sex for birth control (this is a forbidden topic in some villages – ask your team leader to find out through your ICC).
 - iii. Directions are available on the YL website under Committee Resources and on the web.
- c. Hygiene/Basic First Aid Kits
 - i. Items can be donated or purchased (see Section Three).
 - ii. Explain the items in the kits during appropriate lessons.
 - iii. It is easiest to assemble the kits in the US and transport them down.
 - iv. Handing out any type of kit may lead to chaos and jealousy among villagers if you don't have enough kits.
- d. Medical Supplies
 - i. These can be donated or purchased (See Section Three).
 - ii. You can give supplies to the local clinic your village uses, as a first aid kit to a school, or to somewhere else of your choosing.
 - iii. Some clinics (Peru) cannot accept expired items due to licensing requirements.
 - iv. Find out what is needed from your team leader via your ICC.
- e. Other projects
 - i. Base your ideas on what your village needs and what you can realistically accomplish well.
 - ii. Projects should be culturally appropriate and sustainable

3.3 Sustainable Health Project Examples

Examples:

- Days for Girls kits and education
- Cycle beads (when culturally appropriate)
- Hygiene or basic first aid kits
- Donations to local clinics or schools

3.4 Collaboration with other Committees

- Vocational: health during work sessions
- Environmental: water, sanitation, pollution
- Cultural: approved social topics

3.5 Lesson Planning Guide

Every lesson should include:

- Objective
- Audience
- Key messages
- Activity or demonstration
- Materials needed

3.6 Practice, Practice, Practice

If you can't explain it simply, keep practicing.

3.7 Planning supplies and materials

- Prioritize local sourcing
- Avoid expired medical supplies
- Coordinate with Team Leader and ICC

3.8 Community Health Lesson Library

Coming soon

PART 4: COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND PREPARATION

Committee work does not happen all at once. It builds little by little throughout the year as you learn more about your site, gather supplies, and practice the skills you'll be teaching. This section explains how your committee should prepare, what your meetings should look like, and what you need to have ready before you get on the airplane.

The main goal is simple:

Make sure every lesson plan is prepared for, practiced, and ready before you travel.

When you're prepared, you feel confident, you stress less in country, and the community gets the best experience possible.

4.1 Purpose of Committee Meetings

Committee meetings are where the real preparation happens. These meetings give you the chance to:

- Plan your community health projects step by step
- Assign roles, responsibilities, and deadlines
- Practice applicable skills before teaching them
- Review tips from previous teams
- Ask questions and get feedback
- Make changes before things become stressful
- Keep everyone on track

These meetings should be supportive, organized, and collaborative. Everyone plays a role in making the magic happen and everyone has a job to do.

4.2 How to Run an Effective Committee Meeting

Your Mentor or Alum Leader may help guide meetings, but your committee should be the ones leading.

A productive meeting includes:

1. **Agenda:** What we are focusing on today
2. **Quick updates:** Check in on assignments, what has been completed, review questions answered by ICC

3. **Focused work:** Practice lesson plans, vocational skills, review supply lists, problem solve challenges, make adjustments
4. **Team share:** Review what needs improvement, create a list of questions for ICC and share with Team Leader
5. **Assignments:** Assign tasks to complete before the next meeting. Assign who is doing what before the next meeting

Meetings work best when everyone participates and follows through with their tasks.

4.3 Final Preparation Before You Leave

By your final meeting, your committee should have:

- All lesson plans written, finalized, and practiced
- Any instructions printed and laminated
- Vocational project fully organized
- Supplies taking in country gathered
- Supply list completed and shared with Team Leader
- In Country responsibilities assigned

At this stage, your job is to double check everything and make sure everyone knows their role. When you're prepared, teaching in country becomes fun, meaningful, and way less stressful.

PART 5: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This section provides practical tools and ready to use templates your committee will rely on as you prepare for the international experience. These resources make your planning more organized, keep your team on the same page, and help ensure everything is fully ready *before* departure.

Use these throughout the year, and especially during your Committee Meetings and Preparation sessions.

5.1 Vocational Project Proposal Template

Use [this template](#) when brainstorming vocational projects. .

This template will include:

- Project Description
- Desired Outcome
- Problem addressed
- Skill/lessons taught
- Assignments to committee members
- Materials needed
- Other needs from the team

5.2 Lesson Plan Template

Use this [lesson plan template](#) to create your vocational lesson plan.

This should include:

- Goal of the lesson- what you are teaching
- Who you will be teaching
- Materials needed
- Demonstration steps
- Lesson plan breakdown

5.3 Teaching Checklist

Before you teach ask yourself:

- Did I practice my lesson?
- Do I know the steps well?
- Do I have a simple explanation?
- Do I have visuals or examples?
- Do I have a back up plan?

5.4 Committee Check In Sheet

Your committee will complete a [committee check in sheet](#) after each team meeting.

This check in will include:

- What you accomplished
- Tasks assigned to committee members
- What questions your committee has
- What you will work on during the next meeting

5.5 Monthly Planning Checklists

These checklists help your committee stay organized throughout the year.

January Checklist - Understand your committee

- Meet your committee and exchange phone numbers
- Decide how you will communicate throughout the year
- Listen to the presentation by last year's team leadership in your January Team Meeting
- Review this manual and additional resources
- Read last year's committee report
- Using this information, as a committee talk about the Community Health projects the community has requested
- Begin brainstorming ideas
- Collect Clothes for Big Brothers Big Sisters Clothing Drive- this is what will fund your project!
- Assign tasks to committee members
- Complete [committee check in sheet](#)

February Checklist - Understand your site and brainstorm

- Review ICC worksheet about Community Health project requested

- Follow up on committee assignments
- Brainstorm ideas of community health projects and lessons based on your committee strengths
- Delegate specific tasks to committee members
- Brainstorm community health lesson plans
- Collect clothes for Big Brothers Big Sisters Clothing Drive
- Compile questions for ICC about community health projects
- Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
- Assign tasks to committee members
- Complete first draft of your [Committee Project Proposal](#) and turn this into your Team Leader

March Checklist - Lesson assignments and drafts

- Review answers from ICC
- Follow up on committee assignments
- All team members are assigned an English lesson
- All committee members assigned a health lesson
- Complete Final [Committee Project Proposal](#)
- Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
- Begin compiling supply list
- Begin any supply donation drives
- Present any committee needs to the team
- Send questions for ICC to Team Leader
- Assign tasks to committee members
- Start planning committee meetings outside of team meeting

April Checklist - Practice and evaluate lessons (adapt)

- Review answers from ICC
- Follow up on committee assignments
- English lesson draft completed
- [Vocational lesson](#) draft completed
- Continue compiling supply list
- Continue collecting supplies through donation drives
- Hold a separate committee meeting
- Complete [committee check in sheet](#)

- Practice presenting your English lesson
- Practice teaching your Health lesson
- Present any committee needs to the team
- Send Team Leader any remaining questions for the ICC

May Checklist - Finalize and prepare all resources

- Check in with Team Leader about any updates from ICC
- Follow up on committee assignments
- Order supplies
- Gather all remaining supplies taking in country
- Double check all lesson plans are completed
- Hold an additional committee meeting
- Finalize your English lesson
- Finalize your Health lesson
- Complete [committee check in sheet](#)
- Tie up all loose ends

June Checklist - Depart/Packing Meeting

- Review any last minute updates
- Finalize supply list
- Finalize all project details
- Bring all supplies to packing meeting
- Final review with Mentor and Alum Leader
- Laminate any instructions

5.6 On Site Daily Checklist

Each day in country, the committee should review:

- Interpreter is briefed
- Committee members know who is teaching when
- Materials are gathered/organized
- Everyone knows their role

- Safety reminders
- End of day reflection is completed

5.7 Committee Reflection Questions

Use these during nightly team meetings or committee check ins.

- What went well today?
- What was confusing and how can we fix it?
- What did we learn today?
- What do we need to adjust?
- Did anything surprise us?
- What do we want to remember about this experience?