

## The nine essential requirements for effective and meaningful participation

### 1. Participation is transparent and informative

- Children and young people need to clearly understand their right to express their views and that they will be heard and valued.
- They need to know why they are involved in the project/program/activity, what their participation will help to achieve and the types of decisions and plans that their participation will influence.
- This information needs to be communicated to them in a child-friendly and accessible format.

### 2. Participation is voluntary

- Children and young people need to be able to choose whether or not they want to participate in the project/program/activity.
- Additionally, they should be aware that they can withdraw at any time and have the information they need to do so.
- They need to be given sufficient information to understand the choices available to them and to understand the implications of their choice to participate or to not participate.
- Adults have the skills necessary to encourage children and young people, particularly those who are marginalised, to participate and to ensure that they are never forced to participate.

### 3. Participation is respectful

- The views of children and young people are treated with respect and opportunities for them to express their views freely are to be created.
- They must be able to express their views without fear of discrimination and without being humiliated or exposed to harm.
- They can express their views within a culture that does not undermine them or their views, and is considerate of their backgrounds, experiences, concerns, vulnerabilities and existing commitments.

### 4. Participation is relevant

- Children and young people are given the chance to contribute their expertise and draw upon their experiences to express their views on issues of relevance and importance to their lives.
- In a way that is child-friendly and accessible, they are to be provided with the relevant information that helps them understand why the issue is of relevance to them, why their views and expertise are being sought and what the limitations of their participation are.
- They must also be given the opportunity to identify issues that they themselves believe to be relevant and important.

### 5. Participation is child-friendly

- Child and young people friendly approaches, depending on age and abilities, should be used to ensure they can participate effectively and meaningfully.
- Methods used must promote their confidence to speak up, share and express their views, ask questions and raise concerns.
- They must be given sufficient time, information and resources to help facilitate their meaningful participation.

### 6. Participation is inclusive

- Children and young people must be treated as individuals and no child or young person must be discriminated against during the participation process.

- The participatory process must take into consideration existing patterns of discrimination, power imbalances and cultural sensitivities, and the methods and approaches used must not exclude the most marginalised children.
- The process must also not discriminate against children based on their capabilities and it must also not humiliate children on any grounds.

#### **7. Participation is supported by training**

- Children and young people have the opportunity to access training on child rights, advocating, communicating with the media, holding decision makers to account, engaging in meetings, facilitation and designing and delivering training.
- Adults working with children and young people have the knowledge and training to meaningfully facilitate participation.

#### **8. Participation is safe and sensitive to risk**

- Adults working with children and young people have a duty of care and must take every precaution to minimise risks of abuse, exploitation and other negative consequences.
- Potential risks need to be identified in advance and risk management plans need to be in place to ensure the safe participation of children and young people.
- Children and young people should know that all considerations in relation to their safety and protection from harm have been taken into account and the potential risks associated to the participation clearly and appropriately communicated to them.

#### **9. Participation is accountable**

- Children and young people must receive feedback on how their contribution has been interpreted and used, and the influence of their participation on any outcomes.
- They should have access to key stakeholders and have the opportunity to ask questions and to provide feedback on their participation.
- Processes that ensure accountability need to be integrated throughout the project/program/activity so that learnings are documented, and changes are applied for quality improvement.
- Children and young people must also have adequate time, support and information to share any feedback with their peers, particularly when nominated by their peers and/or communities to represent their views.