



POLICYMAKERS' TOOLKIT

FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN ROAD SAFETY
AND SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY



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FOREWORD

Sana' Khasawneh & Jacob Smith, Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety

As young road safety advocates, we are terrified of the fact that we lose 1000 young people on the world's roads every day. Road crashes have been the biggest killer of young people for over a decade, this needs to change! In the Global Plan of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, youth have been finally recognised as key stakeholders in delivering road safety. This brings us so much hope; we aspire to be meaningfully engaged in shaping road safety policies and changing the stark reality we face on the road. As youth, we have our own needs, dreams and demands that other key stakeholders in road safety are unaware of.

If we want to see change in road crash statistics, we must be at the same table as policymakers. We want to speak for ourselves and ensure our voices are included in the policies shaping our future. Herein, we explore meaningful youth participation, offer ideas and a systematic and strategic approach that key stakeholders, working with and for youth, can adopt to include youth voices to shape effective policy, practise and change.

At the Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety, youth leaders work closely with policymakers in their home countries to address road safety challenges. This Toolkit supports our mission and presents the case that youth have the right to shape the future of their mobility. Youth deserve roads that do not kill their dreams, and this is only achievable if we are involved in a meaningful way. **We have raised our voices, will you listen?**

Our Coalition inspires, mobilises and unites thousands of young people from more than 100 countries. We are passionate advocates, change agents, artists, creators, activists and community leaders. We want policymakers to shift how they view us. Instead of blaming us for dying on the roads due to 'dangerous road user behaviour', we want you to protect us by co-designing a safe and sustainable mobility system. **Youth continue to be the catalysts of change for an array of social movements. That can be the same with road safety if we work together!**

We hope that policymakers will take a long hard look at the current systems, how they engage young people, and realise the potential of an intergenerational collaboration in planning, implementing and evaluating road safety policies. We are ready to work with you. **Will you start engaging us?**



Stefania Minniti & Floor Lieshout, YOURS - Youth for Road Safety

We believe that the absence of young people in road safety policymaking is a self-defeating travesty. Deaths will continue on the world's roads without actively engaging and working with young people to develop safe and sustainable mobility systems. Closing the gap between policymakers and youth in the global road safety agenda is at the core of our mission to save young lives. Now, with this Toolkit for Meaningful Youth Participation, we encourage decision-makers worldwide to rethink their perception of youth and their approach to working with young people on road safety. We call for an urgent focus on this leading public health issue for youth.

Since our inception in 2007, we have championed meaningful youth participation in road safety policymaking. As the organisation has matured, we have grown with our experience. We empower the next generation of road safety advocates via our Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety and the YOURS Academy. **Our Toolkit marks an essential milestone in our journey to ensure young people everywhere have the opportunity to participate in road safety meaningfully.** We encourage practitioners and policymakers to use it to foster inclusive, participatory practices with youth at all levels of decision-making.

The Toolkit does not offer a 'cookie-cutter' approach to meaningful youth participation. To do so would make it too easy to pick and choose methods of engagement at politically convenient times, with little hope for follow through of long-term commitment. This would only continue to support exclusionary practices that impact youth, especially marginalised youth. It does not seek to decide road safety policy outcomes and activities for youth - we say these must be developed with youth in true participatory processes that reflect the diversity of young people's needs and their different country contexts.

Instead, this Toolkit promotes the core principles of meaningful youth participation as a cycle of relationship building, commitment, investment and a fundamental shift in mindset that can be applied to any organisation, agency or government aiming to work with and for youth.

In this Toolkit, you will find our road map that illustrates the process for fostering meaningful youth participation to develop, implement and evaluate road safety policies with young people. Our case studies highlight the tangible benefits of meaningful youth participation and the detrimental impact of involvement that is anything but meaningful. Our self-assessment scorecard will help you evaluate your current relationship with youth and track your progress as you develop meaningful participatory practices.

We count on your support to endorse this Toolkit and your commitment to developing systematic and inclusive meaningful youth participation as standard practice in the design and delivery of public policies and programmes related to health and road safety. **We hope our arguments will convince you that meaningful youth participation in road safety benefits everybody and will help deliver more effective policies and a healthier, more inclusive civic culture that currently too many young people are excluded from.**

INTRODUCTION



YOUTH TODAY FACE A COMBINATION OF UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES IN EVERY CONTEXT.

Adolescents and youth have already lived through two major global crises that have disproportionately impacted their health, well-being and future opportunity - the 2007 to 2008 financial crisis and the COVID19 pandemic.¹ Millions of young people face the growing insecurity of military conflicts, violence and displacement. Young people also face persistent employment challenges, a shrinking jobs market, and barriers to accessing quality education.²

Mental health, road traffic injury and interpersonal violence also significantly impact the health and well-being of young people globally. Road traffic crashes are the number one killer of those aged 5 to 29³, with more than 1000 young people under 30 years old dying daily on the world's roads.⁴ This is against the backdrop of increased uncertainty and urgency as the climate emergency takes hold in the face of inadequate action by leaders worldwide.

Failure to tackle these intersecting issues is reinforcing systemic inequalities, preventing intergenerational justice and stopping millions of young people worldwide from reaching their full potential in life.

1 <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/delivering-for-youth-how-governments-can-put-young-people-at-the-centre-of-the-recovery-92c9d060/>

2 <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/delivering-for-youth-how-governments-can-put-young-people-at-the-centre-of-the-recovery-92c9d060/>

3 World Health Organization. Road traffic injuries [Internet]. World Health Organization. 2020. Available from:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>

4 Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 (GBD 2019) Data Resources

Currently, 1.8 billion young people are aged 10 to 24, the largest youth population in history.⁵ 42% of the global population are under 25 years of age.⁶ Nearly 90% of the worldwide population aged 10 to 24 are growing up in developing countries⁷, where solving many of these challenges is urgent and inextricably linked to achieving the sustainable development agenda. Solutions that address youth's converging and complex needs are central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite so much resting on solving these significant challenges for young people, which would benefit all people, progress is faltering youth globally. Investment in adolescent health is only 2.2% of global health development assistance.⁸ Undoubtedly, the lack of funding to promote the health and well-being of adolescents continues to impact youth into their 20s and throughout their lives.

It's no surprise that young people lack trust in policymakers. Youth face exceptional challenges seeded by the global financial crisis, with limited recovery decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Both crises have led to a sharp increase in youth unemployment, and exacerbated inequalities between and within different generations.⁹ For the first time in history, today's youth have less disposable income than previous generations and have specific challenges accessing secure jobs and affordable housing.¹⁰ 2019 research of OECD countries showed a decline in trust since the global financial crisis compared to the rest of the population and that only 46% of young people expressed confidence in their national governments.¹¹ Similarly, youth perceive they are not represented in governance institutions and that they have limited political influence.¹² Youth are underrepresented in political institutions and public administration; the same 2019 research revealed that only 26% of staff working at youth ministries were under the age of 34.¹³ In addition, a 2021 report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union tells us that as little as 2.6% of parliamentarians are under 30 and 1.1% of these young members of parliament are women.

Meaningful youth participation is key to solving this disconnect between young people and policymakers; it is crucial to developing effective policies that reflect the specific needs of youth and address major challenges such as road traffic injury. It is also important for repairing trust between governments and youth, and building a more cohesive and fairer society. Meaningful youth participation requires using the appropriate tools and mechanisms to guarantee that young people's specific needs, views and skills are recognised, valued and weaved into the very fabric of society and how it functions.

Meaningful youth participation requires a shift in mindset that challenges current perceptions of youth and bias which undermines their contributions to the policymaking process. It requires a change in ways of working so that multiple mechanisms and approaches ensure all youth can influence policy, not just those with the time and resources to participate. It requires commitment and funding to act upon the perspectives, ideas and contributions of young people and that the act of participating is not simply another workshop or event of lost youth contributions with no follow-through.

5 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>

6 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/08/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-worlds-young-people-in-7-charts/>

7 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/>

8 <https://www.fiafoundation.org/resources/these-are-our-streets-manifesto-203>

9 <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>

10 <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>

11 <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>

12 <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>

13 <https://www.oecd.org/gov/fit-for-generations-global-youth-report-highlights.pdf>

The fundamental right of youth to meaningfully participate in policymaking processes is not a new idea. It is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in article 12 - the right of all children to be heard.¹⁶ For those older than 18, the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the SDGs recognise the right to meaningful participation for people of all ages as a pathway to building inclusive and sustainable communities. The need to integrate meaningful youth participation into UN agencies and its ecosystem is being spearheaded by the UN Youth Envoy and the UN Youth 2030 strategy.¹⁷

It is clear that despite efforts to mainstream meaningful youth participation, it is often ad-hoc at best and lacks investment and political will. At its worst, governments do not view meaningful youth participation as a relevant or necessary part of policymaking.

Youth participation can be treated as a tick-box exercise rather than systematic and integral to policy processes. It can often be tokenistic - youth may be invited to formal power settings but are not actively participating. Youth may be used as 'window-dressing' in launches and events and positioned as passive endorsers of policies and actions that have not meaningfully considered their perspectives.

Many issues arise when introducing youth participation to policymaking spaces that undermine it. When young people's input into policymaking is taken into consideration, there may be strong push-back from communities whose expectations may not align with that of youth. These negative experiences do more damage to the relationship between policymakers and youth.

Youth are not a homogenous group. There are many definitions of youth but no universally agreed age range, and within the age ranges, there are distinct phases of development with unique challenges. Youth also have different skills, preferences, availability and resources - one mechanism for youth participation is not enough to account for the diversity within this demographic. There are specific challenges in reaching marginalised youth, and viewing meaningful youth participation through the lens of intersectionality is vital to its success.

Meaningful youth participation is not simply bringing more youth into adult-led processes. It is also finding innovative ways to incorporate meaningful participation into daily aspects of life and non-traditional spaces where young people can choose how they participate and are free to express themselves on their terms.



16 <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/advanceversions/crc-c-gc-12.pdf>
17 <https://www.unyouth2030.com/>

AT YOURS, we work with and for young people to reduce global road fatalities.

We believe it is only possible to end the leading killer of young people with young people. Meaningful youth engagement mainstreamed into road safety planning and policies is vital to achieving the SDG target 3.6 of a 50% reduction of road traffic fatalities and injuries by 2030.

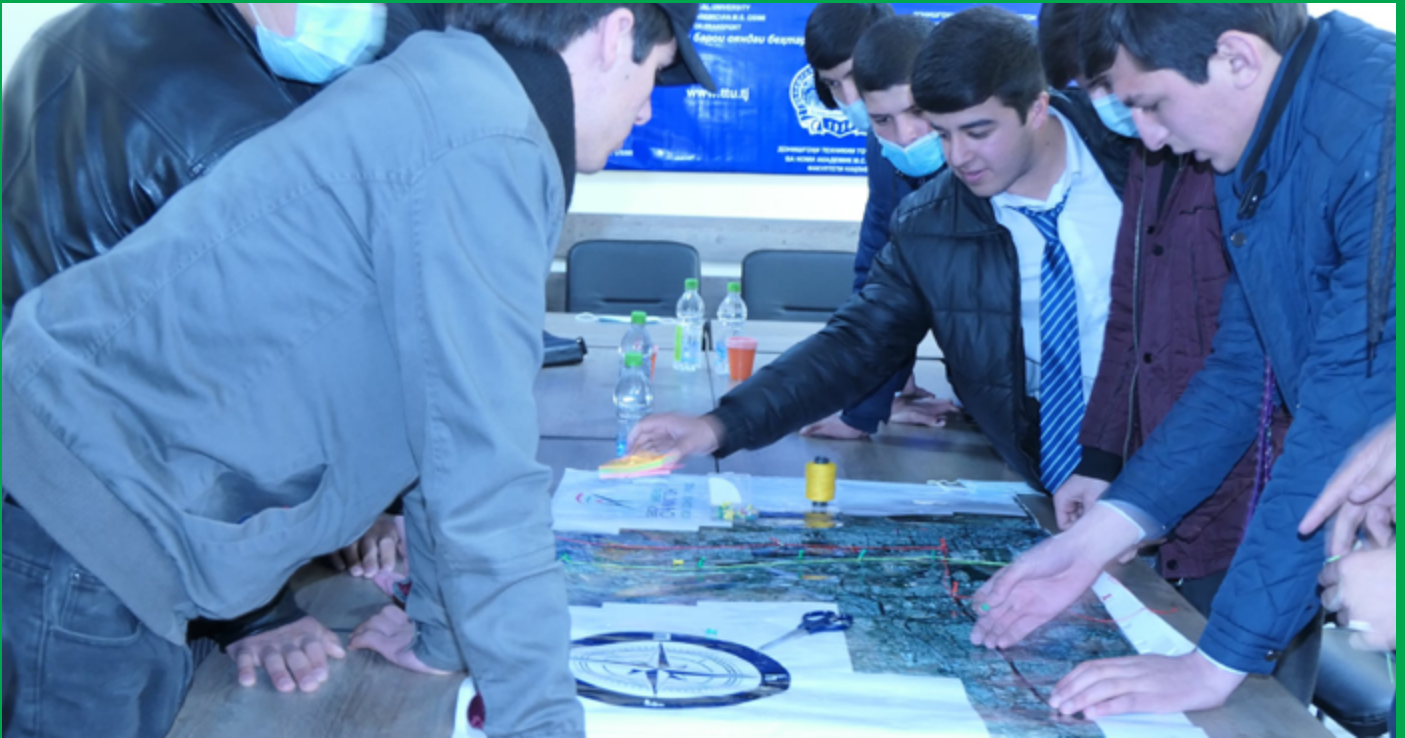
We believe it is impossible to meet this target or interconnected SDGs (4, 5, 10, 11, 13) without mainstreaming youth participation in designing, financing, implementing, and evaluating safe and sustainable mobility policymaking.

Not only do we believe that we should collaborate with and empower young people to tackle this significant global issue, but we also believe that governments, donors, academia, and civil society worldwide should do the same.

Many models and toolkits for meaningful youth participation exist. The purpose of our Toolkit is to provide the critical arguments in support of meaningful youth participation as well as the barriers and challenges. Central to our Toolkit is highlighting the perspectives of young people on why they must meaningfully participate in policymaking on road safety. The Toolkit also contains case studies showing how meaningful participation works in different contexts and stages of the policymaking processes. It also includes a road map for how policymakers and the road safety community can incorporate meaningful youth participation into the safe and sustainable mobility policymaking agenda.



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT: _____



The focus of this document is to support policymakers and practitioners in building solid foundations for meaningful youth participation. It aims to construct participatory practices that grow community capital and develop policies that work for everyone. The Toolkit purposefully does not offer a ‘cookie-cutter’ approach to meaningful youth participation. Instead, it provides a road map on how to develop meaningful relationships with youth, and work with youth, to influence any stage of the policymaking cycle.

Without solid foundations for meaningful participation, interventions are likely to fail and, at worst, damage and fracture relationships with young people. This Toolkit supports creating the right environment for successfully implementing participatory techniques found in many guides. This Toolkit is setting practitioners and policymakers up for success. If you use the methods in this Toolkit, the tools and techniques relevant to context, culture and youth will emerge in discussions and relationship-building with youth.

How to use this Toolkit:



1. Use the background chapters to understand youth’s road safety challenges, existing global mandates for meaningful participation, and the associated benefits and challenges of working with and for young people in policymaking. Assess the road safety situation for youth in your context.



2. Reflect on the principles of meaningful youth participation and consider the challenges youth are facing to contribute to policymaking processes meaningfully.



3. Use the road map and the reflective questions to establish your current relationship with youth and understand if, where and how youth are currently participating. Use this tool to assess which phase of building and establishing meaningful youth participation your organization has reached. Work through the reflective questions to understand how you will continue strengthening relationships with youth and build support within the broader community. This road map will help you build the foundations needed to include youth in road safety policymaking meaningfully and continue to work with youth to monitor and evaluate the co-designed outcomes of this engagement.



4. Use the case studies and additional resources for inspiration and examples of different participatory techniques that can be used at various stages of the policymaking cycle.



5. Track your progress using the Self-Assessment Scorecard, inviting youth to score their experiences too. Develop improvement plans with youth if scores fall short of meaningful youth participation.

Our Definition of Youth

Different countries have different definitions of 'Youth' which in some cases can go up to 35 years old. There is no universally agreed age range for youth which often serves as a barrier to meaningful youth participation and youth focused work. **For the purposes of this document we consider youth as those aged those aged 15 to 29 years old.** Youth aged 18 years old and under are also considered children by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child; this is where definitions of children and youth overlap.

We also consider that as well as age being an axis of inequality, that this intersects with other systemic inequalities across gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, sexuality, and disability. We advocate for a multi-method approach to meaningful youth participation to support the opportunity of inclusion for all youth in policymaking processes.

YOUTH AND ROAD SAFETY

“Road traffic crashes are the leading killer of youth. Young people are smart and creative. With our skills and ingenuity, we are able to work with decision-makers to reduce the number of deaths and achieve the global road safety mandates.”

Youth Advocate, Nigeria, 2022 Claiming Our Space Campaign

Globally, road traffic injury is the number one cause of death for young people.¹⁸ According to the 2019 Global Burden of Disease Study Data, this equates to over 1000 children and young people under the age of 30 die every single day due to road traffic injury.¹⁹ Millions more children and youth are seriously injured and left with life-changing injuries due to road traffic collisions. Such injuries can reinforce inequalities that exist across education, poverty, and current and future access to social and economic opportunities.²⁰

Key Data:

- Over **1000** children and youth under 30 years old die every day on the world’s roads.
- Road traffic injury is the leading cause of death globally for those aged **5 to 29**.
- **1.9 million** deaths of children and youth aged 10 to 24 could be prevented by 2050 if road safety solutions are implemented at scale across 77 low-middle-income countries (LMICS).²¹
- **10.5 million** children and youth under 20 are injured in road traffic crashes every year.²²
- **4.2 million** premature deaths are caused by outdoor air pollution every year, of which vehicle emissions are a significant contributor.
- **80%** of 11 to 17-year-olds worldwide are not meeting WHO recommendations for physical activity.

Road traffic injuries and fatalities are the product of systemic problems within our vehicle-dominated transport systems worldwide. Environments that prioritise the movement of vehicles over people not only result in preventable injuries and deaths; behind these tragedies is a dominant street hierarchy that contributes to several interlinking health and environmental issues that significantly impact youth.

18 World Health Organization. Road traffic injuries [Internet]. World Health Organization. 2020. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>

19 Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 (GBD 2019) Data Resources

20 Rights of Way, Child Poverty, Road Traffic and The SDGs, 2016, FIA Foundation

21 <https://www.fiafoundation.org/media/ijjfnfaj/final-report.pdf>

22 <https://www.fiafoundation.org/resources/these-are-our-streets-manifesto-2030>

Emissions from road transport are a significant contributor to the global air pollution crisis that has debilitating health consequences. An estimated 90% of the global population are breathing air that does not meet World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.²³ 4.2 million people die prematurely every year due to outdoor air pollution, of which vehicle emissions are a significant contributor.²⁴ Exposure to air pollution is especially harmful to young children and has been found to stunt neurodevelopment, trigger asthma and childhood cancer, and cause cardiovascular illnesses later in life.²⁵ The effects of poor air quality on lungs in childhood are shown to continue into adulthood as youth mature and growth slows.²⁶ Air pollution, particularly traffic related, has been shown to elevate mental health episodes and presentation to emergency departments in individuals aged 8 to 24 years old.²⁷ A 2017 study of university students in Beijing found that air pollution negatively impacts physical activity.²⁸ Tackling the air pollution crisis early to protect the health of with younger children will have a major positive impact on youth and adults.

Regular physical activity is vital for young people's healthy growth and development, yet car-dominated environments hamper their freedom to walk and cycle safely. According to WHO, 23% of adults and over 80% of 11 to 17-year-olds do not meet WHO global recommendations for physical exercise.³² Physical activity significantly benefits health, mental wellbeing and helps prevent and manage non-communicable diseases.³³ By improving road safety, streets can better support safe active mobility. With the necessary infrastructure to support safe walking and cycling, fair use of street space for all road users empowers people to make healthier, more sustainable mobility choices.



23 <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-05-2018-9-out-of-10-people-worldwide-breathe-polluted-air-but-more-countries-are-taking-action>

<https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2018-more-than-90-of-the-worlds-children-breathe-toxic-air-every-day>

24 <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2018-more-than-90-of-the-worlds-children-breathe-toxic-air-every-day>

25 <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-10-2018-more-than-90-of-the-worlds-children-breathe-toxic-air-every-day>

26 Gauderman, W. J., Avol, E., Gilliland, F., Vora, H., Thomas, D., Berhane, K., ... & Peters, J. (2004). The effect of air pollution on lung development from 10 to 18 years of age. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 351(11), 1057-1067.

27 Szyzkowicz, M., Zemek, R., Colman, I., Gardner, W., Kousha, T., & Smith-Doiron, M. (2020). Air pollution and emergency department visits for mental disorders among youth. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(12), 4190.

28 Yu, H., Yu, M., Gordon, S.P. et al. The association between ambient fine particulate air pollution and physical activity: a cohort study of university students living in Beijing. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act* 14, 136 [2017]. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-017-0592-x>

32 Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

33 <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/physical-activity>

However, 93% of global road traffic deaths occur in LMICs, where over 50% of fatalities are vulnerable road users such as cyclists, pedestrians and two-wheelers.³⁴ Walking and cycling are declining in popularity, especially in low-middle-income countries (LMICS).³⁵ Cities built for cars continue the proliferation of private vehicle use for those that can afford it and a lack of safety for those who can't. Poorer communities tend to walk or cycle, meaning they are more exposed to the risk of unsafe road conditions.³⁶ In Sub-Saharan Africa, youth are likely to walk to school, exposing them to road traffic risk as they access their right to education.³⁷

Road safety is a social justice issue, especially for marginalised youth. Road traffic injury and other associated health risks caused by increased air pollution are more likely to impact poorer communities than affluent ones.^{38,39} Research from South Africa shows that traditionally poorer economic groups face higher road traffic injury rates.⁴⁰ In London, UK, the road traffic injury rate for children from the most deprived areas is higher than those of the least deprived.⁴¹ USA-based research by the Governors Highway Safety Association found that Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities are disproportionately affected by road traffic crashes.⁴² Globally, poor people tend to be priced out of areas with few highways and better air quality, and therefore are disproportionately impacted by the health effects of toxic air.⁴³

Road traffic risk and vehicle-dominated environments are fuelling multiple health crises which reinforce systemic inequalities and further marginalise youth, especially within vulnerable communities. In addition to the increased risks and health impacts on poorer communities, the lack of affordable, safe and accessible transport options significantly impacts access to education, vital services and social and economic opportunities. More impoverished communities tend to see little investment in their infrastructure, including road safety and accessible public transport.⁴⁴

“Decision-makers should ally with young people because when it comes to road safety they are the most affected road users, when going to school, work and also health centres. Young people, especially girls, are harassed as they make their way to school and work by boda boda men.”

Youth Advocate, Uganda, 2022 Claiming Our Space Campaign.

Road traffic injuries and crashes are often viewed as accidents, moments of bad luck or bad judgement, rather than the avoidable tragedies that they are. For young people, this victim-blaming mindset is incredibly damaging. This leads to a 'quick fix' approach to improving road safety that targets young people as a problem rather than working with youth as active collaborators who can participate meaningfully in developing and implementing effective road safety interventions.

34 <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>

35 Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

36 <https://www.grsproadsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Fact-Poverty-PDF.pdf>

37 Poswayo A, Kalolo S, Rabonovitz K, et al. Inj Prev Epub ahead of print: [please include Day Month Year]. doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2018-042786

38 <https://www.grsproadsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Fact-Poverty-PDF.pdf>

39 Hajat A, Hsia C, O'Neill MS. Socioeconomic Disparities and Air Pollution Exposure: a Global Review. Curr Environ Health Rep. 2015 Dec;2(4):440-50. doi: 10.1007/s40572-015-0069-5. PMID: 26381684; PMCID: PMC4626327.

40 Rights of Way, Child Poverty, Road Traffic and The SDGs, 2016, FIA Foundation

41 Edwards, P., Green, J., Roberts, I., Grundy, C., and Lachowycz, K. (2006) Deprivation and road safety in London. A report to the London Road Safety Unit. London: LSHTM

42 An Analysis of Traffic Fatalities by Race and Ethnicity, 2021, GHSA

43 <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/air-pollution-hurts-poorest-most>

44 <https://www.grsproadsafety.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Fact-Poverty-PDF.pdf>

Human error is inevitable, especially for children and adolescents still developing physically and cognitively. Road crashes will happen, but death and severe injury are avoidable outcomes with the right safe systems. The Safe System approach to road safety accepts this reality, meaning children, youth, and all road users do not have to pay an unacceptably high price for their mobility. Through a system of safe infrastructure, safe speeds, safe vehicles, safe road users and post-crash care, it is possible to mitigate human error and save young lives. Young people can not only benefit from the safe system approach, but they can also significantly contribute to its success if given the opportunity.

However, too often, youth are targeted with ineffective educational programmes that do not consider the systemic issues within the transport system. Road traffic deaths and injuries are the responsibility of governments, not the individuals navigating transport systems that do not protect them.

Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable at different stages of their development. Younger children are limited by their physical, cognitive and social development.⁴⁵ Due to their small frames, it is harder for children to see past vehicles, and to be seen by drivers.^{46,47} Young children lack adequate risk perception and have difficulty judging the speed and proximity of vehicles.⁴⁸ Children are more susceptible to serious head injury than adults due to their softer heads.⁴⁹ As children enter adolescence and early adulthood, they are more likely to take risks on the roads.⁵⁰ More males than females are injured as pedestrians, and this is likely to be linked to more risk-taking behaviour and gender stereotyping related to masculinity.⁵¹ The impact of road crashes on children and younger youth continues shape and influence the life experiences of young people

While education is an essential part of the safe system approach to ensure safe road users, it is clear that to protect youth (and all people) it is crucial to ensure transport systems incorporate the necessary infrastructure design, laws, regulations, enforcement and post-crash care to prevent serious deaths and injuries on the world's roads.

45 https://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/Ten_Strategies_For_Keeping_Children_Safe_on_the_Road.pdf

46 https://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/Ten_Strategies_For_Keeping_Children_Safe_on_the_Road.pdf

47 Cloutier M, Beaulieu E, Fridman L, et al State-of-the-art review: preventing child and youth pedestrian motor vehicle collisions: critical issues and future directions Injury Prevention 2021;27:77-84.

48 https://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/Ten_Strategies_For_Keeping_Children_Safe_on_the_Road.pdf

49 https://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/Ten_Strategies_For_Keeping_Children_Safe_on_the_Road.pdf

50 https://www.who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/Ten_Strategies_For_Keeping_Children_Safe_on_the_Road.pdf

51 Cloutier M, Beaulieu E, Fridman L, et al State-of-the-art review: preventing child and youth pedestrian motor vehicle collisions: critical issues and future directions Injury Prevention 2021;27:77-84.



“Young people experience the highest number of road deaths and injuries first hand, and therefore can speak to solutions based on lived experiences. We want to cycle, walk and experience our cities without the risk of getting killed. Our realities are the lessons.”

Youth Advocate, Kenya, 2022 Claiming our Space Campaign

Not only is a paradigm shift required in terms of how we understand road safety, it is also required in understanding the purpose, potential and types of meaningful youth participation - and the transformative effect it could have to make streets safer, equitable and inclusive for all ages, abilities and mode of travel. Reflecting the specific needs, and ideas, of children, adolescents and youth into planning people-centred communities can ultimately help address road traffic injury and save lives.



Put simply - instead of blaming youth for the burden of road traffic injury, work with youth to identify the challenges and opportunities to create safe, healthy and sustainable, climate-friendly streets and communities.

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

“Meaningful, diverse, and effective youth participation – inside the United Nations and far beyond – is essential to advancing human rights, addressing the climate crisis and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, ECOSOC Youth Forum, 2022⁵²

The fundamental right of youth to meaningfully participate in policymaking processes is not a new idea. Participation is a human right recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for those under 18 years of age; in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and is central to equal, inclusive and sustainable development in the SDGs and New Urban Agenda. The Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021 - 2030 recognises youth as a critical stakeholder vital to its successful delivery.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

For children and adolescents under the age of 18, the right to meaningfully participate in society and realise their full potential is mandated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - the most widely ratified international human rights agreement with 196 signatory parties.⁵³ It is a legally binding international agreement outlining in Article 12 the child’s right to be heard and taken seriously on issues that affect their lives. The UNCRC applies to children and youth under the age of 18 years old as individuals and as groups within society.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Meaningful public participation in decision-making is a fundamental human right that supports and is dependent upon other rights essential to peace, justice and effective governance.⁵⁴ The declaration covers youth - young people have the right to meaningful participation. Participation is a core principle of government that supports the right of all people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.⁵⁵

52 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116592>

53 <https://www.unicef.org/thailand/what-is-crc>

54 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2020/09/right-participation-matters-more-ever-un-secretary-general>

55 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2020/09/right-participation-matters-more-ever-un-secretary-general>

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Meaningful participation is recognised across the SDGs as critical to inclusive and sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda aims to “*leave no one behind.*” This means creating societies and settlements that reflect the needs of all people and that “*all people, regardless of their backgrounds, have rights and responsibilities to fulfil their potential in life, and lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives.*”⁵⁶ This is particularly important for groups often facing barriers to meaningful and equal participation that reinforce converging inequalities such as women, children, youth, elderly, those living with disabilities, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced people and migrants.

Specific targets within the SDGs directly call for meaningful participation. SDG 11.3 target calls for participation to be integrated into human settlement planning and management to create inclusive and sustainable cities and communities.⁵⁷ Calls for meaningful, inclusive, responsive and representative participation in decision-making at all levels are strengthened in SDG 16.7 as key to achieving peace, justice and strong governance institutions.⁵⁸ To accomplish these targets, youth must have access meaningful, systematic and inclusive participatory mechanisms to deliver sustainable development for all.



UN Youth 2030 Strategy

The central and catalytic role of youth across the SDG agenda is recognised by the UN 2030 Youth Strategy and the work spearheaded by the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. The strategy focuses on working with and for youth to deliver peace and security; human rights; and sustainable development across all UN agencies.⁵⁹ Road safety has a specific target within SDG 3 - the goal for good health and well-being - to halve the number of deaths and injuries due to road traffic crashes by 2030.⁶⁰ With youth recognised as key stakeholders to deliver the SDGs, it is imperative that youth are included in designing and deliver road safety policies.

The New Urban Agenda (NUA)

The New Urban Agenda agreed at the Habitat III conference in Quito in 2016 stipulates that sustainable development should:

- Be age and gender-responsive;
- Realise all human rights and freedoms;
- End all forms of discrimination and violence;
- Empower all individuals and communities through meaningful participation.⁶²

⁵⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/desa/leaving-no-one-behind>

⁵⁷ <https://sdg-tracker.org/cities>

⁵⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

⁵⁹ https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf

⁶⁰ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

⁶² <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

Meaningful participation is a transformative commitment to sustainable development for all people:

"We commit ourselves to promote institutional, political, legal and financial mechanisms in cities and human settlements to broaden inclusive platforms, in line with national policies, that allow meaningful participation in decision-making, planning and follow-up processes for all, as well as enhanced civil engagement and co-provision and co-production."⁶³

Furthermore, youth are specifically identified as a critical stakeholder for sustainable development, who should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully and advocate for their needs and that of their communities:

"We commit ourselves to harnessing the urban demographic dividend, where applicable, and to promoting access for youth to education, skills development and employment to achieve increased productivity and shared prosperity in cities and human settlements. Girls and boys, young women and young men are key agents of change in creating a better future, and when empowered, they have great potential to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities. Ensuring more and better opportunities for their meaningful participation will be essential for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda."⁶⁴

The New Urban Agenda also recognises the importance of sustainable, affordable and inclusive mobility for meaningful social and economic participation.⁶⁵ Transport systems are the backbone of society and should reflect the needs of all citizens to build genuinely inclusive, equitable and accessible communities. Policymaking processes for road safety, transportation, urban planning and use of public spaces must meaningfully include young people.

The Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021 - 2030

The Global Plan for The Decade of Action for Road Safety, produced by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Regional Commissions, recognises that youth must meaningfully participate in designing and delivering road safety:

"Young people play an important role in shaping the future transport system for two key reasons. First, they are the age group most affected by road trauma, with road traffic crashes being the leading cause of death among those aged 5–29. Second, they are the generation that will inherit the outcomes of today's decisions about the safety of the evolving transport system. As such, they should be asked about their needs and to help shape the system and generate ideas on how to better protect some of the most vulnerable among us. Meaningful engagement with young leaders can help foster greater ownership of the road safety issue as well as develop a new cohort of road safety advocates with a fresh perspective on the future of mobility."⁶⁶

Global Accelerated Action for the Health for Adolescents (AA-HA!): Guidance to Support Country Implementation

Many underlying inequities are issues of power, money and resources of which meaningful participation for all youth is one pathway to achieving equity.⁶⁷ The Global Accelerated Action for the Health for Adolescents (AA-HA!) recognises that meaningful participation of this age group in public health policies is necessary to ensure successful interventions and uphold the rights of youth to inform and participate in decisions that significantly impact their lives.

⁶³ <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

⁶⁴ <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

⁶⁵ <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

⁶⁶ <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-plan-for-the-decade-of-action-for-road-safety-2021-2030>

⁶⁷ Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!): guidance to support country implementation. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

THE GLOBAL YOUTH COALITION FOR ROAD SAFETY

“As young people we will be the ones living and building the future of mobility. Our goals and needs are not the same as our parents. Social justice, the protection of human life and the environment are of paramount importance for us. It is therefore vital for us to be heard”

Youth Advocate, Chile, Claiming Our Space Campaign, 2022

Globally, many young people are ready to act on road safety, yet their energy and ideas are often lost or missed out in this policy agenda. The mission of YOURS is centred on working with and for young people globally to tackle the leading killer of youth - road traffic injury. The Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety, initiated by YOURS, is here to bridge the gap between policymakers and young people, to ensure young people are empowered to collaborate and contribute to road safety policies through meaningful participation.

We facilitate and support opportunities for young leaders to influence the global policy agenda and ensure there are more young leaders routinely involved in spaces of power. Together, we advocate for systematic meaningful youth participation at every level - within policy-making structures and outside of them, so the needs of all young people can be weaved into road safety policies. Ultimately every young person has the right to contribute to the design of their environment and the policies and institutions that govern their lives. It is only possible to tackle the leading killer of youth, with youth.

Road traffic crashes have been the leading killer of youth for over a decade. It is clear that it is time for a new approach to developing and implementing road safety policies. It is only possible to tackle the leading killer of youth, with youth.

The Global Youth Statement for Road Safety

On the 18th of February 2020 at the 2nd World Youth Assembly for Road Safety more than 160 young leaders from 75 countries adopted the Global Youth Statement. The Statement was based on the voices of more than 1500 young people from around the world that took part in the Youth Consultations. The statement highlights the reality of today's generation being born in a global road safety crisis where global decision-makers are facing the issue with silence, inaction, and exclusion of youth.

The Global Youth Statement calls on decision-makers to start listening to youth and to explore pathways to include meaningful youth participation in all phases creating safe and sustainable mobility policies. Crucially, it calls for policymakers and practitioners to actively seek out young people, and to view young people as agents of change for road safety.

WHAT WE DEMAND

We cannot trust that our decision-makers will make the right decisions. We are therefore claiming our space at the decision-making table.

WE, THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD, DEMAND:

Roads that do not kill our dreams:

protect vulnerable users, children and youth on their way to get an education. Stop funding and building anything less than 3-star roads.

Education for every road user:

so that we can afford formal and graduated driving training, the necessary safety-equipment and information on how to be safer.

“Slow down!”:

speed kills; we need established and enforced safe speed limits appropriate to the function and location of the road by transport authorities and police.

No more deathtrap cars:

get the unsafe vehicles off the roads and commit to a global vehicle safety standard.

There is no planet B:

we need safe and sustainable transport systems to combat the climate crisis. Let us breathe!

Lawsss!:

we need good helmet and seatbelt laws, laws that protect children in the back seat and have zero tolerance for drugs, alcohol, and distractions. We need the political will to enforce these laws.

That every second counts:

Post-crash care saves lives. We demand a quick and efficient response when the worst happens and justice for road traffic victims.

Stop blaming us and start engaging us:

It's time to change your perception of youth. No more manipulation, decoration or participation for show. We want our needs, ideas, skills and opinions taken into account. Use our boundless potential.

- Extract of youth demands from the Youth Coalition for Road Safety Global Statement

We call on decision-makers and all stakeholders to invest in a Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety to take the movement forward and enact these demands and commitments. We, the Youth, must also be part of the road safety revolution. So

WE DECIDED TO ACT.

STOP BLAMING US AND START ENGAGING US: WE ARE CLAIMING OUR SPACE

Young people are not passive agents; many young people have ideas on how to improve their communities for their peers. However, they are often stigmatised and perceived as 'the problem' instead.

CASE STUDY: Disconnect between youth and policymakers on road safety policymaking

In Spain a study set out to understand young people's perceptions about the causes of traffic crashes; to understand their views on road safety regulations; and to explore their ideas for solutions. Participants were aged 16-31 and included 43 participants and 12 focus groups involving 98 participants.

Overall the study revealed that interventions for reducing traffic injuries will improve through consideration of the young people's perceptions. Young people believe traffic injuries and deaths are a problem. They believe that the determinants of traffic crashes and injuries are multiple and related, and include personal, social and structural issues. Young people said they also feel stigmatised and stereotyped. Some identified issues such as drug taking may indicate a different problem such as a public health issue, and social issues such as the equating of cars with the ability to find a partner.

Mistrust towards the authorities was articulated through comments of feeling manipulated by ineffective measures, for example, confusion as to why fast cars are available to purchase if authorities don't want people to drive fast. Participants also believed that the government has vested interests which is why they are not spending more on public transport.

While young people in the study do not agree with a sanctions and fear approach they do believe that some work as a deterrent. However, the study revealed that this approach also increases distrust in the government, and generally that young people do not believe that fear motivates. They call most measures authoritarian.

Young people consider that the most effective response to road traffic crashes is to promote quality of life rather than promote car culture. Rather than fines or incentives, participants called for designing cities for pedestrians, promoting bicycle use, and investment in public transport and social work programmes.

Ramos, P., Diez, E., Pérez, K., Rodríguez-Martos, A., Brugal, M. T., & Villalbí, J. R. (2008). Young people's perceptions of traffic injury risks, prevention and enforcement measures: a qualitative study. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 40(4), 1313-1319.

That's why the Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety launched the Claiming Our Space campaign - to highlight the inherent value and fundamental right of youth to meaningfully participate in tackling the global road safety crisis that greatly impacts them.

Claiming Our Space campaign asked: Why should decision-makers ally with young people to tackle the road safety problem and connected development goals?

Young people are the experts of their own experience

As a young person we are “on the ground” and policy makers are “in the office”, ergo they don't see or experience what happens on ground like we do, and these young minds have a vision of how a sustainable road safety future should look like.

Cameroon

They should ally with us because we are the most vulnerable group. We can share our experiences with reference to our local environments, and we are the future leaders

Tanzania

We as young people spend most of the time on the road. We understand it better than anyone else. Decision-makers engage us now for a sustainable future!

Zimbabwe

Without looking at road safety issues from the youth's lens, solving the youth's safety problems is a joke!

Iran

Develop effective policies that work because they are co-designed with youth

Youth involvement can lead to better decisions that affect their lives, strengthen their commitment, promote the sense of responsibility and citizenship. Young people are a valuable resource in this changing world, so decision-makers and society should not waste it.

Georgia

It is extremely important to make an alliance with the youth not only for finding solutions to road safety issues but for any other struggles too. The younger contribute new ideas and are the future of our society.

Argentina

Youth can help us bring the solution to the road safety problems. Every youth can bring change and improve the environment around them. So let them be involved and decide for their future! Believe in the power of youth!

The Philippines

Many politicians, community leaders and others are far from convinced that harnessing the active involvement of youth represents an effective strategy for achieving better outcomes. Youth participation leads to better decisions and outcomes.

Iran

Youth are the demographic most impacted by road traffic risk

The authorities should ally with the youth because we are committed, professional, and active change agents. Road Safety problems and the SDGs affect us directly, and our voices must be recognized when making decisions.

Argentina

Because traffic accidents are the main cause of death for the youth, authorities must understand that our point of view can help find solutions to the problems we face.

Argentina

Your authorities should team up with the youth to face up to all the road safety issues and other sustainable development goals on account of traffic accidents being the leading cause of death for the youth.

Argentina

A large proportion of the victims of traffic accidents in the Arab world are among the youth, so the work of this group along with the decision-makers will represent an essential building block for a generation of solutions.

Morocco

Young people are overrepresented in traffic collision statistics and change is needed. Early engagement will promote the well-being and development of youth, lead to better decisions, and encourage future careers in road safety.

Argentina

Road traffic crashes kill young people more, and yet young people are not involved in determining road safety solutions that will bring an end to road crashes. Am advocating for the inclusion of young people in discussions and decision making on issues that affect young people.

Morocco

Build communities that work for all people

To develop more inclusive cities for young adults and children. We, the youth are the cities' future and must be taken into account when planning the cities to come.

Colombia

Decision makers must join us because only we really know the difficulties of being a woman in the traffic, coming from marginalized social classes, not having access to safe and good quality transportation, not being able to count on infrastructure compatible with mobility impairment and so much more.

Brazil

Because a large percentage of the population is young people must be included to have a role in decision-making

Jordan

Innovation, creativity, fresh perspectives

The youth have our minds full of alternatives, also, creative and efficient ideas, we do not want to be set aside. These huge issues find solutions in collaboration with the younger voices and authorities willing to listen.

Argentina

Because we have got brilliant and groundbreaking ideas to make a change in traffic. We have the strength and attitude needed to make a change in the world. We can motivate others to do things the right way.

The Dominican Republic

Today's youth is energetic, optimistic, and full of vibrant ideas. Team TRAX believes in the role of youth in nation-building. If their energy is channeled in the right direction, they can make wonders in giving a positive shape to the things that require change. So this is why.

TRAX, India

Fostering youth empowerment & their active engagement in decision making processes via youth-driven leadership models should be prioritized as they are capable of bringing forth innovative, energetic, honest, positive, dynamic & diverse perspectives & solutions to the table.

Sri Lanka

Youth have energy, ideas, creativity, a wide network with their peers and most importantly an understanding of the risks they are facing on the roads. Policy makers working with youths is a win-win cooperation to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road crashes by 2030.

Vietnam

Cross-cutting solutions for the environment championed by youth

We are getting closer and closer to the "point of no return" in regards to the global environmental crisis, and air pollution in large cities. We have to promote active mobility - thus reducing the number of cars on the streets and fostering the use of bicycles.

Brazil

Not only are streets for transit, but for enjoyment. But in car-centered cities this isn't always possible: to reimagine cities, young people must insist on road safety as a life or death issue for the construction of more creative, sustainable, inclusive and fair places to live..

Mexico

As young people we will be the ones living and building the future of mobility. Our goals and needs are not the same as our parents. Social justice, the protection of human life and the environment are of paramount importance to us. It is therefore vital for us to be heard.

Chile

Cross-cutting solutions for the environment championed by youth

Young people are the basis for change, and they have the capacity to face global challenges relevant to their local communities. Involving young people in decision-making at all levels is critical to the transfer of experiences and knowledge between generations.

Jordan

Without sincere intergenerational dialogue and meaningful engagement; our society is at risk of perpetuating power dynamics that continue to put each other at risk of detrimental health outcomes for all. Decision-makers must understand that our lives are at stake.

USA

Accelerator for the SDGs

We have the skills, ideas and passion to achieve the SDGs and take appropriate measures to protect EVERYONE-EVERY PEDESTRIAN, EVERY PASSENGER and EVERY DRIVER. A crucial step now can make a fruitful change in the future for us, our country, our families, our friends, and others.

USA

Advocate for meaningful youth engagement for SDG 3, SDG 11, SDG 13 to SDG 15 at the intersection of safe and sustainable environment and road infrastructure,

INDIA

WHAT IS MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

"Meaningfulness is individually defined."⁶⁸

Crashes impact youth and are often a result of decisions where youth have had no opportunity for input. Decision-making must employ different meaningful participatory approaches to ensure youth are included in tackling road traffic injury. After all it is their lives at stake and the wider community that feels the impact.

Meaningful youth participation is vital to creating inclusive and sustainable societies in the broader sustainable development agendas. Many governments recognise the right of children and youth to participate in policymaking processes through the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), support of the New Urban Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Numerous governments have dedicated youth policies and programmes aimed at the healthy development and inclusion of youth, with various mechanisms to facilitate youth involvement in policymaking processes. This is however not systematic/systemic in road safety policymaking.

Significant barriers still exist to mainstreaming meaningful youth participation in policymaking processes, impacting how youth understand their value within society and for who and what the built environment is for. Where participation does happen, it can be ad-hoc, not inclusive of marginalised groups. It can further exacerbate trust issues between young people and governance institutions when inputs are not adequately valued, interpreted or acted upon.

Policy-makers may actively seek out the experiences and ideas of youth, yet these connections can be unstructured, unsustainable, and ill-thought-out, leaving youth feeling tokenised and used. The UNCRC states that participation is expected to be an ongoing process for it to be "effective and meaningful".⁶⁹ Young people are increasingly invited to participate in global policy discussions, often without adequate benefits or support.⁷⁰



"Who has power and what does that look like? All meaningful youth engagement should entail an opportunity to shift this power where young people are given the tools and resources to analyse their own lived experience and also the funding, and networking opportunities to see themselves as decision-makers. Without that, many young people are in a position where they lack power, where they are not able to speak up and be a part of decision-making opportunities. Meaningful youth engagement starts by looking at power and looking at what tools, resources and opportunities you're giving to young people so they can step into their power."

Jacob Smith, Regional Leader Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety, USA

68 Johannesen, J. (2018). Patient views on "ladders of engagement". Toronto: Ontario SPOR Support Unit

69 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

70 <https://unoy.org/what-is-meaningful-youth-engagement/>

Meaningful youth participation means that young people's experiences, ideas, expertise and perspectives are systematically integrated into programmatic, policy and decision-making institutions.⁷¹ Meaningful youth participation is not a one-off event but a continuous cycle that needs commitment, resources and investment and values youth as equal stakeholders. Policymaking requires meaningful youth participation in all stages of policy design, implementation, financing, monitoring and evaluation, taking a multi-method approach to ensure typically marginalised youth also have the opportunity to contribute.

Meaningful youth participation means that young people leave the experience knowing their contributions are valued and considered. Their engagement involves active follow-up from senior stakeholders. Youth leave understanding how their contributions will be used and what has changed as a result of their engagement. Meaningful youth participation is a continual process that reinforces the right to be actively involved in decision-making and the right to express perspectives and ideas freely. It is not a one-off event, a tick-box exercise or a linear process.

Meaningful youth participation provides young people with the necessary support and resources to participate. It means developing youth-friendly participatory mechanisms that allow young people to follow up and hold stakeholders accountable for their promises.⁷²

Meaningful youth participation is ongoing relationship management that needs constant evaluation of the interventions and tailored, youth-responsive input to foster trust, empathy and connection between young people and senior policy stakeholders.

Participation can only be meaningful if it is truly inclusive and representative of young people across gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and citizenship.

Benefits of Meaningful Youth Participation

Meaningful youth participation benefits young people, policy development, and wider society. Meaningful participation in policy processes helps governments design more effective interventions whilst strengthening the rights and freedoms of youth.⁷³ It also increases cross-cultural awareness and deepens an understanding of citizenship.⁷⁴

Youth participation has multiple benefits for their development and other young people. Understanding the specific issues impacting youth informs more effective policies and improves health, well-being and prospects for youth.⁷⁵ On a personal development level, meaningful youth participation in its different forms can foster greater self-esteem, confidence, and critical thinking skills. It also provides youth with the tools to advocate for themselves now and in the future.

71 https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Meaningful_Youth_Engagement_Discussion-Paper.pdf

72 https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Meaningful_Youth_Engagement_Discussion-Paper.pdf

73 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/a_mapping_of_child_participation_initiatives_sc_sweden_2020.pdf/

74 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

75 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

Participation can increase technical skills, notably when partnering with skilled adults who do not control the input from young people.⁷⁶

Meaningful youth participation provides connections to decision-makers, institutions⁷⁸, policy processes, forms of community organising and methods for collaborative problem-solving. It gives youth a sense of agency over their lives.⁷⁸ Youth-led projects demonstrate that when youth participate, they teach other youth, address power imbalances, and encourage local-level problem-solving.⁷⁹

Research exploring student voice in secondary school reform found multiple benefits to different types of participation. Participation included:

- Listening (adults listen to students).
- Collaboration (adults and youth work together).
- Leadership (students take on decision-making with adult support through formal groups).

These levels of participation improved culture, developed a sense of belonging and confidence, fostered better teacher and learning outcomes, and provided space for formal groups to tackle more significant concepts free of the constraints of schools.⁸⁰

The meaningful participation of youth in road safety interventions can deliver positive policy outcomes that benefit them and the whole community. Research shows that community engagement is necessary to understand the barriers to change when implementing road safety initiatives. Community engagement ensures that it is possible to develop road safety strategies that are practical and context-specific, producing outcomes that traditional social and behavioural change programmes cannot. Children and youth are active risk assessors and problem solvers who know best how to navigate hostile environments as experts of their own experiences.⁸¹ As the group most impacted by road traffic injury, community engagement measures focused on the meaningful participation of youth are key to wiser, more equitable solutions in line with community values.⁸²

There are also benefits for wider society. Meaningful youth participation fosters social cohesion⁸³, a positive connection to the community⁸⁴ and a sense of place. When meaningful youth participation is taken seriously in urban planning, it can impact whole cities and improve community resilience.⁸⁵ Where youth are empowered and valued members of society, this can reduce vandalism and antisocial and criminal behaviour.⁸⁶

76 Scharber, C., Isaacson, K., Pyscher, T. and Lewis, C. (2016), "Participatory culture meets critical practice: Documentary film production in a youth internship program", *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 355-374. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-01-2016-0021>

77 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/a_mapping_of_child_participation_initiatives_sc_sweden_2020.pdf

78 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

79 Trejo-Rangel, M.A., Mota Ferreira, A., Marchezini, V., Rodriguez, D.A., Oliveira, M.d.S. and Messias dos Santos, D. (2022), "Giving voice to the voiceless: connecting graduate students with high school students by incubating DRR plans through participatory mapping", *Disaster Prevention and Management*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 124-133. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DPM-03-2021-0100>

80 Mitra, D. (2018), "Student voice in secondary schools: the possibility for deeper change", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 56 No. 5, pp. 473-487. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2018-0007>

81 Davis A, Jones L. (1996) Environmental constraints on health: listening to children's views. *Health Education Journal*. 55(4):363-374. doi:10.1177/001789699605500402

82 Austin, E.K. and Green, K.N. (2019), "The Central Role of Community Participation in Traffic Safety Culture", Ward, N.J., Watson, B. and Fleming-Vogl, K. (Ed.) *Traffic Safety Culture*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 129-143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78714-617-420191010>

83 Thomas, K.T. (2019), "Bridging social boundaries and building social connectedness: Through youth development programs", *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-02-2018-0019>

84 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

85 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

86 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children's Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

Without meaningful participation, the rights and freedoms of young people are compromised and restricted. There are many negative impacts on youth and the wider community when there is little tokenistic or no meaningful youth participation. Lack of meaningful participation first and foremost impacts young people’s health and well-being, making it harder to develop effective policies and programmes that work for youth.

Lack of meaningful civic participation from a young age can foster distrust of government and social institutions and erode political stability.⁸⁷ Poor or no participation can leave youth frustrated, dismissed and devalued, impacting their confidence in democratic processes as they age.⁸⁸ It can lead to deepening inequalities, a rise in segregation, violence and vandalism, and rebellion and protests.⁸⁹

Poor participation favours privileged groups which are easier to reach, are well networked and already have access to formal power settings. Where participation is tokenistic, and there is little follow-up or interventions based on youth involvement, young people can feel used and manipulated for political gains.⁹⁰

Barriers and Challenges to Meaningful Youth Participation

Failure to make youth participation inclusive of all youth is a failure to make it meaningful. Youth marginalised due to gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, disability, geographic location or socioeconomic status face difficulty accessing participatory mechanisms that do exist.⁹¹ Typically, mechanisms that exist for youth participation such as youth councils, youth advisory boards or youth parliaments are often only accessible to advantaged youth.⁹² Systematic participation needs to take a multi-method approach to ensure inclusive participation so that the policies and programmes represent the needs of all youth as well as offering young people the opportunity to take part on their own terms.

“In large cities, decision-makers are more open to feedback from youth on social problems. In small provinces and rural areas because of education and our culture, we often really respect the ideas and opinions of older people with a higher position. They often look down on the opinions of youth, that’s why the government and youth don’t have many opportunities to talk to each other and learn from each other. We have the mechanisms but how youth and government understand these needs work through education and engagement on both sides.”

Minh Vo, Vietnam, Youth Leadership Board, Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety



87 https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Theme5_CivicEngagement-V2-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf

88 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children’s Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

89 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children’s Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

90 Mansfield RG, Batagol B, Raven R. "Critical Agents of Change?": Opportunities and Limits to Children’s Participation in Urban Planning. *Journal of Planning Literature*. 2021;36(2):170-186. doi:10.1177/0885412220988645

91 https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Theme5_CivicEngagement-V2-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf

82 https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Theme5_CivicEngagement-V2-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf

Linked to this persistent marginalisation are the cultural barriers and perceptions of the role of youth in a society that prevents meaningful youth participation. Mapping of 14 country initiatives by Save the Children examining child participation revealed that every country had cultural barriers.⁹⁴ Children and youth are often not regarded as politically credible.⁹⁵ In some country contexts, this is generally applied to all youth or is specific to gender stereotypes such as expecting women and girls to be gentle and quiet.⁹⁶ For example in Albania, the same mapping found that it is very challenging for girls over 15 years old to take part in groups or councils, as they are expected to stay home where it is considered safer for them.⁹⁷

Negative perceptions of young people permeate society and act as a major barrier to equal social, political and economic participation, and impacts how young people view themselves in society. A recent survey in Scotland revealed that 52% of respondents viewed young people as being portrayed negatively in the media.⁹⁸ The same survey revealed that 40% think young people are poor communicators, 29% view young people as lazy, and 33% view youth as irresponsible.⁹⁹ Research co-developed with youth in Finland, showed that young people see themselves as missing from traditional media as a whole, where they continue to be 'othered' and represented negatively.¹⁰⁰

Age is an important axis of inequality that greatly impacts young people, especially those groups already marginalised by systemic and structural inequalities. Perceptions of a 'youth deficit', whereby young people are seen as deficient, are also internalised by young people.¹⁰¹ This acts as a barrier to young people participating in political protests or organising as they see themselves as too naive, inexperienced and not equal collaborators.¹⁰²



“For decision-makers in my country, we are an afterthought. It is both ways – how we as young people perceive ourselves and how they perceive us. Kenya hosted the AfriCities Summit, hosting leaders from all over the world. The decision-makers did not want to listen to us, we were not invited to the conference and had to force our way to attend. It was very expensive which was a barrier for us, essentially telling us to stay aside like we were an embarrassment. The message is ‘this is not the space for you.’ For young people, there is a lack of awareness of what our impact could be.”

Atieno Agutu, Kenya, Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety, Local Actions Winner 2022

94 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/a_mapping_of_child_participation_iniatives_sc_sweden_2020.pdf/

95 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/a_mapping_of_child_participation_iniatives_sc_sweden_2020.pdf/

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98 https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Theme5_CivicEngagement-V2-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf

99 https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Theme5_CivicEngagement-V2-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf

100 Meriläinen, N. (2022). "I find this really entertaining" – first look of the relationship between vocational school students and various media. On the Horizon. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-06-2021-0069>

101 Maher, T.V. and Earl, J. (2021), "Living Down to Expectations: Age Inequality and Youth Activism", Pettinicchio, D. (Ed.) The Politics of Inequality (Research in Political Sociology, Vol. 28), Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 215-235. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0895-99352021000028011>

102 Maher, T.V. and Earl, J. (2021), "Living Down to Expectations: Age Inequality and Youth Activism", Pettinicchio, D. (Ed.) The Politics of Inequality (Research in Political Sociology, Vol. 28), Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp. 215-235. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0895-99352021000028011>

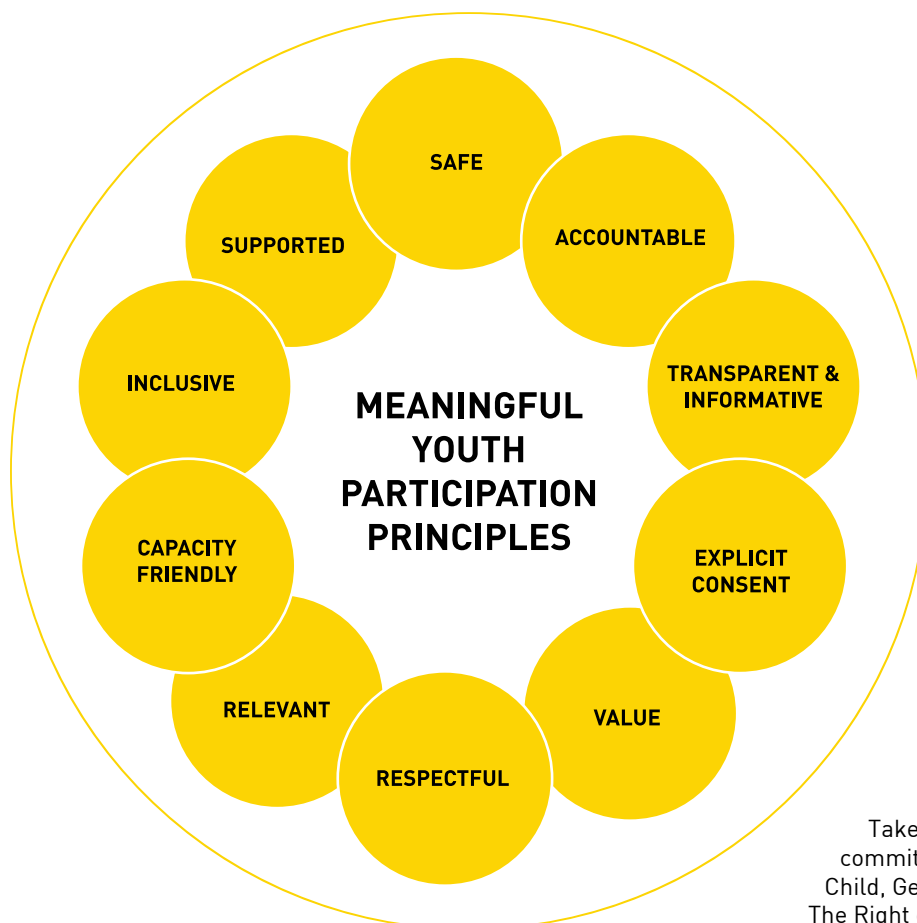
How wider society values youth participation is an important consideration. Many countries do have formal mechanisms for youth participation recognising the right of children and youth to participate in policymaking processes. However, these rights can be rolled back, and are dependent on the political climate and attitudes towards meaningful youth participation. For example, in the Philippines and Brazil, there have been recent changes in the law to restrict child participation.¹⁰³ Communities may not be receptive to meaningful youth participation or accepting of the results, which could potentially lead to a backlash against youth and their ideas or preferences.

Young people participate differently. Not all young people have the time, resources, education, or interest to join participatory mechanisms in formal settings. Addressing these barriers is vital to systematically integrating youth into the policymaking process. Meaningful youth participation requires an approach that supports youth from all backgrounds to access formal participatory spaces, as well as offering alternative methods so young people can choose how they wish to participate, and on their own terms.

Policymakers lack time, resources, and capacity to commit to meaningful participation and are not equipped to implement it systematically. This Toolkit changes that!



PRINCIPLES OF MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION¹⁰³



Taken and adapted from UN committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12, The Right of the Child to be Heard

1. Transparent and informative: Young people must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and accessible information about their right to express their views freely, their views to be given due weight, and where appropriate, kept confidential. Youth should be informed how this participation will take place, its scope, how their views will be shared, purpose and potential impact.

2. Explicit Consent: Young people should never be coerced into participation against their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.

3. Value: The time, effort and expertise of young people should be valued; young people should not always be expected to participate for free or be out of pocket to have their views heard. Travel costs, time and contributions should be considered, and/or suitable stipend/remuneration offered to ensure all youth who want to participate in formal activities are not prevented by financial barriers.

103 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html> [accessed 25 July 2022]

4. Respectful: Young people's views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Adults working with young people should acknowledge, respect and build on good examples of participation, for instance, in their contributions to the family, school, culture and the work environment.

5. Relevant: The issues on which young people have the right to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. In addition, space needs to be created to enable children to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important.

6. Capacity-Friendly: Environments and working methods should be adapted to young people's capacities. Adequate time and resources should be made available to ensure that young people are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views.

7. Inclusive: Participation must be inclusive, avoid existing patterns of discrimination, and encourage opportunities for marginalized youth, including both female, male and non-binary girls and boys, to be involved. Youth are not a homogenous group and participation needs to provide for equality of opportunity for all, without discrimination on any grounds. Programmes also need to ensure that they are culturally sensitive to young people from all communities.

8. Supported by Training: Adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate youth participation effectively, to provide them, for example, with skills in listening, working jointly with youth and engaging youth effectively. Young people themselves can be involved as trainers and facilitators on how to promote effective participation; they require capacity-building to strengthen their skills in, for example, effective participation awareness of their rights, and training in organising meetings, raising funds, dealing with the media, public speaking and advocacy.

9. Safe and Sensitive to Risk: in certain situations, expression of views may involve risks. Adults have a responsibility towards the young people with whom they work and must take every precaution to minimise the risk of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of their participation. Young people must be aware of their right to be protected from harm and know where to go for help if needed.

10. Accountable: A commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential. Youth are entitled to be provided with clear feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes. Wherever appropriate, youth should be given the opportunity to participate in follow-up processes or activities. Monitoring and evaluation of young people's participation needs to be undertaken, where possible, with young people themselves.



TYPES OF MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

For participation to be considered meaningful, it must be understood and undertaken as a process, not a one-off event for an isolated project.¹⁰⁴ We recommend that policymakers employ a multi-method approach to ensure all youth have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the development and implementation of policy. Taking a multi-method approach, and following our step-by-step guide enables decision-makers to check at every stage of the process if they are setting the groundwork for meaningful youth participation.

“Effective participation provides opportunities for young people to share their perspectives as experts on their own lived experiences, to deepen their understanding of cities and the processes that shape them, and to contribute to broader planning processes.”¹⁰⁵

Methods of meaningful participation fall broadly into two categories that can be employed to ensure as many young people as possible have the opportunity to participate. These definitions are taken from Kirily Pells’ research with children and young people which describes the ways they view participatory processes.¹⁰⁶

1. ‘Performed Participation’

‘Performed participation’ describes participatory mechanisms that are considered extraordinary to daily life. These mechanisms require young people to step out of their normal routines to share their experiences, ideas and perspectives. ‘Performed participation’ could include formal structures such as youth councils, youth advisory boards, student unions, youth-led organisations or youth parliaments. It could also include project-specific meetings such as design workshops, mapping, tours, consultations or competitions, and calls for proposals for youth-led projects.

EXAMPLE: Performed Participation - Participatory mapping for disaster risk reduction, Brazil

Masters and doctoral students partnered with high-school students aged 15 to 17 years in Brazil to bring under-represented voices to the disaster risk reduction agenda. A participatory mapping exercise was undertaken in partnership between the students as a ‘youth teach youth’ activity. Participants were required to identify hazard-prone areas and make suggestions to reduce risk of disaster. The process required training, teaching, mapping, ideas discussion and presentation, and results communication. Students presented their results and proposals to local partners and discussed five incubation projects in the city to support disaster risk reduction.

The project is a successful example of finding ways for underrepresented age groups to be heard in this type of planning when partnered with older youth. The project found that participation promoted critical thinking, addressed local power imbalances and that participatory exercises in mapping risk can encourage local-level problem solving with

youth. Trejo-Rangel, M.A., Mota Ferreira, A., Marchezini, V., Rodriguez, D.A., Oliveira, M.d.S. and Messias dos Santos, D. (2022), “Giving voice to the voiceless: connecting graduate students with high school students by incubating DRR plans through participatory mapping”, *Disaster Prevention and Management*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 124-133. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DPM-03-2021-0100>

104 UN General comment No. 12 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html>

105 Derr, V., Chawla, Louise, & Mintzer, Mara. (2018). *Placemaking with children and youth : participatory practices for planning sustainable communities* [First edition.].P7

106 Pells, K. (2009). 18 ‘No one ever listens to us’. *A Handbook of Children and Young People’s Participation*, 196.

2. 'Lived Participation'

'Lived Participation' does not require youth to step out of their daily lives. In fact, this requires decision-makers to step into the space of youth, and view specific challenges or issues through the eyes of young people in the context of their lives. This provides policymakers and practitioners with first-hand understanding of issues young people face.

EXAMPLE: Lived Participation, Tajikistan **Interview with Haidarsho Makulshoev, Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety.**

Between 2009 – 2018, 4396 people lost their lives and more than 15890 were injured on the road in Tajikistan. Most of the victims were under 30 years old. This makes road injury one of the biggest killers of young people in my country. In 2018 alone, over 600 young people lost their lives. Above all, it is the most vulnerable in society who are affected. Tajikistan is a low-income country, the poorest in Central Asia, and despite political promises that transport and communication developments would bring economic improvement - the high rate of road injuries and deaths are drawing people into poverty. Rapid motorization and the subsequent new high-speed roads are one of the main contributing factors to the increasing road deaths.

I saw that unsafe conditions for cycling was a contributing factor to the injury burden facing young people. In Tajikistan, those aged under 14 are not meant to cycle at all on the main roads, but of course they still do. It is an affordable mode of transport for youth too, but many are not supported to cycle safely, nor is the correct infrastructure provided to protect them from motorized transport.

If a vehicle hits a cyclist, it is often not recorded as road traffic injury by the police. Youth are hit by expensive cars. No one wants the statistics that so many cyclists are getting killed. Traffic police do not want to show themselves under performing. It is assumed they do not have the money to sue or to take the driver to court. Cycling is seen as a mode of transport only used by poor people.

If we create a safe cycling culture instead it would be environmentally friendly, and would mean that youth will want bikes instead of expensive cars.

I decided to tackle this head on with my project with the Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety. I designed a cycling safety programme to help youth be safer on the roads. I wrote to the authorities to implement the pilot programme. I heard nothing at all. I followed up city authorities and they informed me they had no curriculum or grounds to deal with cycling safety. I approached the police – they said it is not their business, they just control the roads. I approached driving schools – they said they only teach drivers to drive and have nothing to do with cycling. I approached schools to try and incorporate it into P.E. lessons, but this was also a non-starter.

No one understands why cycling should be taught. Everyone just said no it is not our business. No one wanted to bother themselves with these issues. It was hard for me to navigate.

Eventually, we found an opportunity! Tajikistan has a Young Road Inspectors programme – inherited from the former Soviet Union. Every year they run competitions, which includes a cycling obstacle course. We decided to approach the organizers to see if we could include cycling safety as one of the elements of the competition. We developed a curriculum based on the experiences of young people we interviewed and analysed the issues they were describing. I interviewed youth in hospital and found out where collisions happened and some of the key issues youth faced, such as being stuck behind large trucks.

We integrated our curriculum into the competition and conducted cycling safety and awareness sessions. We now include our cycling safety programme into the competition every year and our programme is in demand with other youth centres requesting that we deliver the same programme. It is brilliant for youth, for families too. The authorities need to invest in scaling up the programme as we do not have the capacity to work for free across all the centres that need support. These programmes should also be coupled with the infrastructure investments required to create a safe and healthy cycling culture in Tajikistan.

Hopefully we have sowed the first seeds of this with our programme. This is a story about finding the right opportunity to bring awareness to what youth face on the world's roads and starting to tackle road traffic injury.

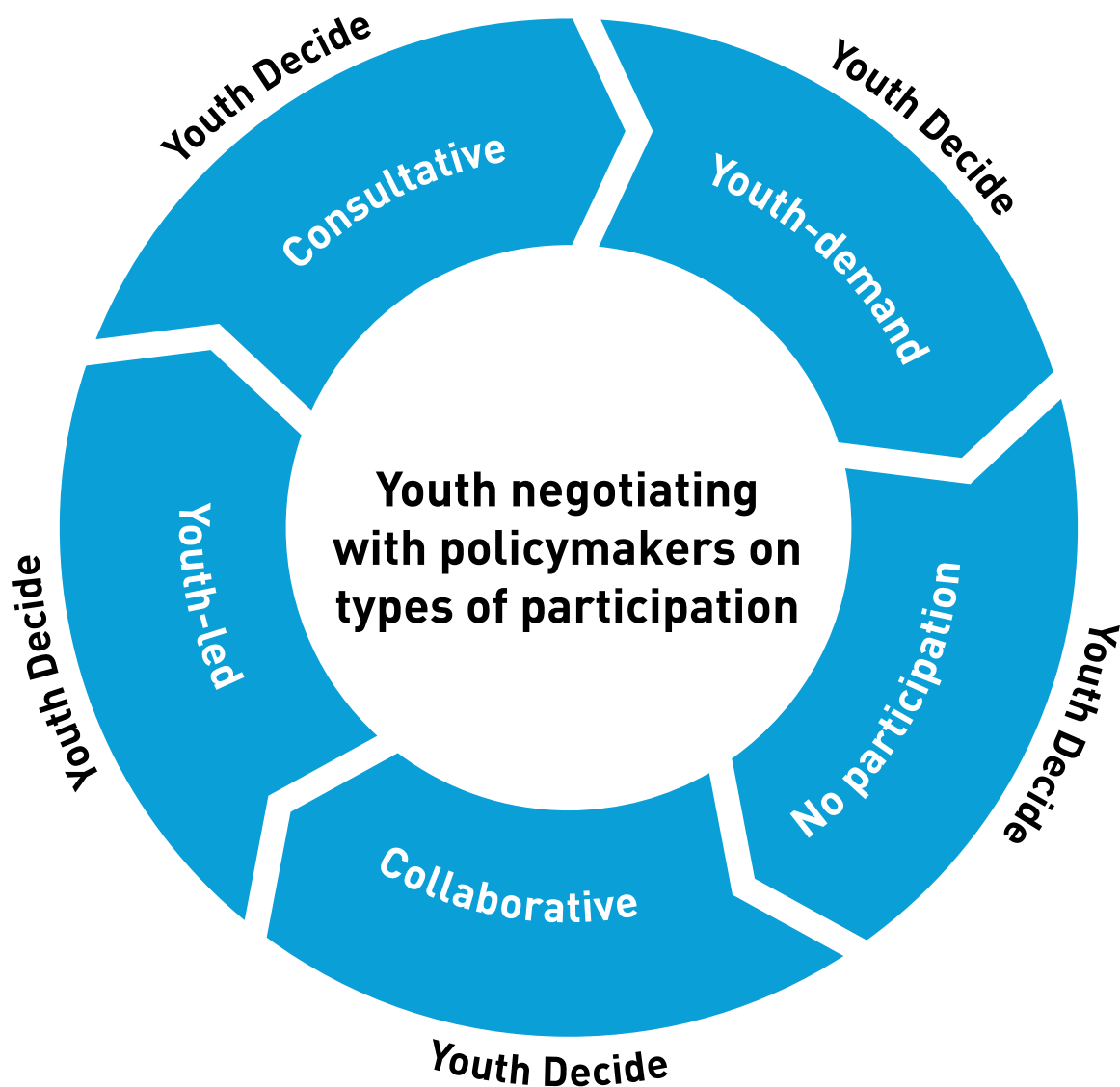
Determining a participatory process requires young people to be involved from an early stage. Youth are best placed to determine their own capacity, interest and relevant techniques for participating in processes with authorities, resulting in processes that are inclusive, accessible and reflective of the diversity of interests and values present in the young populations.

EXAMPLE: Lived Participation, UK

In an example from Gateshead, UK, a researcher set out to understand children's journeys to school. While they had developed a series of participatory exercises, they ran a session using diagramming techniques to check what methods the children thought would help them describe their journeys. The children's suggestions did not match the researcher's original suggestions. Methods the children suggested included creating rap songs, poetry, mapping, film-making, drawing, performing and group discussions to name a few. The diversity of the methods reflected the spread of skills and individual styles.

Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2007). Participatory action research approaches and methods. Connecting people, participation and place. Abingdon: Routledge, 260.





Across both lived and performed participation, there are different levels of participation for youth:

- **No participation:** Youth are able to actively decide whether or not they want to participate.
- **Consultative participation:** Decision-makers consult youth about their experiences and use this to design and implement policies.
- **Collaborative participation:** Decision-makers work with youth as partners to decide how to implement a programme or policy.
- **Youth-led participation:** Young people are given space to create their own initiatives and organisations.¹⁰⁷
- **Youth demanding participation:** Youth are actively “claiming their space” by putting their needs, ideas and perspectives onto the agenda through campaigns, community mobilisation, unions and protests.

¹⁰⁷ https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/a_mapping_of_child_participation_initiatives_sc_sweden_2020.pdf/

Not all levels of participation are appropriate for all youth and all situations. Youth-led participation is not the ultimate aim of all participatory processes.

These types of participation are not a hierarchy or ladder - youth might choose to dip in and out. Some initiatives do not require a high-level of participation but suit consultative approaches. **The value is in the quality of that choice, rather than the choice itself.** For example, youth-led participation can be a negative experience and not meaningful if youth are not adequately supported, it is not inclusive, or outcomes and views not given due weight by decision-makers. These are examples of how involved youth could be in participatory processes, or how youth might demand space if they are not included.

In truly participatory processes, youth are engaged in setting the agenda, and are able to choose the mode of participation that best suits their preferences, priorities and needs, allowing them to participate on their own terms. This means youth have the choice and opportunity to step into formal power settings or allow policymakers and practitioners to join them in informal spaces to better understand their lived experiences. It also means that youth have the choice to opt out of participating.

When participation is not meaningful¹⁰⁸

- **Manipulation:** Youth are included in adult-led activities but have not been briefed or supported and take part not knowing the purpose of the engagement.
- **Decoration:** Youth are included in adult-led activities and understand the purpose, but have not been engaged in planning of the event are used as decoration such as in photo opportunities to passively support adult initiatives of policies and give the illusion that youth were involved.



“I was invited to a policy validation event with the ministry. I was the only youth present at the event and they kept referring to my presence as meaningful youth engagement. We were not engaged in the drafting processes and no draft was shared with us to make any input. At the end of the meeting, we were required to sign as part of the validation team which I refused to do....”

Oliva Nalwadda, Uganda, Youth Leadership Board, Global Coalition of Youth for Road Safety

- **Tokenism:** Youth are included in adult-led activities and may be consulted, but there is no clear mechanism for feedback or follow-up. Youth are not informed how their contributions will be used or how they can find out more information in future. In most cases, having young involved is simply a ‘tick-box’ exercise where no ideas or opinions are taken into account.

108 <https://www.youthpower.org/youth-drg-toolkit-3-models-roger-hart-ladder>

“We had experts and city officials coming to our schools and victim-blaming us from a young age, instead of treating young people as inspiring citizens and future leaders. This perception of young people starts early and we internalise it. Young people are taught to be the following other leaders. At 13, I was taken to meet city officials. I was handed a pre-written statement and told to read it. That was the level of engagement, it was tokenistic and not meaningful.”

Jacob Smith, Regional Leader Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety, USA



EXAMPLE: When techniques don't work and why techniques on their own are not enough - The problem with youth councils

While the techniques for participation are endless, success lies in building the foundations of a participatory culture and developing techniques with young people, rather than for young people. While there can be some advantages to youth councils, the following points demonstrate the risks of simply choosing one method without first developing strong foundations to support a societal culture of participation.

- Young people perceive that participants in youth councils are exclusive and non-representative (McGinley and Grieve, 2010)
- Young people do not feel empowered and decisions are perceived to only include 'safe' issues (McGinley and Grieve, 2010, Yamashita & Davies, 2010)
- Socially excluded and disadvantaged youth are excluded from such process (McGinley and Grieve, 2010)
- Youth councils replicate adult systems and processes and continue to reinforce exclusion of marginalised young people (Augsberger et al, 2016, Cockburn, 2010, Kay & Tisdall, 2010)
- Already marginalised groups of young people can be further marginalised through exclusion of these groups including by young people themselves (Turkie, 2010)
- This approach adds burden to already busy lives (Turkie, 2010).

Augsberger, A., Collins, M. E., Gecker, W., & Dougher, M. (2018). Youth civic engagement: do youth councils reduce or reinforce social inequality?. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 33(2), 187-208.

Kay, E., & Tasdall, M., 2010, Governance and participation in Percy-Smith, B., & Thomas, N. P. (Eds.). (2009). *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice*. Routledge.

Cockburn, T., 2010, Children and deliberative democracy in England, in Percy-Smith, B., & Thomas, N. P. (Eds.). (2009). *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice*. Routledge.

McGinley, B. & Grieve, A., 2010, Maintaining the status quo? Appraising the effectiveness of youth councils in Scotland, in Percy-Smith, B., & Thomas, N. P. (Eds.). (2009). *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice*. Routledge.

Turkie, A., 2010, More than crumbs from the table. A critique of youth parliaments as models of representation for marginalised young people, in Percy-Smith, B., & Thomas, N. P. (Eds.). (2009). *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice*. Routledge.

Yamashita, H. & Davies, L. 2010, Students as professional. The London Secondary School Councils Action Research project, in Percy-Smith, B., & Thomas, N. P. (Eds.). (2009). *A handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice*. Routledge.

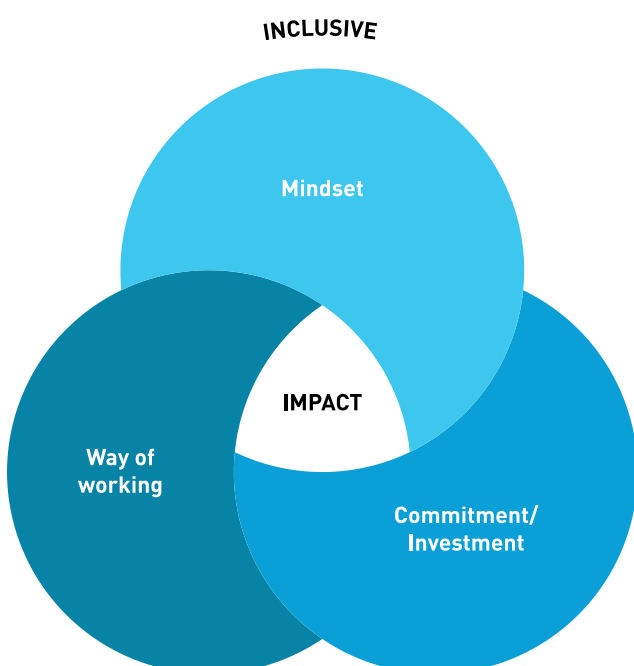
EXAMPLE: Youth form their own movement and hold decision-makers to account, Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, motorcycle taxis (okada) employ over 300,000 riders. Two hundred thousand of those riders formed the Bike Riders Union (BRU), making it the largest youth group in the country. The power of the BRU is recognised as political parties court their leaders. As a union, BRU provides social and occupational support. Many riders faced extortion, harassment and violent clashes with the police. Through training in communication and conflict resolution with the Centre for Coordination for Youth Activities (CCYA), the BRU were able to open a dialogue with the Sierra Leone Transport Authority (SLTA) to tackle these issues facing their riders. The CCYA also facilitated other training for the BRU members, including health and safety, essential business and accounting, and traffic rules and regulations, and helped set up social security insurance for the young riders. The BRU claims its partnership with CCYA has improved road safety, reduced okada-related crashes, and decreased fights and clashes over the control of okada parks by rival groups. Working with the SLTA reduced police extortion and harassment of its members and increased the number of riders who now own bikes. This example case study shows that when youth come together and unite, they have the power to negotiate their rights.

Olawale Ismail, What is in a Job? The Social Context of Youth Employment Issues in Africa, Journal of African Economies, Volume 25, Issue suppl_1, March 2016, Pages i37–i60, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejv028>

Ecology of meaningful youth participation for policymakers and practitioners

Ultimately, these three pillars are required to deliver impact with and for youth through meaningful participation.



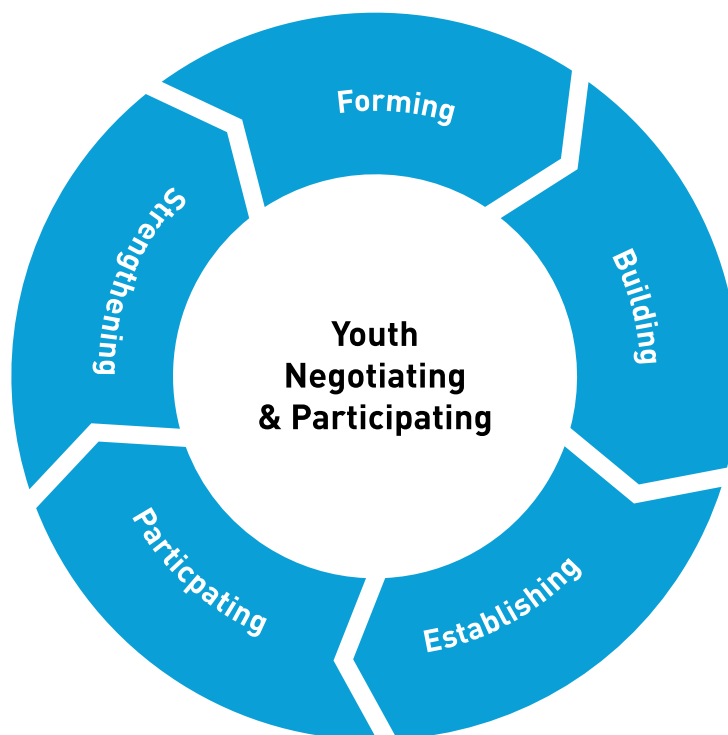
- 1. Mindset.** A fundamental shift in perception of the role of young people in society - challenging bias, viewing young people as politically credible, as experts of their own lived experiences and equal stakeholders.
- 2. Way of working.** Systematically integrating meaningful youth participation as a cycle of continuous relationship building, taking a multi-method approach so young people can choose how they participate on their terms.
- 3. Commitment and investment.** How far are you prepared to go? How will you include and act on the contributions of young people, and how will you continue to follow up? How committed are you to maintaining and investing in ongoing participatory approaches and the outcomes?

Impact: What's changed?

The impact of this approach can be measured by monitoring and evaluation, and the purpose of the project, to understand the quality of the participation, and the outcomes of the process. The clear impact can be seen through asking the question "What's changed?". What are your relationships with young people like? Has a trusting culture of participation been developed? Have the outcomes led to fewer road traffic injuries, more youth involved in decision-making, emergence of more youth groups, improved air quality, more effective and reflective/responsive policy?

CYCLE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Meaningful youth participation is not a linear process, but a cycle that reinforces the right to participate and fosters respectful relationships with youth from all walks of life.



The following road map will take you through each stage of this cycle that will build an inclusive, participatory culture working with and for youth:

1. **Forming** relationships, understanding the youth community profile and building trust with youth groups.
2. **Building the foundations for meaningful participation** by identifying challenges and barriers, developing strategies to overcome them, and understanding different mechanisms youth want for participation.
3. **Establishing meaningful youth participation** as a process within the community to prevent backlash and foster understanding.
4. **Youth Meaningfully Participating** to define proposals for road safety interventions.
5. **Strengthening** participatory processes and relationships with youth through monitoring and evaluation of chosen interventions.

TOOL 1: ROAD MAP FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The road map can be applied to any stage of the policymaking process. Youth should be participating and negotiating at each stage and phase of the cycle.

- Steps one and two are to help organisations assess their current working relationship with youth and identify staff training needs and safeguards that need to be put in place.
- Step three, phases one and two, support decision-makers to identify different youth demographics, youth groups and youth spaces. It focuses decision-makers on how to identify marginalised youth and how to connect and build trusting relationships with youth.
- Once trusting relationships and participatory methods have been agreed upon between decision-makers and youth, phase 4 is where youth participate in road safety policymaking processes. Using the agreed modes of participation, and after meaningful intergenerational activities, road safety proposals are developed. This can include agenda setting, policy design, financing and implementation.
- To continue to assess the quality of the experience of youth participating and also the success of road safety proposals developed in phase 4, phase 5 focuses on monitoring and evaluation. The learnings from this process will strengthen relationships with youth and the effectiveness of road safety policymaking.

STEP 1: Shared Values

Before considering working with youth, first assess the capacity of your team or organisation. Undertake any training within the team to understand the principles and concepts of meaningful youth participation, so the team is prepared to work with youth.

Reflective Questions:

1. Is there a common understanding of the rights and needs of young people by staff?
2. Is there an understanding of the core principles of meaningful youth participation?
3. Is there a common understanding of the rights and needs of people of vulnerable, marginalised and socially excluded groups?
4. Is there a commitment to gender equity?
5. Is there a commitment to social inclusion?
6. Have all adults received the necessary training to work with youth?
7. Is a safeguarding plan in place for working with vulnerable children and youth?
8. Is there the will and support from the leadership to embed meaningful youth participation?

STEP 2: Youth Participation Assessment

It is essential to assess where you may already work with youth. This exercise will help you determine which phase you are at in step three of the roadmap.

Reflective Questions:

1. How do young people currently participate in your issue area?
2. What is your current relationship with young people?
3. Where do young people currently work, play? How do they travel? Who do they connect with, which groups do they get involved with?
4. Who are the young people in your community? Consider marginalised groups
5. What are your goals in involving youth? Consider this question for a participatory process, road safety and relationships within the community.
6. Will a participatory approach be feasible?
7. Is there an allocated budget and hours to support youth participation? Is it enough?



STEP 3: YOUTH NEGOTIATING AND PARTICIPATING

PHASE 1: FORMING

Forming relationships, understanding the community profile and building trust

1.1 Demographic profile: Identify the young people in your area, e.g. demographics, government data, statistics, census data etc

1.2 Identify youth groups: Identify groups where young people participate eg. government youth departments/groups, church groups, special interest groups such as skateboarding groups, sporting groups, gaming groups

1.3 Identify and locate missing/marginalised youth: Identify where else you can find representative young people

Reflective Questions:

1. How will you ensure that young people's participation is safe?
2. How will you make sure young people feel safe? (perception and needs of young people might be different to your perception of what is safe)
3. How do you ensure that participation is inclusive? E.g. Do you have the correct representation and a suitable range of methods so that young people are participating equitably?

1.4 Create relationships: Become acquainted with representative groups.

Reflective Questions:

1. How do you perceive young people?
2. How does the community perceive young people?
3. How do young people perceive you and your agency?
4. How do young people perceive their community?
5. How do young people perceive each other?
6. What capabilities do you perceive young people to have?
7. What is your understanding of participation?



PHASE 2: BUILDING

Identifying challenges, barriers and opportunities for meaningful youth participation

2.1 Identify challenges: Identify any challenges and barriers to meaningful youth participation.

Reflective Questions:

1. What are the challenges for young people participating? Eg. access, safety, disability, religious, socio-political.
2. What helps young people participate? Eg. involving trusted community leaders, disability access, processes tailored to specific needs or financial support.
3. How do you currently help young people participate? E.g. advocacy
4. How will you be challenged by young people participating? E.g. your authority, work and social identity, and perceived financial costs.
5. How far are you willing to support participation and then act on young people's input?
6. How will you manage conflicting community views which may reject the idea of youth participating?

2.2 Participation tools: Mutually develop methods for participation with youth and agree on how to get young people to participate. Areas to cover:

1. Different types of participation
2. Requirements to make the participatory environment safe, inclusive and empowered
3. Translation of participation results to action
4. Rules and plan for how will you manage conflict
5. Outline roles and responsibilities of the policymakers, youth and other stakeholders

Reflective Questions:

1. How will you make young people's experiences positive and fun?
2. How will you make young people's participation mutually beneficial?
3. How will you make young people's involvement meaningful?
4. How do young people want to participate?
5. What ideas do young people have to participate?

2.3 Develop agreement: Develop an agreement for the building phase. This can be used as a monitoring and evaluation tool that can be updated at any time.

Reflective Questions:

1. How will you get young people to participate?
2. How can you participate in what they are already participating in? e.g. social media
3. How do you ensure that young people can influence every step of your processes and develop an ongoing relationship with them?
4. How do young people want to participate?



PHASE 3: ESTABLISHING

Embedding participation as a process within the community

3.1 Community support: Identify how you will communicate young people’s role to the community and other leaders, groups and policymakers

3.2 Communications strategy: Develop a communications strategy to normalise the participatory approach



PHASE 4: PARTICIPATION

Participatory road safety process

4.1 Develop road safety recommendations: Implement participatory activities to develop road safety proposals. The project could be a physical intervention, a campaign, a strategy, a policy, research, funding or analysis. Determine ownership of the project and the roles and responsibilities of the life of the interventions. Develop an agreement on the way forward between youth and all stakeholders involved.

4.2 Intergenerational and multi-sector focus: Implement intergenerational and multi-sector activities.

4.3 Implementation: Implement proposals developed in phases 4.1 and 4.2.

Reflective Questions:

1. What is your process for implementing the outcomes?
2. How will you continue to support young people’s participation as you develop and implement the outcomes?
3. How will you modify outcomes based on young people’s ongoing involvement?

PHASE 5: STRENGTHENING

Monitoring processes and maintaining relationships

5.1 Monitor and & evaluate: Use agreements from phase 2 and phase 4 to monitor and evaluate both participatory processes and road safety proposals. This might be an area that young people lead however, this is by agreement.

Reflective Questions:

1. How will you know if your interventions are working?
2. How will you track unintended consequences, both positive and negative?
3. How will you refine interventions based on their levels of success and unintended consequences?
4. How will you know the impact of the participatory processes on young people?
5. How will you refine your processes based on young people's experiences of participatory processes?

5.2 Adapt: Use agreements from phases 2 and 4 and discuss any necessary changes to the process or interventions. This might be an area that young people lead however, this is by agreement.

5.3 Self Assessment Scorecard: Use the scorecard (tool 2) to check your progress on meaningful youth participation and also consult with youth to complete the same assessment to establish areas for improvement.



Resources for Inspiration:

PARTICIPATION TOOLS AND MANUALS

[Derr, Victoria, Chawla, Louise, & Mintzer, Mara. \(2018\). Placemaking with Children and Youth. New Village Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvwr51q](https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvwr51q)

[Driskell, David C. \(2017\). Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth. Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315071930](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315071930)

[Mukherjee, N. \(2002\). Participatory learning and action : with 100 field methods. Concept Pub. Co.](#)

[Pretty, J. N. \(1995\). A Trainer's guide for participatory learning and action. Sustainable Agriculture Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development.](#)

CASE STUDIES TO INSPIRE LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Diers, J. (2004). Neighbor power: Building community the Seattle way. University of Washington Press.

[Green, M., Moore, H., & O'Brien, J. \(2006\). When people care enough to act. Toronto: Inclusion Press.](#)

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS OF TRAFFIC TAMING

Engwicht, D. (2005). Mental Speed Bumps: The smarter way to tame traffic. Envirobook.

[NACTO, 2020, Designing streets for kids.](#)

<https://globaldesigningcities.org/publication/designing-streets-for-kids/>

CASE STUDY 1: SYSTEMATIC MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT CITY LEVEL, Boulder, Colorado, USA

Background

This approach focused on child and adolescent participation, but decision-makers can also apply the principles and ideas in this case study to older youth too.

The Growing Up Boulder initiative began in 2009 as a partnership between the City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District, the Program in Environmental Design at the University of Colorado and other youth organisations. It gives voice to people affected by planning decisions, including young people (5). It is possibly the only city that has integrated children's participation perpetually into planning processes across multiple sectors (1,3), helping to realise children's rights reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which targets all people under the age of 18 (4).

Methods for implementing this programme are taken from participatory planning frameworks in Growing Up in Cities (6) and within a Participatory Action Research framework (3,9) which actively collaborates with vulnerable populations and seeks to challenge the power structures that hold knowledge through a perpetuated action and reflection cycle of activities (9).

Their approach looks explicitly to understand the broad cross-section of children and youth in the City of Boulder, recognising the impacts and differences in demographics such as socioeconomic status and ethnic minorities (4). This participatory approach involves various methods designed to elicit young people's documentation and evaluation of urban places through action research. Dominant participating age groups were 10-15-year-olds but included an age range of 8-18.

The two underlying components of the approach included identifying and contributing to positive changes and exposing obstacles to change (7). In simple terms, the Growing Up Boulder partnership involves city leaders identifying projects and engaging with young people in the planning process.

While the project is not without its challenges, such as conflicting views among different sectors in the community and limited representation of the demographics of young people, it has resulted in many successful projects (5, 8). Some of the methods of young people's participation include models and digital representation, reflection papers, child-friendly city assessments, guest lectures and films (5), walking laboratories and mapping (8), and photovoice (2).

The approach included assessing planning education to determine the most effective methods for child and youth participation (6). During the projects, many benefits were noted, including recognising that young people's participation could shift public meetings "away from individuals advocating for their positions" (5) through dialogue and listening.

Other benefits include building relationships with city officials, increased mutual understanding of lived and technical experiences between young people, city officials and practitioners (5) and excellent education opportunities for children and youth (2). Another critical benefit noted by participants is the impact of the process (1) in facilitating intergenerational community dialogue and building social capital.

Children and youth tend to view urban areas from an integrated and interdisciplinary perspective, reflecting a desire to become active stewards in their neighbourhoods and develop sophisticated responses to complex problems (1). At a higher level, children and youth participation fosters social justice, wellness, and well-functioning ecosystems that support urban resilience (1).

Examples of successful projects and unusual activities include:

- Growing Up Boulder partnered with GO Boulder to develop an update to their transportation master plan. Participants included primary, secondary and tertiary students. Participants identified a range of problems and potential solutions to deal with transportation issues such as road safety. Participatory methods included mapping, interactive presentations, walk audits, and an artistic impression to demonstrate how ideas of children and youth were incorporated into the transportation plan. The plan is currently being delivered in the form of transportation projects(11); however, it is unclear whether the ideas have translated into projects directly reflecting the input and priorities of the students (12).

- Growing up Boulder partnered with the City of Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSPMP) in their North Trail Study Area planning process. Participants included children from a school, children from families, and junior rangers and crew leaders from the Junior Ranger program. Some activities were connected to school curricula where children learned about insects and applied this research to designing costumes for their field trip. The ideas were incorporated into the draft plan, which was communicated to the broader public. All participants were also sent a letter outlining how their ideas were incorporated into the project. Many of these ideas remained in the final plan. Children and youth reported that they felt heard. Perceptions of children among staff were changed, recognising the capacity, capability and thoughtful responses from children and youth. The team is now working to build this type of youth engagement into future planning processes. (2)
- Digital teen-friendly city map (8) is a partnership and year-long project between university students and young people aged 11-18. This project aimed to develop free resource maps for children and youth. Over 12 months, 33 outreach sessions were conducted with 14 youth organisations targeting teens from diverse backgrounds and specific areas of interest. The maps highlighted both favourite teen spaces and barriers to positive lived experiences in Boulder and identified areas for improvement. Theoretical frameworks underpinning the project included participatory planning, social equity and transformative capacity. The Map has been completed, and reflective processes documented the process’s benefits and outcomes. Lessons of note include engagement is most accessible during the school year, incentives support repeat engagement, adults must be flexible, particularly with scheduling, adults must be prepared to learn alongside teens, and they must demonstrate that teens’ ideas are heard and taken seriously. (10)

References

- 1 Derr, Victoria, Chawla, Louise & van Vliet, Willem, 2017. Children as natural change agents. In *Designing Cities with Children and Young People*. Routledge, pp. 24–35.
- 2 Victoria Derr, Halice Ruppí & Deryn Wagner, 2016. Honoring Voices, Inspiring Futures: Young People’s Engagement in Open Space Planning. *Children, youth and environments*, 26(2), pp.128–144.
- 3 Derr, Victoria & Tarantini, Emily, 2016. “Because we are all people”: outcomes and reflections from young people’s participation in the planning and design of child-friendly public spaces. *Local environment*, 21(12), pp.1534–1556.
- 4 Derr, Victoria et al., 2013. A city for all citizens: Integrating children and youth from marginalized populations into city planning. *Buildings (Basel)*, 3(3), pp.482–505.
- 5 Derr, Victoria & Kovács, Ildikó G., 2017. How participatory processes impact children and contribute to planning: a case study of neighborhood design from Boulder, Colorado, USA. *Journal of urbanism*, 10(1), pp.29–48.
- 6 Derr, Victoria, 2015. Integrating community engagement and children’s voices into design and planning education. *CoDesign*, 11(2), pp.119–133.
- 7 Chawla, Louise & Driskell, David, 2006. The Growing Up in Cities Project. *Journal of community practice*, 14(1–2), pp.183–200.
- 8 <https://www.growingupboulder.org/all-projects.html>
- 9 Kindon, S., Pain, R. and Kesby, M., 2007. Participatory action research: origins, approaches and methods. In: S. Kindon, R. Pain, and M. Kesby, eds. *Participatory action research approaches and methods: connecting people, participation, and place*. London: Routledge, 9–18.
- 10 https://www.growingupboulder.org/uploads/1/3/3/5/13350974/menv_gub_teen-friendly_city_map_report_2019.pdf
- 11 <https://www.growingupboulder.org/transportation-master-plan.html> and https://learn.sharedusemobilitycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/policy-documents-2/CO_Boulder_Transportation_MasterPlan.pdf
- 12 <https://boulderrreportinglab.org/2022/03/07/boulders-transportation-master-plan-is-designed-to-make-the-city-safer-for-cyclists-and-pedestrians-here-are-9-projects-to-look-for-this-year/>

CASE STUDY 2: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Meaningful Youth Participation Road Map

- STEP 1 - Shared Values
- STEP 2 - Youth Participation Assessment

Developing capacity of municipal authorities to create participatory processes - Quebec, Canada

After a failed attempt to include young people in the development of a skate park, municipal staff undertook a different approach with the support of researchers, which improved their understanding of participatory techniques and demonstrated that meaningful youth participation could enhance their work. Hot chocolate was served at the skatepark, and a music system was set up for skaters to connect. Short interviews were then conducted with skaters. Social media was used to retain a connection to participants, which required a policy change of municipal authorities that previously prevented using social platforms.

The process resulted in longer-term changes to retain communication with young people beyond the project. The study also highlights that young people had limited understanding of their municipal authority's role. In a meeting with the councillors, one participant provided the following feedback:

"The youth strategy is weirdly vague in the minds of most youth... to get youths' intentions, you have to reach them directly. Use places and ways that they are already familiar with and where they feel comfortable."

These projects gave municipal authorities a better understanding of reaching young people and developing meaningful participatory processes that enhance their work rather than create an added burden. The projects also increased young people's understanding of the role of municipal authorities and how they can communicate and participate with them.

Natasha Blanchet Cohen, & Juan Torres. (2015). Accreditation of Child-Friendly Municipalities in Quebec: Opportunities for Child Participation. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 25(2), 16–32. <https://doi.org/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.25.2.0016>

CASE STUDY 3: Youth Engagement and Social Accountability at a Local Level - Belize, Central America

Meaningful Youth Participation Road Map:

- **STEP 1 - Capacity Assessment,**
- **PHASE 4.2 'Participating'- intergenerational activities**
- **PHASE 5.1 'Strengthening' - monitoring and evaluation.**

Meaningful Youth Participation Principle:

- **'Accountable'**

Social auditing is a tool by which citizens can measure their government's performance. In Belize, a two-day workshop was held for youth and youth organisations within the context of the Transparency and Accountability in Local Governments (TRAALOG) initiative. The purpose of the workshops was to strengthen management, leadership, analytical tools, research and communication skills for collective action. Peer facilitation was one of the capacity-building exercises, drawing on the skills, political knowledge and influence of student government representatives. The peer-facilitated aspect of the workshop was reported to be the most empowering for building youth leadership skills. Advantages of a peer-led approach included a more open and relaxed environment where participants felt valued as youth and that their views were being listened to.

The increase in knowledge and skills about government roles and processes led youth to develop ideas for localised social audits of their local authorities. Youth participants conducted audits across nine Belize municipalities six months after the workshop. They conducted themselves exceptionally professionally, interviewing mayors and other government officials. The following report was well-received and viewed as a communication tool with the government. Key benefits of this project included:

- Increased confidence among youth participants.
- Improving intergenerational communication skills.
- Improved capacity for good judgement.

The audit helped identify the value of group work, developing critical thinking and analysis skills, and ultimately improved knowledge in participatory design and data collection.

Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts. (2022). Youth Participation in the Caribbean. Taylor and Francis.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003203889>

CASE STUDY 4: ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

Youth Political Participation in Local Governments - Latin America

Meaningful Youth Participation Road Map:

- **STEP 2: Youth Participation Assessment**

A study of youth political participation in local governments in Latin America demonstrated that youth already participate in community activities such as volunteer and charity work, community and neighbourhood organisations, and artistic or cultural activities. The study also discovered that young people feel that their local governments reject or constrain their participation in community life, particularly in local decision-making processes.

Those who already participated in community life were more likely to participate in multiple forms. For those who didn't participate politically, reasons included lack of incentives such as financial or time, and beliefs there were other ways to influence the agenda outside politics.

A key-reason participants expressed interest in participating in youth organisations was the opportunity to socialise in an environment where their voices were heard, and they could participate in non-political activities such as soccer, Hip-Hop or subject-specific dialogue. Those who expressed an interest in political participation viewed themselves as potential protagonists and believed that existing political participatory processes were ineffective with little overall trust in government management and decision-making. Developing more robust relationships between government and youth was necessary for improving participation opportunities.

Berthin, Gerardo. (2014). Youth political participation in local governments: initial evidence from Latin America/ Participacion politica de los jovenes en el gobierno local: evidencia inicial de America Latina/Participation politique de la jeunesse aux gouvernements locaux: preuves initiales de l'Amérique Latine. *Social and Economic Studies*, 63(3-4), 107-354.

CASE STUDY 5: Youth and Health: campaigning for behavioural change in Africa, America and Asia

Meaningful Youth Participation Road Map:

- **PHASE 4.1 'Participating' - Developing participatory proposals**
- **PHASE 4.3 'Participating' - Implementing participatory proposals**

Youth participating in health campaign programmes in west African countries and Brazil have proven to be highly successful in both reach and behaviour change. Radio programs have had great success in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, targeting Ebola virus prevention, providing young people with training, opportunities for adolescents to train their peers, and youth offering health guidance.

In Guinea, 3,845 youth were trained in hygiene, sanitation, symptoms and early detection of Ebola, with another 2,100 youth mobilised. Over 400,000 community members were reached, including over 159,000 children. Similar results were achieved in other countries, demonstrating the power and capability of youth to reach and mobilise large numbers across communities. These programmes show that this participation also improves youth educational and skills development outcomes. Participation built community trust and cohesion, ensured access to health services, helped reduce the spread of misinformation, and supported policy and programme development.

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/Meaningful-Adolescent-and-Youth-Engagement-MAYE-During-Responses-to-Epidemics-and-Pandemics.pdf/>

A further example from Vietnam involved young people making a song and music video as a public service encouraging people to take measures to reduce the spread of coronavirus. The song purportedly evolved into a tik-tok challenge.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctF5aMV05kM>
<https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/stories/pandemic-participation-youth-activism-online-covid-19-crisis>

CASE STUDY 6:

Meaningful Youth Participation Road Map:

- PHASE 5.1 'Strengthening' - Monitor and evaluate
- PHASE 5.2 'Strengthening' - Adapt

Meaningful Youth Participation Principle:

- 'Inclusive'

In Australia, a social enterprise aims to bring down road trauma and fatalities by targeting disadvantaged young drivers who can't afford newer, safer vehicles and are four times more likely to be killed than other drivers. Connecting corporate and government organisations enables young people experiencing transport disadvantages to access safer cars.

Virtual coaching is also available to help drivers improve and reduce risk-taking. The programme involved testing corporate fleet vehicles that were earmarked for sale to be used by community groups running learner driver programs. It also involved recently licensed drivers to test the cars and monitor their driving performance through an app that provided a safe driver's score, educational tips and micro-videos related to their specific driver behaviour recorded during their drive.

The success of the programme was attributed to the trusting relationships between drivers, mentors and instructors. Bi-products of the success included increased access to employment, education and social opportunities. The programme was shaped by several techniques, including codesign of the workshop with coordinators, mentors, learner drivers and probationary licensees and interviews.

The programme was also successful in creating behaviour change. The participatory approach allowed for the continuous development of the programme. Participants have shared their experiences at the Australian Road Safety Conference 2021 symposium. The pilot provided essential data to refine the program, which is now open to 17-25-year-old drivers and is open to developing new partnerships with corporate and community partners to expand the programme.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK8rsyyK_XQ&t=292s
<https://www.empowrmobility.com/>

CASE STUDY 7: YOURS - Sustainable Youth Empowerment

Meaningful Youth Engagement Road Map:

- **PHASE 4.1 'Participating' - Develop road safety proposals**
- **PHASE 4.3 'Participating' - Implementation of road safety proposals**

Meaningful Youth Participation Principles:

- **Relevant**
- **Supported by training**
- **Accountable**

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Government of Belize (GOBZ) commissioned YOURS to ensure youth were educated and empowered to take action on road safety. This action did not happen in isolation but was a key element of the Bank and Government's wider road safety project to improve infrastructure, post crash response, enforcement and education.

The YOURS two year programme focused on facilitating strong partnerships with youth, media, universities and government institutions to address the road safety situation in Belize. 34 youth were trained in road safety principles, issues, and supported to become workshops facilitators themselves. This peer-to-peer education programme meant that more than 2000 youth were reached empowered with road safety knowledge and campaigning and advocacy techniques.

YOURS partnered with the Belize Government including the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the Project Management Unit and the Statistical Institute of Belize. In doing so, the programme not only facilitated strong connections to decision-makers, it also ensured the workshops developed reflected the specific country context.

Since undergoing the YOURS training and organizing themselves as Belizean Youths for Road Safety (BYRS), the young facilitators have continued to make incredible strides for road safety in the country. Having reached their target of face-to-face workshops with 2000+ young people, BYRS have reached tens of thousands more young people throughout the country. Using the tools provided in the trainings, youth are now taking the road safety mission forward, planning and executing their own activities and campaigns to ensure youth are heard on this issue, and also reaching and empowering more youth.

Youth-led activities have included:

- Yearly training of new police recruits on road safety issues facing youth
- Training across Belize schools, primary and secondary

- Collaboration with Transport Research Laboratory on delivering a road safety curriculum for primary school teachers
- Creative road safety campaigning; video contests, tv spots
- Peer messaging at festivals, expos and exhibitions
- Road safety radio shows

The original programme acted as a catalyst for youth participation in road safety: Youth were supported to become agents of change and multipliers of road safety knowledge in Belize through the programme.

[YOURS. 2014 - 2015. The Belize Programme: Sustainable Youth Empowerment.](#)

CASE STUDY 8: GLOBAL YOUTH COALITION FOR ROAD SAFETY

Meaningful Youth Participation Road Map

- PHASE 2.3 - 'Building' - Mutually agree participatory tools
- PHASE 3.3 - 'Establishing' - Communications strategy
- PHASE 4.1 - 'Participating' - Develop road safety proposals
- PHASE 4.2 - 'Participating' - Intergenerational and multisectoral activities
- PHASE 4.3 - 'Participating' - Implementing road safety proposals
- PHASE 5.1 - 'Strengthening' - Monitor and evaluate
- PHASE 5.2 - 'Strengthening' - Adapt

The Global Youth Coalition for Road Safety was initiated by YOURS in 2020 as a platform for young people to connect, learn and lead on global road safety issues. The Coalition is designed to bridge the gap between young people and the global road safety agenda, facilitating access to formal power settings so youth speak for themselves in policy debates that impact their lives. The Coalition also seeks to empower youth leaders with the tools to advocate for meaningful youth participation within the Safe System approach to solve road safety challenges at community and national level.

Within the Coalition, youth are offered the opportunity to learn about road safety, develop different skills and to participate in local, national and global spaces. Youth are able to choose the level of their participation in coalition activities that best suits their needs and preferences.

The Coalition has initiated a number of participatory mechanisms to form its guiding principles, to develop road safety proposals and support youth-led road safety interventions.

On the 18th February 2020 at the 2nd World Youth Assembly for Road Safety more than 160 young leaders from 75 countries adopted the [Global Youth Statement](#). The Statement is based on the voices of more than 1500 young people from around the world that took part in the Youth Consultations. The Statement forms the bedrock of the Coalition's road safety advocacy and calls for youth to be included in this policy agenda. The [Youth Leadership Board](#) offers paid opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles (with available support and resources from YOURS) to guide the Coalition's mission and act as a sounding board and accountability mechanism for the wider membership.

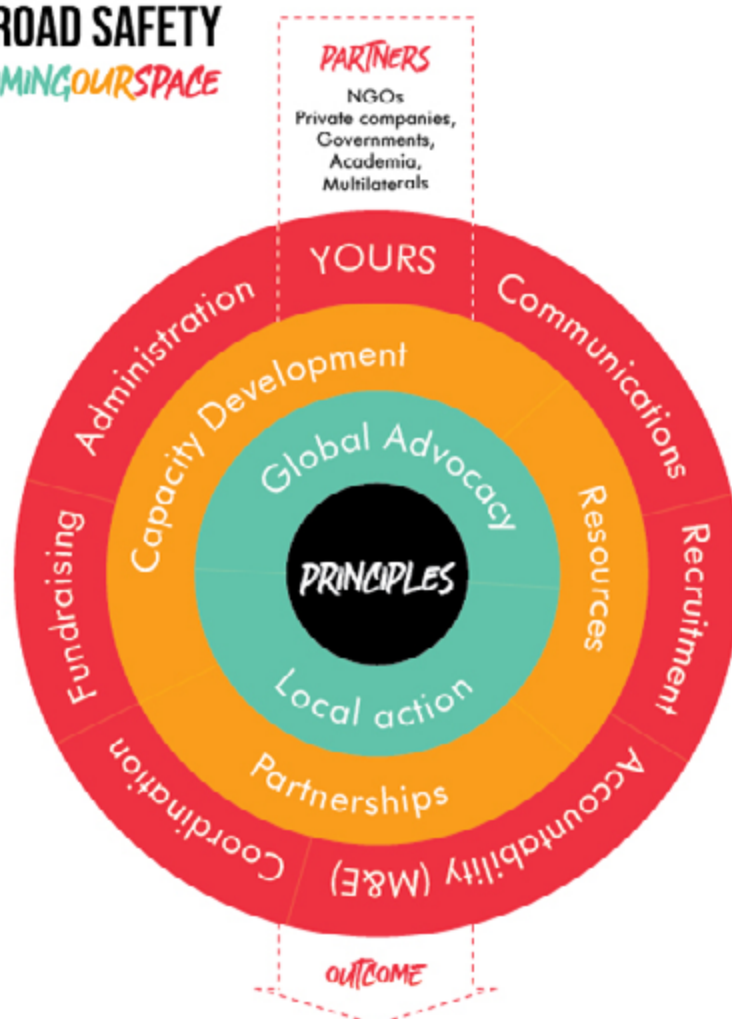
As part of the Coalition activities, youth leaders have embarked on [producing policy briefs](#) to identify road safety and sustainable mobility as critical element of the SDG agenda, including developing a set of recommendations for policymakers to take forward on cross-cutting issues such as education, gender equality, climate change, health, sustainable cities and communities and inequalities. A

common thread through all briefs is the need for meaningful youth participation to establish specific needs and perspectives of youth for effective policymaking and implementation.

The Coalition also supports youth leaders to take action in their community through [Local Actions grants](#) that enable youth to devise and implement their road safety project proposals. The projects cover advocacy, community mobilisation, awareness and peer to peer education.

GLOBAL YOUTH COALITION FOR ROAD SAFETY

#CLAIMINGOURSPACE



ENERGIZING THE GLOBAL YOUTH MOVEMENT FOR ROAD SAFETY

that contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on key targets around safe mobility and related issues such as climate change, good health, sustainable cities and meaningful youth participation.

TOOL 2: SELF-ASSESSMENT SCORECARD

Assess your own readiness and progress on meaningful youth participation. This self-assessment scorecard can be used at any stage of the road map to evaluate how youth are participating and allow you to track your growth in integrating meaningful youth participation into your organisation or policy area.

As you are working through the scorecard, use these reflective questions to estimate your score:

- How have you arrived at this score?
- What evidence do you have to support this assessment?

Ensure that youth are also able to score their experience. This will help identify gaps and areas for improvement, and can contribute to the monitoring and evaluation process

Use the following scale to score your answers to the questions below:

1.	There are no clear mechanisms in place to support this action
2.	This has been identified as an area that needs development and youth have been informed of this
3.	Testing and learning with youth to embed principles of participatory practises
4.	Participatory mechanisms are embedded and youth experiences have shaped their development
5.	Youth and practitioners have agreed on user-friendly, inclusive and accessible mechanisms to support this action

Each section relates to the principles for meaningful youth participation.¹⁰⁹¹¹⁰¹¹¹

YOUTH SPEAK FREELY AND ARE LISTENED TO	Practitioner	Youth
1. Have young people been provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and appropriate information about their right to express their views freely?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Are young people's views to be given due weight, and are they informed on how this participation will take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
YOUTH ARE DOING THIS OF THEIR OWN FREE WILL		
1. Do participants know they can withdraw at any time?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Is participation voluntary?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
A CHANCE TO TAKE INITIATIVE		
1. Are young people provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Are strategies and activities planned and facilitated in ways that recognize and respect young people's existing skills, competences, interests and initiatives?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3. Are strategies and activities planned and facilitated in ways that build on positive cultural practices and enable respect for differences of opinion among participants?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
SPACE FOR LIVED EXPERIENCES		
1. Is space provided for youth to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
PITCHED AT THE RIGHT LEVEL		
1. Are adequate time and resources available so young people are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views? Consideration needs to be given to the fact that young people will need differing levels of support and forms of involvement.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

109 <https://www.unicef.org/media/73296/file/ADAP-Guidelines-for-Participation.pdf>

110 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html>

111 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/basic_requirements-english-final.pdf/

NO YOUTH LEFT BEHIND		
1. Do youth of different genders, ages, abilities and backgrounds have opportunities to participate and influence decision-making?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Are efforts made to analyse and overcome barriers for inclusive participation (through consultative, collaborative or youth-led planning with marginalised youth)?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
SKILLS TO ENGAGE YOUTH		
1. Have adults had the necessary preparation, training and support to facilitate youth participation effectively?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Have young people been supported and offered capacity-building so they can also act as trainers, or facilitators on meaningful participation? For example, training in organising meetings, raising funds, dealing with the media, public speaking and advocacy as well as rights based approach to participation.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
SAFE, SECURE AND OPEN		
1. Are young people aware of their right to be protected from harm and know where to go for help if needed?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Is there a safeguarding plan for working with vulnerable youth?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
CLOSING THE FEEDBACK LOOP		
1. Are youth provided with clear feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes and led to change?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Are youth included in monitoring and evaluation of their participation?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
YOUTH EXPERTISE, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND TIME ARE VALUED		
1. Have youth been reimbursed for any out of pocket costs incurred due to their participation?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Where appropriate have youth been offered a stipend for their contributions?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

How are you doing on meaningful youth participation? What your score tells you.

83 - 95	You have nailed it! You have successfully built a sustainable, meaningful, participatory environment for youth!
67 - 82	You are doing this, keep building!
51 - 66	You are part way there! Keep on going!
35 - 50	You are just starting your meaningful participation journey, but we are here to help!
19 - 34	You have shown up, and that's the start of this process!

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