



Meaningful participation

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Acknowledgement

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Purpose, audience and objectives

Purpose	When designing youth employment or entrepreneurial programmes, processes must be participatory, inclusive and accessible to young people with disabilities. This will help improve understanding of the barriers that need to be removed for young people with disabilities to meaningfully participate. This guide emphasises that organisations and initiatives of young people with disabilities are fundamental for their participation in public and community life. It offers guidance on what meaningful participation means and some questions to consider to ensure the meaningful inclusion of young people with disabilities within programming.
Audience	It is one of a series of short guides developed by Sightsavers, within Futuremakers by Standard Chartered , and specifically written with Youth Business International programme partners in mind. While advice included in the document is more targeted towards YBI's youth entrepreneurship programme, we have tried to make these relevant to all Futuremakers projects.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To build greater disability confidence of the reader and how partners can better include youth with disabilities in their Futuremakers projects.2. To give specific examples, advice and simple steps on how to adapt projects to be more inclusive of youth with disabilities.

Explaining meaningful participation

Often, people with disabilities are not consulted in decision-making about matters relating to or affecting their lives, with decisions continuing to be made on their behalf.¹ This may be more significant for children and young people with disabilities.

In the past decades however, and with the emergence of movements of people with disabilities demanding recognition of their human rights and their role in determining those rights, consultation with people with disabilities has been acknowledged as important. The motto “nothing about us without us” resonates with the philosophy and history of the disability rights movement, which relies on the principle of meaningful participation.²

¹ CRPD General Comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention

² Ibid

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) brought a paradigm shift. The CRPD sets a unique role for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as key intermediaries to represent and channel the views and perspectives of persons with disabilities. OPD participation brings multiple benefits for the relevance, quality, impact, and sustainability of programmes.³

Whilst the CRPD is applicable mainly to governments, it is prudent that other actors including those within international corporations follow its principles in implementing inclusive development, particularly its focus on meaningful inclusion and participation.

Full and effective participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organisations, should be ensured as a measure to achieve their inclusion in society and combat discrimination against them.

Organisations and initiatives of young persons with disabilities are fundamental for their participation in public and community life, for their right to be heard and for their freedom of expression and association. Adults have a key and supportive role to play in promoting an environment that enables young persons with disabilities to establish and act, formally or informally, within their own organisations and initiatives, including through cooperation with adults and other young persons.⁴

The following offers guidance on making the participation of youth with disabilities in programming meaningful:

- Full and effective participation should be understood as a process, not as an individual one-time event
- Young people with disabilities still face significant attitudinal, physical, legal, economic, social and communication barriers to participate in public life. Low or insufficient income and unemployment also restrict their capacity to engage in civil society activities. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of their organisations to advocate for their full and effective participation in society
- To consult and involve people with disabilities in a meaningful and timely manner will require access to all relevant information, through accessible digital formats and reasonable accommodation when required, such as the provision of sign language interpreters, easy-read text and plain language, braille, and tactile communication
- An organisation has a duty to inform organisations of young people with disabilities about the outcomes of consultative processes. Consultations should begin in the early stages and provide an input to the final product in all decision-making processes. Meaningful participation entails their inclusion in different decision-making roles within the programming cycle
- Consultations should include organisations representing the wide diversity of young people with disabilities, at different levels be it local or national levels
- Organisations of young people with disabilities should have access to appropriate resources to take part in the independent monitoring frameworks and ensure that reasonable accommodation and accessibility requirements for their membership are met

³ Applying CRPD standards to programmatic processes: A look at inclusive programming in practice, International Disability Alliance, 2022

⁴ CRPD General Comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention

- Define, in close consultation with organisations of youth with disabilities, verifiable indicators for good participation, concrete timelines and responsibilities for implementation and monitoring

Now that I know, what do I need to do?

- When designing my employment or entrepreneurship project or programme, have I talked with young people with disabilities and their representative organisations to understand the barriers which need to be removed for them to meaningfully participate in it? Did we decide together on the best solutions to the barriers, or did we just inform them of our plans?
- Are diverse youth with disabilities and their representative organisations actively engaged in analysis, design, and planning?
- Are young people with disabilities represented at all levels of the organisation, including senior decision-making and governance positions?
- Do activities create safe and accessible spaces for all young people to participate equally including, where necessary, separate spaces to ensure diverse and marginalised voices are heard?
- Have I budgeted for meaningful engagement with organisations of young people with disabilities, including for accessibility and reasonable accommodation?

Further Reading

General comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organisations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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and middle-income countries to
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