

Annex 3

Youth Participation Practice Standards

The following practice standards, developed by the Commonwealth/UNICEF, may be useful in framing your own organisation or sector's youth participation standards.

1. Is it voluntary? Real participation is voluntary, not forced.
2. Is it accessible? Too often only urban or better-off young people are involved. Too often only the boys get to speak.
3. Is it respectful? Real participation takes place in a climate of respect, where no one is laughed at or ignored.
4. What's the point of it? Unless all participants have tackled this question themselves, they will see the exercise as confusing or a waste of time.
5. Who wants it? Real participation is based around issues that young people themselves care about and need to give their attention.
6. Does it make a difference? Real participation is where young people contribute and have real influence on the outcomes.
7. Is the language right? Real participation requires young people to feel competent in the language and vocabulary spoken.
8. Are the participants prepared? If older adults have all the information, whereas the young people are pulled in at short notice, results will be poor. Young people need to build their skills and confidence to participate effectively.
9. Is it open-ended? Real participation allows young people to follow ideas through – it isn't all decided in advance by the older adults.
10. Is it honest? Is everyone being honest with each other, as partners? Are they being honest with themselves?
11. Is it safe? Real participation takes every effort to ensure participants are not endangered by what they do or say.
12. What happens afterwards? Real participation means people are clear about who is responsible for follow-up actions.

– Source: Commonwealth Youth Programme and UNICEF 2005a–c

References

- Commonwealth Youth Programme and UNICEF (2005a), *Adolescent and Youth Participation: Adults Get Ready!*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.
- Commonwealth Youth Programme and UNICEF (2005b), *Adolescent Participation and the Project Cycle*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.
- Commonwealth Youth Programme and UNICEF (2005c), *Participation in the Second Decade of Life: What and Why?*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.