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Participation in the Second Decade of Life

What and Why?



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Commonwealth Secretariat

Commonwealth Secretariat
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Commonwealth Youth Programme
Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX,
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20-7747 6456
Fax: +44 (0)20-7747 6549
E-mail: cyp@commonwealth.int

Websites: www.thecommonwealth.org/cyp www.thecommonwealth.org www.youngcommonwealth.org

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Acknowledgement

In July 2002, UNICEF's Adolescent Development and Participation Unit commissioned the Commonwealth Youth Programme to prepare a toolkit on promoting meaningful children's and young people's participation based on the experiences and lessons learnt by UNICEF country programmes around the world. These four booklets on youth development and participation are the result.

We wish to acknowledge and express our gratitude to the many people and organisations for their contribution to the State of the World's Children 2003 and to these booklets:

UNICEF field offices and national committees: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Caribbean Area Office, Central African Republic, Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, UNICEF regional offices, the Innocenti Research Centre and the UNICEF Office for Japan and Dharitri Patnaik of ActionAid.

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Please note that the examples provided in this booklet are merely used for illustration and do not necessarily represent UNICEF or CYP views. The tools recommended should be adapted to your own home country situation, taking into consideration the cultural, social and political context.

Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states in Article 12 that:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

(CRC Article 12)

Simply put, participation is a right that cannot be denied or withheld from anyone, including children and adolescents. To this end, organisations like UNICEF and the Commonwealth Secretariat continue through their work in member countries to ensure that this right is in fact upheld. In May 2002, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children pledged to build, “a world fit for children.”

World leaders declared their commitment to change the world not only **for** children, but **with** children:

Children, including adolescents, must be enabled to exercise their right to express their views freely, according to their evolving capacity, and build self-esteem, acquire knowledge and skills, such as those for conflict resolution, decision-making and communication, to meet the challenges of life. The right of children, including adolescents, to express themselves freely must be respected and promoted and their views taken into account in all matters affecting them, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. The energy and creativity of children and young people must be nurtured so that they can actively take part in shaping their environment, their societies and the world they will inherit. Disadvantaged and marginalised children, including adolescents in particular, need special attention and support to access basic services, build self-esteem and to prepare them to take responsibility for their own lives. We will strive to develop and implement programmes to promote meaningful participation by children, including adolescents, in decision-making processes, including in families and schools and at the local and national levels.

(A World Fit for Children (WFFC), paragraph 32 i)

Adolescent participation is critical to development. Though participation means different things to different cultures, one thing is constant and that is the fact that the continuous involvement of adolescents is essential, if we are to facilitate and ensure their ability to assume their rightful place in their respective communities and societies.

Participation is a multi-faceted and dynamic concept and cannot be limited to any specific activity. Rather, youth involvement or participation is best described as a programme strategy, even a public

attitude that encourages youth to express their opinions, to become involved and to be part of the decision-making process at different levels.*

Using this booklet

This booklet is part of a series made up of practical models and tools for putting the ideas and commitments of the UN General Assembly's 2002 Special Session on Children into practice. Its aim is to provide opportunities for adolescents and young people¹ to participate in the decision-making affecting their lives – not just once, but every day.

This booklet explains:

- ◆ **What** we mean by participation
- ◆ **Why** is participation so important to adolescents' (10-19 year olds') development in particular

The series is intended for practical application by programme staff of development agencies, practitioners and everyone with an interest in adolescents' development at community, national and global levels. Together, the booklets form part of a common framework for participation. It is recommended that within this framework, strategies are adjusted and adapted to ensure that they are culturally, socially and politically appropriate.

Undoubtedly, the principle of participation is an important and essential programme consideration. It has implications and consequences for the design and implementation of programmes and development activities. So, while these tools are intended to be useful in the field among programme staff, it will be necessary to make the appropriate and necessary adjustments that will take into account social norms and local attitudes, values and practice of the specific environment in which they will be used.

Whether or not participation is new to you, we hope *Participation in the Second Decade of Life: What and Why?* is a useful advocacy tool that sparks meaningful discussion and debate.

¹ Young people are defined as 10 to 24 year olds. These booklets also refer to children, who are defined as any person below the age of 18 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Adolescents are defined as persons aged 10 to 19. It should also be noted that categorisation of youth differs across different nations and cultures.

* Golombek, Silvia: *What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World*, International Youth Federation

1

What is participation?

Let's hear from some adolescents themselves:²

“Participation is exchanging information and ideas with others”

“Participation is contributing to an action”

“Participation is bringing in someone extremely poor”

“Participation is making it easier for people to understand each other and become interested in what each does.”

“I think it is hard to define. We'll have to think about it. But we can try by saying participation is putting all one's will, love and care into what we have to do, and giving one's true opinion.”

“Give us the chance early and see how we fly.”

“...to become a doer instead of just a hearer”

As there are many types of developmental processes, cultures and unique individuals in the world, participation is not any one phenomenon. There are various definitions of participation. A basic concept of participation however, is that people are free to involve themselves in social and developmental processes and that self-involvement is active, voluntary and informed.

UNICEF and the human rights based approach to programming for and with children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is UNICEF's guiding frame of reference, and provides a legal foundation for the ethical and moral principles that guide the organisation's work for and with children. UNICEF's human rights based approach to programming for and with children is therefore informed by this legal framework. This framework is enforced and legitimised by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

A human rights approach therefore guides programming in all sectors and phases of UNICEF's programme planning process. UNICEF is well placed to identify and respond to situations that deny children their rights. As rights holders, children do in fact have claims against those who do not meet their obligations of ensuring that these rights are fulfilled.

² Sources: UNICEF Situation Analysis workshop in Bohicon, Benin 2002; Special Session on Children, New York 2002; UNICEF Voices of Youth Website 2002.

At present, under the UNICEF Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) for the period 2002-2005, UNICEF has five programme priorities. These are:

- ◆ child protection
- ◆ immunisation
- ◆ early childhood development
- ◆ fighting HIV/AIDS and
- ◆ girls' education.

The participation of children and adolescents is viewed by UNICEF as a critical process for the achievement of the MTSP, in all circumstances, including situations of conflict, emergency and natural disaster. The participation of adolescents in the programme assessment, advocacy, design, implementation and monitoring processes is very important for the fulfilment of the CRC and the achievement of the goals set out in the MTSP, the World Fit for Children conference (WFFC) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

UNICEF's work and involvement are therefore reflected in these areas with regards to programming, partnerships, alliances, advocacy work and internal operations. Critical to this engagement and facilitation is the key principle of providing opportunities for children and adolescents to participate and express themselves freely with adult guidance.

There are many ways to pursue young people's participation and ensure fulfilment of their rights:

- ◆ Consulting adolescents
- ◆ Giving adolescents information
- ◆ Encouraging them to reflect on and analyse their circumstances
- ◆ Sharing responsibilities with adolescents
- ◆ Delegating responsibility to adolescents
- ◆ Allowing, supporting and responding to adolescents' choices
- ◆ Acting as a role model by sharing time with adolescents, treating them with empathy and respect
- ◆ Giving adolescents a chance to speak in public

But it is not about disregarding parental, professional and cultural knowledge. Participation is *not* highly technical; it is *not* something only experts can recognise (otherwise only experts could participate!).

Adolescents' participation is relatively new to many organisations, communities and families. It calls for significant changes in attitudes and practices: more dialogue, and mutual respect. It is about adults and young people working together as partners. This often calls for changes in structures, systems, and styles of working – not just additional activities. Like UNICEF, the Commonwealth has been addressing the specific needs of young people through its Commonwealth Youth Programme, which works with young people and for young people



2

Examples of adolescent participation

With appropriate support, adolescents can participate in decision-making and perform responsible actions in almost any social setting, formal or informal.

Among families

- ◆ In Amuahia, Nigeria, adolescents aged 10-16 from the child rights club at Williams Memorial Secondary School mobilised parents to bring their children in for immunisation. The students went from house to house, consulting with households and handing out tracking slips.

In schools

- ◆ Schools all over the world are setting up students' councils. Members are increasingly selected by their peers rather than hand-picked by teachers. Girls on student councils have spoken up for access to the same vocational lessons as boys. In Guatemala, student governments have been responsible for painting school buildings and even for distributing food rations during a famine.

Through children's and youth clubs

- ◆ In rural villages in Southern India, the NGO Myrada organised community children's groups around the issues of bonded labour and child marriages. The children engaged in respectful dialogue with landowners, factory owners and parents. There was some success in all areas. Everyone in the community, from elders to children themselves, came together to monitor school attendance.

Through Sport

- ◆ Amid the poverty of a shantytown in Kenya, Mathare Youth Sports Association (MSA) has linked football to a range of development challenges. Young men organised themselves not only into teams and leagues but also into clean-up squads. Despite initial opposition from fathers, girls' teams took off too. "Before playing football I was fearful", said one girl, "Now I am not because I am used to mixing with people and I know what is good and what is bad."³
- ◆ In Enhams, St Vincent and the Grenadines, the *Playin' It Safe* Football Club is a community initiative involving youth and adults. They take to the field in their smart uniforms as they use sport to promote healthier lifestyles and create awareness of HIV/AIDS. The Club started with forty members and it was decided to have meetings 'on the block' where everyone congregates. This atmosphere proved a plus since more people felt comfortable sharing their views and contributing to the proceedings. The Club is managed by community residents, along with the captains of the football and cricket teams.
- ◆ In Albania during the Kosovo crisis of 1999, Youth Councils were formed in refugee camps. They organised sports competitions and concerts, and took an active role in running the camps,

³ Brady, Martha, and Arjmand Banu Khan, *Letting Girls Play: The Mathare Youth Sports Association's football programme for girls*, Population Council, New York, 2002.

keeping them clean and safe. They helped raise funds for the poorest families, and distributed landmine-awareness information.

In community meetings

- ◆ Adolescents have been allowed to attend community meetings since helping to install running water in Pachen village, Papua New Guinea (with European Union funding and guided by government).
- ◆ In Tanzania, UNICEF is supporting adolescents to educate their communities about HIV/AIDS through community theatre, art and video. Older adolescents are also trained as community justice facilitators.

Through ‘child-friendly’ cities and municipal strategies

- ◆ In Kolkata, India, a survey has identified every child who is out of school. The city is creating 700 primary education centres, to be run by NGOs and young people trained as ‘barefoot teachers’.

At workshops with government and development agencies

- ◆ In Benin, UNICEF and government officials met with adolescents from all over the country to discuss development challenges facing them. The participants ranged from school children to adolescents living and working far from their families, under the ‘protection of relatives’.

Through media

- ◆ Interactive websites such as UNICEF’s Voices of Youth (www.unicef.org/voy) allow adolescents’ experiences to be shared globally.
- ◆ The Internet-based youth NGO, *TakingITGlobal* (www.takingitglobal.org), is currently run by staff aged 16-23.

In Nepal, the first interactive radio programme for teenagers is generating 200-500 letters a week from listeners. *Chatting with My Best Friend (Sathi Sanga Maka Kura)* combines music, drama and chat between a young female and male host. The content, developed by producers in their 20s, aims to help break the silence surrounding issues such as sex, love, relationships, peer pressure and conflict with parents. Stories from the programme and listeners’ responses are adapted for television in *Kathmandu*, Nepal’s first TV programme acted and directed by young people. *Sathi Sanga Maka Kura’s* and *Kathmandu’s* plot lines put the protagonists through situations demanding creative, critical thinking and other life skills.

At international forums

- ◆ Children’s participation in international forums has come a long way. In May 2002, prior to the UN Special Session on Children, more than 400 children from 154 countries participated in the Children’s Forum. They presented their message for a world free of poverty, war and violence to the UN General Assembly. It was the first time that the world’s children were afforded the opportunity to address the UN on behalf of their peers. The response was overwhelming, with Secretary General Kofi Annan assuring the children that their issues would be heard.

- ◆ At the *CitizenYou Summit 2002*⁴, 18-25 year olds from 50 Commonwealth countries met to discuss participation, globalisation and rights and responsibilities. The planning team, facilitators and many of the speakers were young people.

In children's parliaments and national strategies

- ◆ To date, more than 150 countries around the world have established children's parliaments. In Timor-Leste (East Timor), the Student Parliament was born from a campaign to educate young people about democracy as the nation moved toward independence.
- ◆ The South African Law Commission consulted young people throughout the country in preparing a draft Children's Bill in 2002.
- ◆ In India, children's parliament gave a significant boost to health and hygiene in one of the poorest regions there. One child collected thousands of rupees to pay for a new water unit in Rajasthan which is drought-prone and has a population of 45 million. Ideas like these shared by children in parliament also help to make a difference at home too.

⁴ Led by the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (CYEC) and with support from CYP.

3

Why participation – protecting adolescents

Participation is about protecting the rights of children including adolescents. The ingredients of participation – safe spaces; dialogue; encouraging self-worth; developing durable groups and personal relationships – all help to protect their rights.

- ◆ Young people who are practiced at being assertive will be better able to deal with abusive, threatening or unfair situations. They are better able to seek advice or exit a harmful situation where necessary.
- ◆ It has been shown that children who grow up in an atmosphere that encourages participation – at home, at school, in institutions – do better at school. (Cappelaere, de Winter, 1998:3)

Participation versus ‘problem-based’ approaches

“If I introduced an employer to a young person I worked with by saying, ‘Here’s Katib. He’s not a drug user. He’s not in a gang. He’s not a dropout. He’s not a teen father. Please hire him’, the employer would respond, ‘That’s great, but what does he know, what can he do?’”

(Pittman 1996:1)

Where adolescents are concerned, attention is often paid to the individual’s problems. By contrast, development is about paying attention to whole human beings, whole families and whole communities.

- 1 Where a programme’s approach is guided only by problem-solving and excludes the assets of adolescents, fragmented responses to adolescents’ needs are the end result. This often leads for example, to separate projects on HIV/AIDS, drugs and literacy. Problems that are easiest to see tend to get more attention and resources, while important but less visible needs are neglected.
- 2 Where adolescents do not have opportunities to participate, they do not get the chance to develop their knowledge, skills and maturity.

Adolescents’ well-being is best achieved by strengthening their capabilities and enlarging their access to opportunities.

(Rajani/UNICEF 2001)

4

Why participation – a spiral of development

“It was my first experience of hearing a document based on the voices of children, including my own voice. After listening to it, I thought, ‘Children can change the world if they are given a chance. We have to fight for that chance’.”

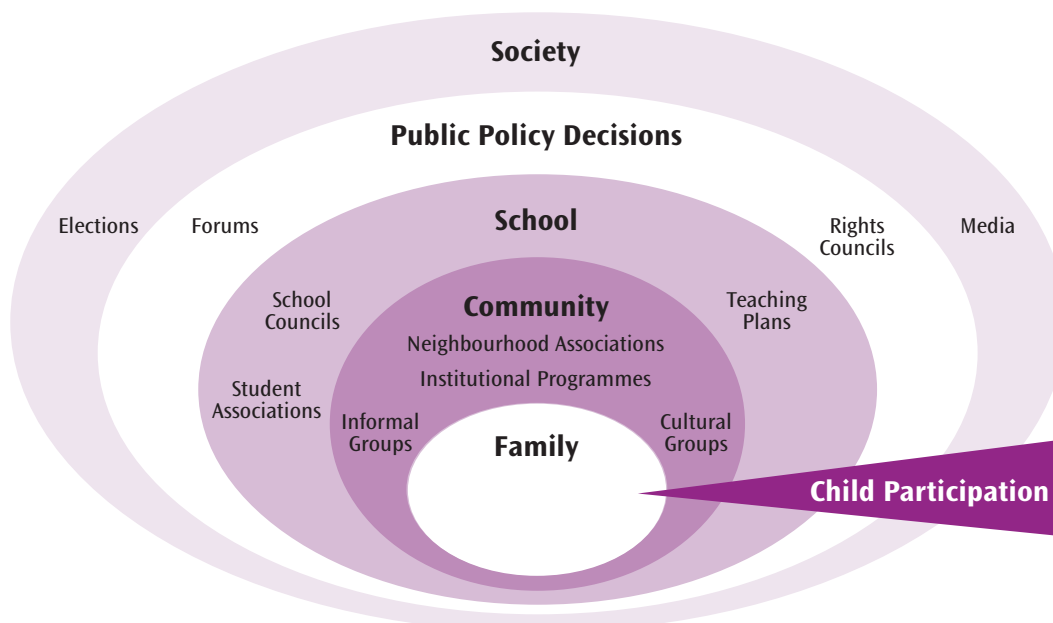
(Jehanzeb Khan, 12, Pakistan, on his experience at the Special Session on Children, New York, May 2002)

Adolescents **learn by doing as well as by thinking**. This kind of learning lasts longer, and gives young people a sense of control over their lives. Usually, the more they participate, the more experienced, confident and able they become.

Looking beyond adolescents’ own well-being, participation is a way to nurture and apply their potential in economic, social and cultural development. Given a voice, adolescents can provide extremely useful information about conditions at work, school, community and other public health risks. This means that they can also play a role in fostering public and civil society accountability. A participatory culture within a project leads to informal education in democracy and active citizenship.

Spheres of participation

As children grow and develop, their opportunities for participation should expand from private to public spaces, from local to global influence.



Source: *The State of the World's Children 2003*. (Adapted from R. Nimi's PowerPoint presentation at UNICEF's Global Lifeskills Workshop in Salvador (Bahia), Brazil, June 2002)

In Thailand, as part of a Youth Camp for Ending Violence against Children and Women, 60 young people were trained to become volunteers and catalysts to both monitor domestic violence in their community and campaign to stop it. As a result of the initiative, a national law on domestic violence is now under review.

(The State of the World's Children, UNICEF 2003)

5

Why participation – rights

Participation is a right for all, not an option that can be withheld from any adolescent. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) emphasises this right in articles 12-15.

All of us working with children and adolescents are under an obligation to offer, in a way that meets the best interests of the child and without discrimination of any kind:

- ◆ Opportunities for children to seek and receive information; and
- ◆ Opportunities for children to form and express their own views, and have these taken seriously and given due weight in decision-making (and in this enjoying freedom of thought, conscience and religion).

Of course, children should be free, as the case may be, to say: “No, I do not wish to be part of this.” That means, for example, that 10 year olds cannot be lumped together with 18 year olds and treated identically. Nor should two 14 year olds from different economic or social backgrounds be treated identically purely because of their age. Rather, we are obliged to ensure that participation is pursued in accordance with the age and maturity of the adolescent and without discrimination.

There are many instances and examples of discriminatory practices against adolescents and children. Young people’s rights are compromised in a number of instances. Do you know of any adolescent and/or child who has faced discrimination because of any of the reasons listed below?

Around the world, adolescents are discriminated against because of their

sex
(male or female)

class
(wealth/occupation/
family occupation)

age

size

looks

ethnicity

race

nationality

religion

being an orphan

education

language

political beliefs

coming from an urban/
rural area

being new in the area

sexual orientation

wars/refugee status

disability

amount of experience

athletic ability

intellectual ability

being quiet or shy

HIV/AIDS status

illness (e.g. HIV/AIDS)

personal choices

colonial history

where they live

past history of trouble

who they know

To discriminate against anyone is illegal and an encroachment of their basic human rights. The UN Declaration on the Right to Development states that every human person is entitled to participate in economic, social, cultural and political development. The CRC affirms that children are people too. “Children can no longer be perceived as not-yet persons, waiting in the lobby of life.”⁵

Consequently, agencies such as UNICEF and CYP through initiatives such as the Adolescent Participation programme continue to work to ensure that the rights of young people throughout the world are in no way compromised.

⁵ Santos Pais, M. (1999) “Children’s Participation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child”, Seminar on The Political Participation of Children, May 25, 1999, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

6

Levels of participation

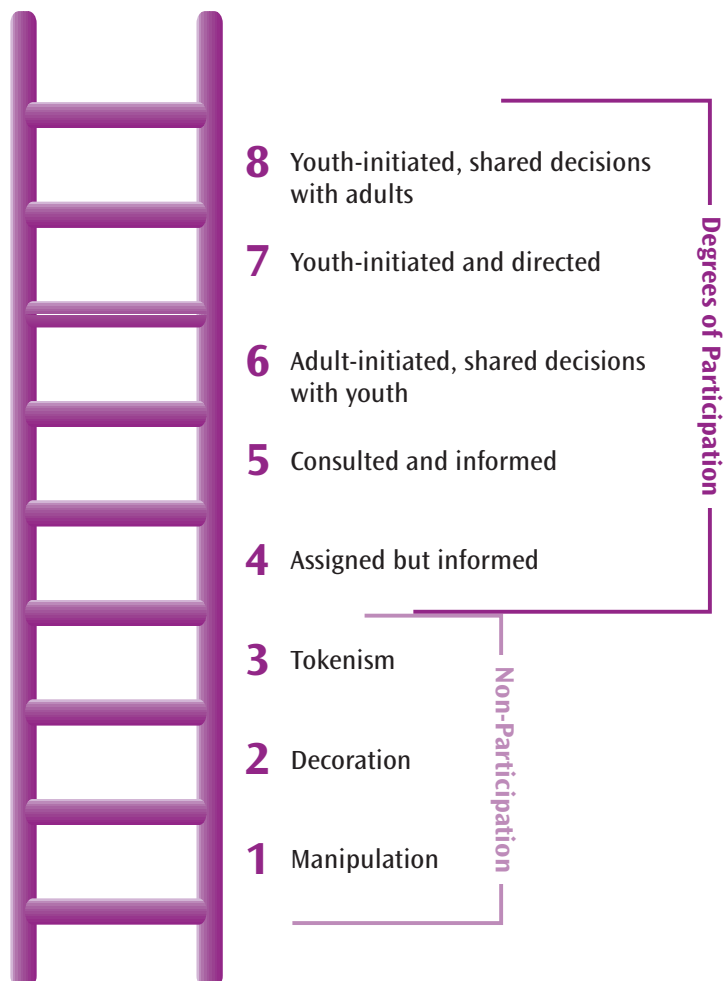
Participation is a multi-faceted process involving adolescents, adults, their families and communities. There are lots of activities and decision-making processes in which adolescents, their families and their communities can be involved. For example, it is possible for participation to occur at the personal and global levels in a range of institutional settings, including the household and school, the municipal council (or equivalent) and international conferences.

Contradictions arise where adolescents are prevented from participating at a level that they are capable of and desire, or if they in fact have little say or understanding of what is going on. For example, if a child were called the editor of a school magazine but had little say in determining its content, this would not be true participation.

Every day, in homes, schools, communities and development initiatives, adolescents are denied opportunities to participate in accordance with their capacities and wishes. Sometimes, unacceptable risks make this unavoidable (for example where young leaders and organisers are liable to be recruited into a violent conflict). However, all too often, adults fail to respect the rights of children to express their views and they also fail to recognise that adolescents should have wider and deeper participation opportunities.

Hart's Ladder of Participation

Roger Hart presents a typology of interaction between children/young people and adults as rungs on a 'ladder of participation'. The higher rungs represent increasing degrees of children/young peoples' participation



Rung of the Ladder	Level of Participation
8 Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Children/young people have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.
7 Youth-initiated and directed	Children/young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.
6 Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth	Adults have the initial idea but children/young people are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Their views are considered and they are involved in taking the decisions.
5 Consulted and informed	The project is designed and run by adults but children/young people are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
4 Assigned but informed	Adults decide on the project and children/young people volunteer for set roles within it. Adults inform them adequately and respect their views.
3 Tokenism	Children/young people are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.
2 Decoration	Children/young people take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issue or goal.
1 Manipulation	Adults lead children/young people in accordance with a scheme known only to the adults. The children/young people do not understand what is happening. They are not free to explore or act on their own thinking. Adults use some of their ideas but do not provide children with recognition on what influence they have.

Adapted from Hart, RA, *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*, UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Florence, 1992.

This table describes the relationships between adolescents and adults that are found at different points in a ladder. For example:

- ◆ An environmental campaign entirely run by a youth group would be at rung 7.
- ◆ If the clean-up group then brought a local council or development agency on board, the project would be at rung 8.

Some people think rungs 7 and 8 are of equal value, or even that rung 7 shows 'more' participation.

One of the worst examples of the misuse of Information and Communications Technology that I have seen was a PowerPoint presentation by some 9 year olds...They had been sponsored by a utilities company and they were little adult mouthpieces cloned from business, structured by bullet points that arrived with deadly precision from the left-hand margin. [The children] seemed moulded by the technology, dancing to the puppeteer's strings. By contrast, a genuine dance by children from Ghana to illustrate a particular issue was filled with hope and the zest of youthful promise and action. I was reminded at the time of Roger Hart's ladder of participation and non-participation.

Dr John Parry, University of Sussex, UK. From a seminar on ICT for development

UNICEF's Right To Know Initiative: Young people as true partners

Adolescent participation formed the foundation of the Right to Know (RTK) Initiative, a global youth communication and outreach initiative designed to ensure that young people, particularly vulnerable and hard-to-reach adolescents, have adequate knowledge to make informed decisions about how to prevent HIV/AIDS infection and lead healthy lives. In 15 countries, RTK placed young people at the centre of the programme as researchers, programme designers, communicators, and as true partners. Young people identified gaps in knowledge and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and also determined the most effective ways to share HIV/AIDS prevention messages with their peers.

RTK in Jamaica developed a checklist (extracts below) to help organisations ask themselves if they have a high level of adolescent participation.

- ✓ We have young people (aged 10-24) on our Board...
- ✓ We give guidance and encouragement but let the youth make their own mistakes and successes
- ✓ We allow young people to evaluate how well the organisation is meeting its goals
- ✓ We provide space, time, and resources for young people's interests – interests they have told us they have
- ✓ We show respect by listening carefully, keeping personal information private...
- ✓ We set aside a regular time and place for young people to reason with one another and with adult members
- ✓ We trust our young people
- ✓ We help young people learn and form their own ideas
- ✓ We give young people credit for what they do
- ✓ We respect young people enough to make demands on them, like taking responsibility for money management, living up to their word, and representing the group in a respectful way.

7

Participation – recognising it

Adolescent participation may be relatively unfamiliar to many. But it depends on things that are familiar enough among adults:

- ◆ good communication, is it inclusive of all?
- ◆ tolerance of disagreement and willingness to respect the views of each person
- ◆ creative, critical thinking is so necessary for emotional and cognitive maturity
- ◆ decision-making with both consensus and minority views respected
- ◆ shared values that build solidarity and provide integrity

In order to promote participation of children and adults, it is essential to have supportive adults and skilled facilitators on board. The following is a list of some of the key resources in this regard.

- 1 Officials (e.g. within a Ministry, the Mayor's office)
- 2 Media practitioners
- 3 Artists
- 4 Celebrities (can add momentum when facilitating children's participation in local or national consultations and events).
- 5 Educational experts, or NGOs (many NGOs are breaking ground in promoting child participation).

NB: Orientation and training in participatory methodologies and giving due attention to the views of children may be required.

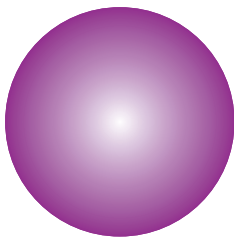
For each of 1-5, there is at least one person or resource you can enlist to support your activities.

8

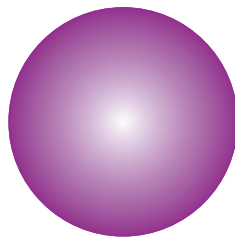
Participation is a partnership *It can be difficult*

Young people and adults who have worked with adolescents know that achieving adolescent-initiated participation is usually a major challenge for several reasons. Many adults are used to exercising authority and keeping discipline through authoritarian practices. People who have tried to promote participation with good intentions have become frustrated, demoralised or cynical when it hasn't worked well, and are left wondering what might have been done better.

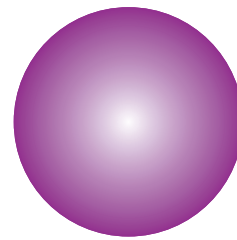
Promoting participation is like juggling three balls. The following illustration is an exercise in promoting participation.



Overcoming discrimination and rigid hierarchy



Providing material assistance or skills training



Listening, dialogue and negotiation

Think of what can happen in a poverty situation if a development agency 'drops' the first, second or third ball?

Each of the following situations will require the dropping of different balls.

- ◆ A situation analysis in an area where no projects are planned
- ◆ A situation analysis where the project plan is already finished
- ◆ Where you applaud and agree with everything adolescents say
- ◆ Where you announce that everyone is in complete agreement
- ◆ Where older people are allowed to interrupt younger people
- ◆ A workshop where you never get beyond warm-ups
- ◆ A workshop without any teaching/skills sessions
- ◆ A workshop when you act as teacher all the way through

Successful participation requires an awareness of power relationships

- ◆ Within households and institutions
- ◆ Between males and females
- ◆ Mothers and fathers
- ◆ Adults and children

- ◆ Boys and girls
- ◆ Elder and younger children
- ◆ Decision-makers and non decision-makers
- ◆ Households and institutions

Take for example, the following example of youth and adolescent participation below, which was one of the products of a Youth Reproductive Health Project in Nepal.

Building a Social Space for Youths

- ◆ Youth club members at the rural study centre site initiated the idea of a shared community space that could be used by young people to carry out various intervention studies.
- ◆ The Youth identified an old sub-health post building in their community and requested permission from the Village Development Community to conduct renovations.
- ◆ The Youth raised a sum of Rs 5000/6000 during one of the festivals to initiate the renovations.
- ◆ The Youth then leveraged their resources through donations, requests for additional financial support from the project and *pro bono* labour from adult community members.
- ◆ The community space is currently being used as a meeting space and library for young men and women in the community.

Source: Mathur, Sanyukta, Mehta, Manisha and Malhotra, Anju, *Youth Reproductive Health in Nepal. Is Participation the Answer?* International Centre for Research on Women, 2004

Similarly, badly handled adolescent ‘participation’ may abuse adolescents by simply regarding them as a source of cheap labour.

Participation Checklist

The rest of this series of booklets looks at how to put participation into practice successfully, and in a strategic way. The following checklist should help to clarify what real participation is all about.

Is it voluntary?

Real participation is voluntary (or declined), not forced

Is it accessible?

Too often only urban or better-off adolescents are involved. Too often only the boys get to speak.

Is it respectful?

Real participation takes place in a climate of respect, where no one is laughed at, or otherwise ignored.

What's the point of it?

Unless all participants have tackled this question, they will see the exercise as confusing or a waste of time.

Who wants it?

Real participation is based around issues that adolescents themselves care about and need to give their attention.

Does it make a difference?

Real participation is where young people contribute and have real influence on the outcomes.

Is the language right?

Real participation requires adolescents to feel competent in the language and vocabulary spoken.

Are participants equally prepared?

Adults have all the information, but the adolescents do not.

Is it genuine?

Real participation allows young people to follow ideas through – it isn't all decided in advance by the adults.

Is it safe?

Real participation takes every effort so that the participants are not endangered by what they do or say.

What happens afterwards?

Real participation means people are clear about who is responsible for follow-up actions.

Resource Guide

UNICEF papers can be accessed on-line or by contacting the UNICEF Programme Division, Division of Policy and Planning, or the Documentation Unit. Most books are also available at the HQ Library, or can be found at online bookstores.

Brady, Martha, and Arjmand Banu Khan, *Letting Girls Play: The Mathare Youth Sports Association's football programme for girls*, Population Council, New York, 2002.

Chambers, Robert: *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*, Intermediate Technology 1997. Chambers is an influential proponent of participatory development. The book explains how professionals often misunderstand the reality of the poor, and describes the techniques of participatory rural (or relaxed) appraisal (PRA).

CIDA (with UNICEF): *Meaningful Youth Participation in International Conferences*. An analysis of how the participation of young people was facilitated at the high level conference on war-affected children. Includes guidelines and suggestions.

de Waal, Alex and Nicolas Argenti (editors): *Young Africa*, Africa World Press, Inc 2002. Contains several articles discussing the understanding of 'youth' in Africa, urgent problems affecting young Africans, and their historic and potential roles as agents of change.

Driskell, David: *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth – A Manual for Participation*, UNESCO Publishing, 2002. Very much in the line of Roger Hart's classic, and equally detailed and full with practical advice, this is very much recommended for urban planners.

Environment and Urbanisation: Building better cities with children and youth, Volume 14, No.2, October 2002. A compendium of examples on participatory urban planning, including the concepts of Child Friendly Cities and the Growing Up In Cities initiative). Distributed to all offices. Also available (at cost) at www.iied.org/human/pubs.html

Friedman, Sara Ann: *Bridging the Gap between Rhetoric & Reality*, UNICEF, 2001. A review of lessons learned from UNICEF-assisted programmes and projects seeking community participation.

Golombek, Silvia: *What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World*, International Youth Federation

Hart, Roger: *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship*, Earthscan/UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Florence, 1992. With a slant towards participation in community development and environmental care, the book is still a must for the practitioner who is seriously interested in theory and practice of encouraging child participation. Describes the 'ladder of participation'.

Lansdown, Gerison: *Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making*, UNICEF Innocenti Insight, Florence, Italy, February 2001 (also in French and Italian). Includes a wide variety of annotated description of projects aimed at increasing children's participation, including a step-by-step guide on facilitating youth participation in conferences.

Mathur, Sanyukta, Mehta, Manisha and Malhotra, Anju, *Youth Reproductive Health in Nepal. Is Participation the Answer?* International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) and Engender Health, 2004. Community, Youth, Development: Pittman, Karen J. "Three Goals in Search of Connection," in *New Designs for Youth Development*, Winter 1996

Pittman, Karen J. "Three Goals in Search of Connection," in *New Designs for Youth Development*, Winter 1996

Santos Pais, M. (1999) "Children's Participation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child", Seminar on The Political Participation of Children, May 25, 1999, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

- Save the Children: *Shaping a Country's Future, National Plans of Action for Children – Involving Children and Young People in Their Development*, 2002. A guide for practitioners primarily from the NGO community intending to involve children in the drafting of National Plans of Action.
- UNICEF: *Children and Youth Parliaments* (unpublished, Adolescent Development and Participation Unit). A summary of the work of 70+ country offices in support of children and youth parliaments as reported in the 2001 Annual reports.
- UNICEF: *Evaluation Technical Notes, Children Participating in Research, Monitoring and Evaluation*, April 2002. While directed primarily at researchers or Monitoring and Evaluation Officers, the notes offer advice and checklists to all programme staff on ethical considerations when seeking to increase participation of children in programmes.
- UNICEF: *Implementation Handbook for the CRC*, 1998. A detailed analysis of the CRC Committee's interpretation of the implementation of the articles of the CRC, with many examples of countries' efforts to promote child participation.
- UNICEF: *Lessons Learned, Suggestions and Guidelines on Children's Participation in International Conferences* (unpublished, Adolescent Development and Participation Unit)
- UNICEF *Operational Guidance Note on the Mid-Term Strategic Plan* (Exdir 2002-29)
- UNICEF, *Operationalisation of the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming in ESARO*, August 2002. A description of the application of the human rights based approach to programming, developed by UNICEF in Eastern and Southern Africa, emphasising community capacity development.
- UNICEF: *The State of the World's Children 2003*. UNICEF's flagship publication recalling lessons from children's involvement in the preparation and running of the UN Special Session on Children. Also includes list of CRC Articles referring to child participation.
- UNICEF: *The Young Face of NEPAD*, September 2002. Position paper emphasising the attention to – and the role of – children and young people in the New Partnership for Africa.
- UNICEF staff working papers: *Partnerships with Local Governments and Communities*, November 2001. Reviews experiences of Child-Friendly Cities, with a focus on decentralised, local situation assessment and planning.
- UNICEF staff working papers: *The Participation Rights of Adolescents*, August 2001. Based on an extensive literature review, the paper sums up a range of principles and strategies to promote participation of adolescents.
- UNICEF staff working papers: *World Summit for Children-Inspired Programmes of Action for Children in the 1990s*, 2002. Reviewing lessons from the preparation and implementation of National Plans of Action, following the WSC 1990.
- UNICEF: *Working for and with Adolescents*, February 2002. Presents the experience of 22 UNICEF offices in working with and for young people.
- UNICEF: *UNICEF's Experience Working with Young People*, May 1999. Based on the analysis of Country Office Annual Reports of 1997, the paper provides an overview of the extent of adolescent participation in UNICEF-assisted programmes at the time.
- United Nations: *Millennium Declaration* (www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm) and *Millennium Development Goals*
- United Nations: *A World fit for Children* (www.unicef.org/specialsession/docs_new/documents/A-RES-527-2E.pdf).
- World Bank, *Participation Sourcebook*, 1996, see www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sbhome.html. Contains about 20 case descriptions, plus chapters on Pointers in Participatory Planning and Decision-making, Pointers in Enabling the Poor to Participate, and an overview of participatory methods and tools.

Useful websites/pages

- www.unicef.org/specialsession/child_participation/index.html**, on children's participation at the Special session and related links
- www.unicef.org/polls** information on large-scale polls among children in East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean
- www.unicef.org/voy** Voices of Youth homepage
- www.unicef.org/magic** for media initiatives aimed at involving young people
- www.unicef-icdc.org** UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence
- www.unicef.org/teachers** UNICEF's website for teachers includes ideas on how to involve children as researchers, and child-friendly schools.
- www.worldbank.org/participation** World Bank site on participation and civic engagement, with direct links to sources on participatory tools methods
- www.ids.ac.uk/ids** the Institute for Development Studies, Sussex is one of the leading centres for research and teaching on participatory development
- www.childfriendlycities.org** for ideas on participatory urban planning
- www.unesco.org/most/growing.htm** for the *Growing Up in Cities* Initiative
- www.savethechildren.net/homepage**, home page of the Save the Children Alliance
- www.oxfam.org/eng** Oxfam's website includes a page on the International Youth Parliament
- www.ncb.org.uk/resources** Site of the UK National Children's Bureau, for free downloads of a wide variety of books and papers on children's participation
- www.ids.ac.uk/ids** homepage of the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, a leading centre for research and teaching on international development, includes a page on participatory approaches.
- www.schoolcouncils.org**, A site with information on how to set up and run school councils.

Glossary

Adolescent	(On an age-based definition) a person aged 10-19
Child	The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises persons below 18 years as children.
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
Extractive	A process that is extractive, extracts things (takes things out) from one place for use in another place. We might call a consultation ‘extractive’ if it was only about getting knowledge from individuals or communities.
Implementation; Monitoring and Evaluation; Situation Analysis; Planning	These are the project stages referred to and explained in greater detail in Booklet 3, <i>Adolescent Participation and the Project Cycle</i> . This entire process is holistic in nature and involves assessment of the challenges, deciding on achievable goals, finding out who can do what, checking and reviewing progress, as well as holding everyone accountable, and sharing lessons learnt throughout the process.
Livelihoods	The means by which people survive/subsist. (In the programming context, a ‘livelihood programme’ might be aimed at employment <i>and</i> health, because people need more than just income to survive).
Matrix/matrices	A grid used to plan, monitor and review projects. It can be text- or symbol-based.
Passivity	If a person shows passivity they are being inactive or submissive. S/he may feel that s/he does not have the skills or the authority to be active.
Protagonists	The main characters in a drama, action or movement.
Puppeteer	The person who controls the puppets in a puppet show.
Stakeholder	In the programming context anyone who is interested in or directly affected by a project, or can influence it, is a stakeholder. In adolescent/community projects, young people are stakeholders.
STD	Sexually transmitted diseases.
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
Young person/people or youth/s	The United Nations defines a youth as anyone within the 15 to 24 age group. However, in many countries a youth can be anyone up to age 30 or 35. For the purposes of this series, youth and adolescent will have similar meaning.

Notes

