

Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program

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National

WHO THEY ARE

Youth Ambassadors are placed with the Red Cross, OXFAM and other peace and development organizations in different regions across Canada to engage youth through presentations, theatre, media, art, and volunteerism, on land mine issues and other related topics.

WHAT'S THE APPEAL?

Where the YMAAP becomes unique is in the training, resources and opportunities they offer to youth. Youth receive extensive training from around 25 resource people from government and non-government organizations (such as the Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief). The topics include: mines, mine clearing, media engagement, facilitation and presentations, their target groups, volunteer management, work planning and time management etc.

“We build them a network of contacts and resource people so they’re connected to a broader range of organizations that are active in this field.”

Julie Boudet, Quebec Rep

WHAT THE YOUTH FRIENDLY GUIDE SAYS

This is a great way to build mentorship and support for youth, which is one of the five principals for intergenerational partnerships, discussed in the Youth Friendly Guide. The mentors are people who are experienced in the subject matter and who are given space to build cooperative relationships between themselves and youth.

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THEM?

After completing their training, Youth Ambassadors travel to a mine-affected country, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia or Cambodia. This gives the Ambassadors incredible first hand knowledge of life in a mine-stricken country. It allows the Ambassadors to really feel connected to their work, and it gives them even more credibility in the eyes of the youth they engage when they return.

“The YMAAP displays opportunities that are available and the Youth Ambassadors model these opportunities. This is how they’re able to connect with youth and mobilize volunteers.”

Julie Boudet, Quebec Rep

MORE ADVICE ON ENGAGING YOUTH

It's important that organizations wishing to attract youth be in touch with local volunteer organizations. Be in touch with local Oxfam/Universities, think about WHERE youth are, and contact those places. Adults looking to target youth should contact the University International Development Core, or the local university in the area and have them directly involved in recruiting the youth. It also helps to contact social justice groups, PIRG offices, and volunteer committees, etc. Instead of trying to appeal to youth directly, consider the option of partnering with an organization that has already been successful with youth, and reach out to youth through that partner organization.

“Youth have to be incorporated and their advice must be genuinely sought out. From the beginning, they’ve got to have a significant say on how the organization looks and runs, the results it aims to achieve, and how youth will be involved.” Julie Boudet, Quebec Rep

OTHER SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

Another strategy is to utilize their strongest interests, and harness them. For example, one Ambassador had a degree in theatre, and she was given a lot of freedom to build a program to engage youth through theatre. It had a tremendous impact on the region. A ton of youth that would not have gotten involved otherwise (because they were more into theatre) saw this program and got involved.

“We looked at what her greatest interests were and we just let her run with it.”

Julie Boudet, Quebec Rep

Another example would be that we had some ambassadors that returned with Masters in International Law. We gave them free reign and room to work with their expertise. We gave them the freedom to find their own ways to build what they knew into an education program that younger youth could understand themselves. Thus, the otherwise complicated and rigorous concepts of human rights and international law are presented in a more youth-friendly and youth-accessible manner.

“If a youth comes in with knowledge and a way to present it to other youth, it’s a great resource for success. For youth coming to learn, just seeing a youthful teacher is energizing for them.”

Julie Boudet, Quebec Rep

By adopting these strategies, the Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program has managed to successfully overcome the organizational and technical barriers that are discussed in the Youth Friendly Guide.