

Handbook for Ethical Youth Participation

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1 Introduction

As part of the Safe and Sound (S²Cities) programme, the Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation (GIB) has developed a *Policy for ethical youth participation* in collaboration with programme partners. This *Handbook for Ethical Youth Participation* is meant to operationalise the Policy to the widest extent possible.

1.1 Who is this Handbook intended for?

Any persons involved in the S²Cities programme, including but not limited to staff, partners, grantees, contractors, subcontractors, volunteers, programme participants, external collaborators and duty-bearers such as national and local authorities receiving support from the programme.

1.2 Objectives of the Handbook and how it should be used

This Handbook is meant to provide guidance and strategies for meaningful youth engagement. As the S²Cities programme is implemented by partners worldwide in diverse contexts, who operate within distinct national legal frameworks, this Handbook and the contained resources should be adapted to each local context to achieve meaningful youth engagement. Whenever national laws or existing organisational guidelines conflict with this Handbook, the highest standards must be applied.

1.3 Provision for monitoring and reviewing the Policy and Handbook

The Policy and accompanying Handbook will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain relevant. To monitor the Policy and Handbook, indicators on meaningful youth engagement are included in the monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.

1.4 How to navigate this handbook

Sections: This handbook consists of three main sections:

- **Chapters 2, 3 and 4:** Guidelines for implementing safe and meaningful participation practices, mitigating risks and managing complaints and violations;
- **Chapter 5:** the Annex, containing checklists, assessment tools, risk case scenarios and further practical resources complementary to the Guidelines; and

- **Glossary:** definition of key concepts and specific words.

Hyperlinking: to facilitate the navigation of this document, the sections contain hyperlinks. These links lead to other relevant sections in the Guidelines, Annex or Glossary.

Wording: in the text, the terms “youth”, “young persons,” and “young people” are used interchangeably to diversify the text.

2 Guidelines for implementing ethical participation

The following topics are covered in this section:

- [1. Hire appropriate staff for implementation](#)
- [2. Build staff capacity](#)
- [3. Mobilise communities](#)
- [4. Raise awareness and build capacity of duty-bearers and other](#)
- [5. Recruit young programme participations openly, transparently and inclusively](#)
- [6. Facilitate meaningful, youth-friendly and age sensitive team building activities](#)
- [7. Build leadership skills and capacity of young participants](#)
- [8. Facilitate youth participation in a way that makes each individual feel valued and hopeful](#)
- [9. Avoid violating young people’s right to education and incomes](#)

2.1 Hire appropriate staff for implementation

- Youth participation is not a programme, but a natural way of working in an organisation committed to youth participation. Staff should be recruited for their knowledge, skills, interest and commitment to youth participation.
- When working ethically with youth participation, it is important to be aware that adult staff do not have a role as teachers or supervisors, but as facilitators.
- An effective facilitator of youth participation does not necessarily have higher education. An effective facilitator of youth activities believes in the capacities of young people and is willing to work to empower young people to take the lead.
- Preferably, the facilitator already has experience in creating space for youth participation. Otherwise, they may need some training on how to facilitate meaningful activities for young people.
- Job interviews should explore potential staff’s perception of ethical participation of young people. Criminal history and other background checks, including references from previous jobs, should be carried out to the widest

extent possible in the local context for all staff who come in direct contact with youth.

For more information, refer to:

> [Checklist: Youth-friendly qualities of potential staff](#)

> [Checklist: Basic security procedures for new staff](#)

2.2 Build staff capacity

Adult facilitators of youth programmes play a key role in involving young people in decision-making processes and in triggering system-level changes for safer urban environments.

The careful capacity building of facilitators is therefore of utmost importance. Inexperienced facilitators should participate in a number of formal training sessions and informal learning situations, for example on facilitation methods, child and human rights and participation, and advocacy with the participation of young people.

A few toolkits developed to help adult facilitators learn how to support youth groups and their activities are included in the annex. Refer to [Relevant manuals and toolkits for further inspiration](#).

2.3 Mobilise communities

- In the best-case scenario, youth participation will fail if community involvement is not ensured. In the worst-case scenario, lack of community involvement will put the young people at risk of repercussions, since many adults do not automatically perceive youth participation positively.
- Local community members and leaders do not always easily accept youth participation. This is even truer in contexts where young people are perceived as inferior to adults, or stereotypically labelled as “intimidating,” because young people sometimes transgress boundaries for what older generations deem “normal” or “appropriate” behaviour in a certain context.
- Official policies may also be unsupportive of youth participation. In such situations, a very gradual approach should be applied.
- When using the city as scene for youth participation and empowerment, mobilisation of communities is all-important.
- Mobilisation can help promote understanding and support for young people’s activities. Awareness-raising and mobilisation of adults who play important direct or indirect roles in young people’s lives may help ensure a youth participation and youth leadership-friendly atmosphere in the programme area.
- Mobilisation can also help change the role of youth in the community and support lasting, positive changes for young people, their families and communities.
- Always fully inform parents or guardians and neighbours about the purpose of young people’s activities and the benefits for everyone in the community.
- Another way to mitigate risks is by inviting parents, local community members and leaders to participate in the activities organised for and by young people.

2.4 Raise awareness and building capacity of duty-bearers

- Duty-bearers are people who are accountable for ensuring that the young people can claim their rights. Duty-bearers are representatives of the state, for example national and local governments, and authorities who are acting in a public and politicised arena.
- Involving young people in decision-making processes through ideation and innovation and triggering system-level changes for safer urban environments may seem very provoking to some.
- Therefore, it is important to prevent unintended negative consequences by creating an enabling environment for the participation of young people through mobilisation, awareness-raising and, when necessary, capacity building of local leaders, city administration and other relevant authorities at local, regional and national level as well as the private sector.
- This can help to create an environment where city and state officers are more open and willing to listen respectfully to youth.
- It will also help build frameworks around young people to minimise the risk of young people feeling disempowered through the process.
- Without awareness raising and capacity building of relevant duty bearers and other relevant stakeholders, participation risks becoming burdensome and disempowering rather than empowering, because young people will face burdens beyond what they can achieve.

2.5 Recruit young programme participants openly, transparently and inclusively

- Recruitment criteria should be clear and transparent. The criteria should also be developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including the young people who are already active in the organisation or programme. They have experienced the recruitment process themselves, so they can offer insight on which procedures are most fair to young people in their specific context.
- For example, it is possible to use social media, local radio and local organisations to announce that recruitment is ongoing, including the terms for participating.
- Gathering young people's feedback on the recruitment criteria should also be collected by the respective partner.
- Keep a critical eye on who is not being selected to ensure recruitment is truly inclusive.
- Remember that young people are diverse and may not prioritise the interests of all young people. People tend to prioritise the interest of those who are similar to themselves. Which young people participate really matters. Therefore, ensuring a diverse group of young people is involved is key to meaningful representation.

2.6 Facilitate meaningful, youth-friendly and age sensitive team building activities

- Like adults, young people prioritise their time. Activities should be relevant and include new learning and some entertainment if participants are to remain interested and engaged.
- The goal for youth participation in the programme should also be clearly defined and preferably in collaboration with the youth.
- It is equally important to facilitate team building activities that are youth friendly, inclusive and sensitive to age, gender, sexual orientation and other qualities of the participants to ensure the development of strong peer relationships characterised by collaboration and solidarity. Otherwise, some young people risk feeling left out and may potentially leave the activities.
- A strong sense of belonging ensures that youth groups are resilient, persistent, and able to stick together even when facing adversity. Ideally, facilitators prepare for sessions based on learning games and exercises leading to the development by young people of the goals for their group.
- Creating opportunities for young people to develop their own code of conduct for how they are going to collaborate throughout the programme is equally important.
- Facilitators also have a responsibility to ensure that participants are part of a youth group matching their own age group and capacities, to ensure that everyone may participate on equal terms. Consider matching young people in groups according to their age and interests and/or asking the young people how they prefer to organise themselves.
- All activities should take place in a space where young participants feel free to interact and learn.

For more information, refer to

> [Relevant manuals and toolkits for further inspiration](#)

2.7 Build leadership skills and capacity of young participants

- One of the fundamental principles of international conventions and of the S²Cities programme is the right to participation.
- To be able to participate meaningfully, young people require life skills and knowledge about urban systems and existing decision-making processes. Otherwise, the participation risks becoming tokenised.
- Being young means being in transition; instead of being taken care of as children, young people increasingly take care of themselves. Becoming the leaders of their own lives demands leadership skills. Self-sufficiency, initiative, and the ability to make healthy decisions are all important skills to leading one's own life.
- Without capacity building, participation also risks becoming burdensome and disempowering rather than empowering, because the young people will face burdens beyond what they have the skills and knowledge to achieve. For

example, if youth are to engage in and influence existing power structures, they need to increase their general awareness and knowledge about their society and communities, their institutions, their power structures, how systemic change happens and the possible entry points for influence.

- They also need to know the contents of relevant laws and policies concerning, for example, urbanisation and city planning to be able to influence decision-making processes and challenge existing power structures.
- Life skills include decision making and critical thinking skills, coping and self-management skills, communication and interpersonal skills, and knowledge about rights, options and responsibilities.
- Civic empowerment is also important and includes young people's ability to democratically organise youth groups; to network with other youth groups and civil society organisations; to analyse the state of youth rights in their city; to engage in dialogue with authorities; and to develop and implement plans for activities and advocate for system-level changes for safer urban environments.
- Adult facilitators play key roles in this capacity building, and they are also responsible for assisting young people in gathering information that broadens their awareness of opportunities they never knew existed.
- Adult facilitators also play key roles in creating opportunities for youth to translate information into youth-friendly, local language.
- Young people, who are already empowered due to their participation in previous programmes, may also be engaged in supporting their peers.

For more information, refer to:

> [The benefits of youth leadership](#)

> [Relevant manuals and toolkits for further inspiration](#)

2.8 Facilitate participation such that each individual feels valued and hopeful

- As the S²Cities programme involves young people aged 15-24 years, and sometimes up to the age of 28 years, and possibly with different educational and socio-economic backgrounds, consider establishing youth groups based on age groups. Suggested age groups could be age 15 - 17 years, age 18 - 21 years, and age 22 - 24 years. Or, depending on the number of young participants and the programme design, age 15 - 17 years and age 18 - 24 years.
- It is recommended that key members of the community and facilitators are trained on gender equality from the very beginning and that regular follow-up on gender issues take place throughout the project period. The involvement of influential people such as school leaders, local community leaders, local authority representatives and religious leaders who people trust can also help pave the way for young women. Offering to accompany young women to and from activities, especially in the evening, may also make it easier for young women to participate.
- The most important step you can take to achieve non-discriminatory practices is to recognise that challenging sexism, racism or any oppressive ideology, begins with challenging yourself. It is recommended to explore your own conscious and

unconscious bias and play an active part in correcting the inequalities that exist in your society.¹

2.9 Respect young people's right to education and incomes

- Any activity should, to the widest extent possible, be arranged outside of school and education hours to avoid violating young people's rights to education. This is especially important during exam times. In the rare event that activities take place during school hours, the organisation should inform educational institutions and ensure that the young people will not face any repercussions or fail exams.
- Young people who are working may need the organisation to inform their employers if they risk being late or absent from work. Always investigate if the young people risk losing income or losing employment due to programme activities. Reschedule activities if this is the case.

For more information complementary to points 2.1.1 – 2.1.9 above, refer to the following sections of the Annex and the Glossary:

- > [Defining “meaningful participation”](#)
- > [Defining adult support and facilitation](#)
 - > [Tips for facilitators](#)
 - > [Tips for addressing age differences](#)
 - > [Tips for addressing gender differences](#)
- > [Tips for ensuring equality and non-discrimination](#)

3 Guidelines for mitigating risks to ethical participation

The following points are covered in this section:

1. [Mitigate risk through preventive measures](#)
2. [Ensure informed consent](#)
3. [Portray young people with dignity](#)
4. [Respect data protection laws](#)
5. [Collect written consent where applicable](#)
6. [Conduct research, monitoring, evaluation and learning in an ethical manner](#)
7. [Conduct competition-based events in an ethical manner](#)
8. [Use innovation, art and other creative means for youth engagement in an ethical manner](#)

¹ Oxfam GB (2020). *Feminist principles*.
<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/feminist-principles-621064/>.

3.1 Mitigate risk through preventive measures

The most important risk mitigation tool to be applied are preventive measures, including talking openly about the risks.

- Widely distribute the *Policy for the ethical youth participation*, this Handbook and train staff, young people, community members and duty-bearers in the rights of young people and ethical youth participation that empowers young people to raise their voice whenever their rights are violated.
- Engage in open and unjudgmental dialogue within your organisation, with young people and the local communities about violence, abuse and exploitation. Oftentimes many people are not aware of what constitute abuse and violence. Share what kinds of rights violations may happen and how these violations affect young people's development negatively.
- Inform programme participants of the possibility to submit complaints or whistleblowing reports [online](#).

For more information about case management, refer to:

> [Section 4](#)

3.2 Ensure informed consent

It is especially important to always ensure that young people give informed consent and to always respect if a young person does not want to participate in an activity or the programme. It is also important to be transparent about the purpose and the benefits or lack of the same when inviting young people for any kind of activities.

Thorough and easy to understand introductions for informed consent to all participants is a process and an approach where relationships are built on trust. Apart from collecting consent in an ethically correct way, participants are also prepared for the actual activity. As part of this preparation, avoid encouraging hope or creating false expectations for assistance and benefits that the programme is not able to provide. Also ensure that all participation is voluntary and no one is directly or indirectly pressured into participating. Proper informed consent involves a conversation that may take up to 30-40 minutes.

For more information, refer to:

> [Achieving "informed verbal consent"](#)

3.3 Portray young people with dignity

When portraying young people in illustrations, photos, video, cases and narratives, ensuring informed consent as well as preserving the dignity of the young people being portrayed is important. Preferably, show young people in situations where they come across as empowered and active.

For more information, refer to:

> [Portraying young people with dignity and in line with the programme](#)

3.4 Respect data protection laws

Often, due to data protection laws, consent requires a signature, or in case of illiteracy a signed declaration that the young person has permitted a representative from the responsible partner to sign on his or her behalf.

For more information, refer to:
> [General rule of thumb for data protection](#)

3.5 Collect written consent where applicable

To comply with data collection laws, the responsible partner staff must always collect written consent to take photos or record videos of participants. It is required to also collect written consent whenever collecting collect personal stories or testimonials from young people for publication, or when engaging young people directly or indirectly in research

To ensure that written consent is collected as ethically as possible, prepare for spending time to carefully provide information and respond to questions when collecting consent.

For more information, refer to:
> [Collecting informed written consent](#)
> [Consent forms](#)

If a participant is below the age of majority in their country, their parents or guardians will also have to provide consent. The age of majority may vary from country to country, and it is important to collect the informed written consent of all persons considered minors in their country and in the country where the activity takes place, or where the young person's photo, video or story will be published.

For more information, refer to:
> [Collecting informed written consent from young people below the age of majority](#)
> [Consent forms](#)

As part of the S²Cities programme partners may wish to collaborate with media, other organisations, external consultants and others to ensure the best quality and reach of the programme. These external collaborators also have responsibilities for ensuring consent.

For more information, refer to:
> [Collaboration with external entities such as media, other organizations, researchers, trainers, private sector, etc.](#)
> [Consent forms](#)

When using online media on behalf of S²Cities, partners are obliged to secure young people's online life and set boundaries for contact.

For more information, refer to:
> [Communication, including photos and interviews](#)
> [Digital safeguarding](#)
> [Consent forms](#)

Young people have the right to participate in events, workshops, meetings, networking and other activities, as panellists, speakers and co-organisers. To ensure that young people have a positive experience and that their safety and well-being are taken care of, it is important to: ensure young people understand the purpose and the value of their activity, cover young people's basic needs, attend to accessibility and diversity needs, ensure equal engagement, employ consent forms and ensure safety all the time.

For more information, refer to:

- > [Tips for organising meetings, training, workshops, retreats, bootcamps, networking, representation, co-creation processes](#)

3.6 Conduct research, monitoring, evaluation and learning ethically

Some communities in low- and middle-income countries may suffer from “research fatigue.” This especially applies to people who have previously provided input to for example baseline studies, scientific research and for media and communication purposes with the implicit or explicit hope of subsequent implementation of relevant activities in the area – sometimes without this happening.

Participation in research, monitoring, evaluation and learning may be very empowering for young people. Research involves the opportunity to learn and practice numerous life skills, and it is a unique and empowering opportunity to ask questions to community members, local leaders and authorities. Young people may consider questions, challenges and opportunities that adult researchers are not aware of. However, for young people to ethically participate in research and/or meaningfully carry out research themselves, they must give consent and have their capacity built for research design.

For more information, refer to:

- > [Monitoring, evaluation, learning, surveys, any other kind of research](#)
- > [Young people's direct participation in monitoring, evaluation, learning, surveys, any kind of research](#)
- > [Handling expectations during research](#)
- > [Consent forms](#)

3.7 Conduct competition-based events ethically

Youth participation programmes can best focus on the value of combined efforts, as these are more likely to achieve large scale positive and sustainable changes compared to what individuals or small groups can achieve.

Choice of words matters when ensuring ethical participation of young people. Using the word “seed money” rather than “prize” implies that competition-based events are not about money for personal use, but for innovation for the betterment of the entire community.

For more information, refer to:

- > [Competition and competition-based events](#)
- > [Management of seed money for innovation](#)

3.8 Use innovation, art and other creative means for youth engagement ethically

Using innovation, art and other creative means as a strategy for youth engagement involves awareness of copy right issues, of protection for original art and of the young artists' safety and security.

For more information, refer to:

- > [Submission of original art or any form of creative output](#)
- > [Consent form for public display of young people's creations](#)
 - > [What are intellectual property rights?](#)
 - > [Where to find copy right free illustrations](#)

4 Guidelines for managing policy violations

Below is a summary of points covered in this section:

1. [Reporting policy violations: complaints and whistleblowing](#)
2. [Local implementing partners: complaints process](#)
3. [Partners' responsibilities if violations do occur: duty to act](#)

4.1 Reporting policy violations: complaints and whistleblowing

GIB and its S²Cities partners are committed to reporting all allegations and suspicions of abuse, both current and historical, and to enabling young people and other programme stakeholders to report their allegations and suspicions.

Refer to the programme's global [Complaints and whistleblowing procedure](#) for guidance on how concerns can be submitted. Concerns can be (anonymously) submitted to local implementing partners and/or to GIB.

4.2 Implementing partners: local complaints process

In addition to informing stakeholders of the programme's global [Complaints and whistleblowing procedure](#), each local implementing partner is responsible for establishing safe, transparent, accessible and widely known complaints processes in their respective organisation and for informing young people and other stakeholders how they can file complaints. To ensure that cases are managed in confidence, they will, as a rule, be managed by the local partners unless otherwise agreed with GIB. Recipients of complaints are obliged to ensure that all cases of disclosed or suspected abuse, discrimination or exploitation are handled in a confidential, consistent, and thorough manner, in line with all relevant national legislative requirements.

Be aware that filing cases with the police and courts in some countries may put young people at further risk. Therefore, it is necessary to handle each case individually with profound care, commitment and with the best interest of the young person(s) in mind.

Depending on the case, it may be appropriate to anonymously refer the involved young person(s) to appropriate counselling, in keeping with the young person's own wishes, to ensure the young person receives proper support and care.

For more information, refer to:

- > [Establishing a local complaints process](#)
- > [Forms for reporting violence, abuse and exploitation](#)
- > [Reporting may put survivors at further risk](#)
 - > [Assessing further risks](#)
 - > [Action plan case management](#)

4.3 Partners' responsibilities if policy violations occur: duty to act

All parties to which the S²Cities *Policy for ethical youth participation* applies have a duty to act in case of violations to the rights of young people to ethical participation.

In case of violations, it is the partner's responsibility to inform GIB and the relevant authorities if applicable. It is not GIB nor the partner's responsibility to prove or investigate that abuse, violence or exploitation have occurred. That is the responsibility of the relevant authority and legal system.

The partner's role is to stop the harm immediately. Follow the Policy and Handbook, and most importantly, talk to the young person(s) involved. When talking to the young person(s), it is important to:

1. Only make promises that can be kept, including avoiding promises of anonymity if the case involves criminal offences which have to be reported to the authorities and police.
2. Listen empathically and actively without inducing the young person(s) into giving more details about the abuse. The partner's role is to listen, support, care and to make the young person(s) comfortable during their sharing.
3. Be aware that questions can make the young person(s) uncomfortable. The partner's role is to support the young person(s) and avoid investigative attempts.

5 Annex

5.1 Checklists

5.1.1 Youth-friendly qualities when hiring potential staff	Yes	No
<i>The educational background of staff working directly with youth is not necessarily important. The equivalent of a high school diploma or even eight to ten years of education could be sufficient, as long as the person has the right mindset for facilitating young people:</i>		
A positive attitude.		
Good at building relations both with young people, with their parents/guardians/caregivers, communities and with duty-bearers.		
Speaks the local language and dialect.		
Open-minded and friendly with young people.		
Willing to step into the background, let the young people take the lead and provide support when necessary and in keeping with the youth's own demands.		
Culturally conscious, sensitive and able to communicate in appropriate language understood by the young people and their community. Dresses according to local traditions and inclusive of all religions and cultural traditions.		
Willing to participate in capacity building that may lead to behaviour change and/or touch upon topics which are possibly controversial in the community.		
Willing to work outside official work hours as needed to accommodate the school and work hours of the young people.		

5.1.2 Basic security procedures for new staff		Management signature and date for finalisation of procedure
1	Job interviews evolving around potential staff's perception of ethical participation of youth.	
2	References with a focus on experiences, viewpoints and practices concerning youth participation from previous jobs.	
3	Depending on what is available in the context, criminal record and/or child protection certificate procured from police/authorities.	
4	Policy for ethical youth engagement and Handbook for ethical youth engagement shared with new staff.	
5	New staff has participated in Ethical youth engagement training.	

5.1.3 Basic security procedures for external collaborators		Management signature and date for finalisation of procedure
1	Policy for ethical youth engagement shared	
2	For external collaborators who will directly engage with young people: depending on what is available in the context, criminal record and/or child protection certificate procured from police/authorities.	
	Consent forms shared as relevant.	

5.2 Tips for facilitator

A good facilitator is prepared before meeting the young people and is knowledgeable about the young people, their context and expectations. Tips for facilitators include:

- Bring at least one game to use as an ice breaker if the young people do not automatically begin speaking to each other. Ice breakers should always be respectful, age and contextually appropriate.
- Explain, explain and explain again until everybody understands.
- Ask questions to engage the young people, listen carefully and always be attentive.
- Listen more than talking and ask which issues people are concerned about instead of making assumptions.
- Be flexible. Do not stick to original plans and ideas if something better comes up.
- Honour each person; do not use them by taking just what is wanted for the purpose of the activity or the programme.
- Learn about each individual's strengths through discussion and observations.
- Have fun. A sense of humour while remaining sensitive to gender, religion, social status and other personal qualities can help facilitate engagement.
- Do not force unwilling people to participate. Instead, ask for their opinions, provide choices and offer increased responsibility. Try to find out why unwilling people do not want to get involved and how the activity could be changed to make it more appealing.
- Seek agreement. If agreement is not possible, it is also okay to agree to disagree.
- Use open-ended questions like, "Can you tell me the story so far?." Closed-ended questions like, "Do you understand?" only require a plain yes or no answer and may make people feel awkward about admitting, for example that they do not understand. A suggestion such as, "Please let me know if you want me to clarify something. You

may ask any time” is more open and more likely to generate a response. Remember to allow people some time to think before you continue.

- Make suggestions and use examples, cases and storytelling when explaining issues that appear to be difficult to understand.
- Choose a variety of tools for facilitation, since different people think in different ways and need to be stimulated differently.
- Be culturally sensitive.
- Try to solve conflicts as soon as they arise.
- Invite feedback.
- Acknowledge ideas and contributions.
- Always give feedback on the spot and inform people how their ideas will be considered and why – or why not. An immediate response is important for most people, even if they do not dare to ask for one. Follow-up on any commitments made.
- Encourage dialogue. If one person tends to speak a lot, ask the others what they think about what the person said. Another strategy is to tell people that now it is someone else’s turn to talk and that they of course can have the chance to talk again later.
- Never discriminate. When getting to know a group of youth, one may feel more attached to one or two of them. Feelings like this are human, but never show that some young person are liked more than others. It is also important to avoid praising one young person’s beauty, talent or intelligence in front of the rest of the group. Discrimination may at best make the other young people feel inferior. At worst it may create jealousy and cause division in the group.
- Never lose patience; do not shout, punish or threaten to expel a participant. If a specific participant has continued behaviour problems, discretely set up a meeting with the participant in a safe and quiet place and ask gently what is bothering the person. It may be that the person, for example have problems at home. It may also be that the participant is not thriving in the youth group. Facilitate a solution that is acceptable for the participant as well as for the rest of the youth group. Sometimes, a young person may discontinue the engagement in the programme. However, discontinuation should be the absolute final solution and only after conflict resolution and thorough discussions with the young person. Including an agreement with the person about what to tell the remaining group members about why the person is leaving the group.
- Be realistic; everything takes time.
- If the answer is not known, say so. When in doubt, check it out.
- Facilitate closure by summing up the day’s decisions and the way forward.

- Be yourself.

For more information, refer to:
> [Defining adult support and facilitation](#)

5.3 Tips for addressing age differences

The ability to participate depends on how well the thoughts and feelings of others are understood. Thoughts and feelings develop through childhood and youthhood.

In the early adolescence children gradually become mature enough to lead the field, organise and coordinate, but age is not the only factor. Context also plays a role. People in different contexts perceive youth differently and laws define youth and youth activities differently in different countries. Education also plays a role. A young person with no basic education has very different capacities in comparison to a young person with a university degree.

Large gaps in age difference, for instance between a 14-year-old and a 24-year-old, can yield the same variation in power and knowledge as youth-adult relationships.

If partners engage young people above the age of 24 in line with national definitions of “young person,” another group could consist of this upper age range who tend to have very different lifestyles and interests than the younger age groups; young people in this age group may already have established a family of their own and/or be fully active on the labour market.

In some cultures, births are not registered, and the young people may not know exactly how old they are. In that case, partners may help the young people select which youth group they feel they belong to in keeping with their educational background and their maturity.

Capacity building can help reduce gaps between different age groups. Older members may, for example support and train the younger ones as the programme progresses and more young people are having their capacity built.

If such age groups are not established, it is important that the young people above the age of 18 years, or the local age of criminal responsibility, are aware that young people have adult responsibilities when they engage with minors.

Local partners have a responsibility for facilitating a conversation about young people’s responsibilities to each other – especially for those who are considered adults and can be held legally responsible for their behaviour towards minors.

5.4 Tips for addressing gender differences

While young women benefit greatly from empowerment activities in all spheres of their lives, participation and retention of young women in youth groups, especially young married women, requires a special effort in many, especially patriarchal, cultures.

When a new youth group is established, facilitators often have to engage over a longer time with potential female members' families to involve young women. To ensure that young women are permitted to participate in group activities in the first place, it is important to involve parents, guardians and other caregivers of young women from the beginning to understand the concerns and needs.

5.5 Tips for ensuring equality and non-discrimination

The general principles of equality and non-discrimination are a fundamental element of international human rights law.

Non-discriminatory practices ensure equal treatment and participation regardless of the individual's age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, medical condition, nationality, appearance, race, religion, sexual orientation, or social class.

Also be aware of the advantages and privileges some people and groups have over others due to social inequality and how this can lead to unequal power structures. If possible, aim to challenge organisational culture and social norms that contribute to the power imbalance experienced by young people. Call out discriminatory practices and be proactive about changing them².

5.6 The benefits of youth leadership³

Young people also need to develop leadership skills to be prepared to co-create and work in partnership with other young people and adults. Leadership training prepares youth to manage time, work in youth groups, set goals, start conversations and negotiate, facilitate meetings and make effective presentations of their concerns, ideas and potential solutions.

Young people who possess leadership and democratic skills are also able to work together with people from different backgrounds, e.g., different ethnicities, genders, geographies and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Leadership skills are also an important part of innovation skills. Having a great idea and bringing the right people together is the first step to creating a successful innovation. While it is never easy to find a new and unique idea, the ability to successfully execute the idea is what makes a young person innovative.

Young people who are trained in leadership ought to possess the tools and knowledge to create equitable change, beyond their own needs, acting as change agents in their own communities.

Not all people are born leaders, but all young people should learn leadership skills. When young people are aware of good leadership qualities, they are also able to influence their own youth group leaders and staffs of S²Cities and hold them accountable.

² Oxfam GB (2020). *Feminist principles*.
<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/feminist-principles-621064/>.

³

Youth leadership development requires time and resources, preparation, planning and the space to practice and safely learn from mistakes. In addition, the purpose of the activities should be clearly defined, and young people should be trained before they can take leadership.

Although the young people are having their leadership skills developed and appoint their own leaders, S²Cities staff are always overall responsible for facilitating youth groups and activities, for initiating conflict resolution and for ensuring that youth group structures are democratic and transparent. Young leaders should be elected or selected by the other youth group members and re-elected or re-selected on a regular and clearly defined basis.

Through exercises, young people may become aware of leadership qualities and leadership styles. Let young people themselves, for example define what they perceive as leadership and positive leadership traits, and how they envision to ensure inclusion and equality and strengthen strong peer collaboration and co-creation.

By ensuring that young people possess such knowledge and skills you minimise the risks of some young people dominate and marginalise their peers.

Age gaps and evolving capacities also have to be considered when facilitating youth leadership. While trainings may be designed to be friendly for all age groups, younger participants may need more support from the adult facilitators than older participants.

Find inspiration for youth leadership exercises in:
> [Relevant manuals and toolkits for further inspiration](#)

5.7 Consent (verbal and written)

5.7.1 Steps for ensuring informed verbal consent

1. Ensure that everyone sit facing each other, preferably in a circle, or at group tables. Everyone, also the adults, should sit at the same level; if the young people sit on the floor, the adults should do the same. If the adults sit on chairs, the young people should also sit on chairs. Avoid having a large table between the adults and the young people. Physical differences in levels and large tables between adults and young people reinforce existing power structures rather than building trust and equality.
2. Thank the young people for their participation and explain that you are now going to talk about an activity that requires that they give their consent. Underline that the participants do not have to answer to your questions if they are not feeling confident in talking.
3. If you have not met the participants before, ask them if they know who you are. Allow time for thinking and responding. If they do not know who you are, introduce yourself.
4. Ask if the participants know why you are there. Allow time for thinking and responding. If you understand from the responses or the lack of the same that the

participants are uncertain about the purpose of your visit, then carefully explain about the purpose and underline that everyone may ask questions whenever they want to. Make it clear that young people can at any time withdraw their consent or withdraw it for specific activities.

Ask if there are any questions.

5. Ask the participants if they still want to participate. Underline that they always have the right to say no and to refuse to respond to your questions, or to not participate in the activities. Ask them what they think happens if they say no to responding to your question or to participating in all the activities. Let them think and respond and wind up by saying that you always will respect a no, and they will, of course still be invited for future activities if they are interested.
6. Let all participants introduce themselves if they do not all know each other already.
7. Ask the participants about their expectations for the activity. Their responses will help you realise if everyone has understood the purpose of the activity. Wind up by recapping the purpose and underline that everyone may ask questions whenever they want to. People forget, or they forget to listen if they are a bit nervous, so repeating important information is crucial.
8. Ask if there are any questions. Repeat that everyone is more than welcome to ask questions and provide time for the participants to think about eventual questions. Repeat that several times during the session, and when anyone has questions, do your utmost to respond honestly.
9. If one or more participants are uncertain whether they want to participate, explain that you may come back another day so that they will have time to consider their participation. When you have promised to come back another day, you must come back.
10. Underline that no one is obliged to participate and that if someone decides not to participate, this will not affect his or her participation in the programme.
11. If you sense that the participants are still uncertain, very quiet or indicate with their body languages that they are not fully into it, invite everyone to have a ten-minute break where everyone may think and talk informally. Leave the room during the break but inform that everyone is welcome to come to talk to you as you will be just outside. If someone does so, do respond honestly to all questions and concerns. When you re-start the session, ask if everyone had time to consider if they want to participate. Encourage discussion before you ask if everyone wants to participate. Repeat that they always make withdraw their consent for parts of or the whole activity, also during a break when everyone else is not listening.

5.7.2 Steps for ensuring informed consent for research

Informed consent for research	
Explain:	Yes or no
Who you are	
Why you would like to ask some questions	
What you are going to ask about	
How you are going to ask. For example, will you be alone or with someone else, and will the young person be alone or with other young people? Will you take notes or use recorder? And is that ok?	
How long time will it take? And where will the interview take place?	
You will not share any details about the young person's name and address with any external audience, but you have to take written consent for now, but the paper will be destroyed when the research is over	
Explain if there are any risks; if anyone may become angry about the responses, for example, and how you will ensure to protect the young person against repercussions	
Will you provide food, drinks, reimbursement of expenses for transport or lost income?	
When and how will the young person learn about the results of the research?	
How and where will you store all the information collected and the consent forms? And when will it all be destroyed?	
What kind of benefits may the young person expect from participating? If none, be honest	
How will the information from the young person and other young persons be used in the future?	
The young person can always decide not to respond to a question, either by saying nothing or by saying that s/he does not have an answer to this question.	
The young person may always decide not to participate anyway, and such a decision will never hamper the young person's opportunities and participation in other activities.	
The young person may always request to have his or her data destroyed up to a specific date.	
Ensure that there is enough time for the respondents to ask questions.	
Observe the young person's body language: Does s/he nod or in any other way acknowledge that s/he understands and agrees? For example, by asking questions. Or does s/he avoid eye contact, look towards the door or window, say nothing, have a closed body-language including arms crossed, or appear to be very nervous? Such behaviour may indicate further explanation is needed.	

Remember to provide the young person with your name, the name of your organisation and the programme, and a mobile number and email so that s/he can always get in touch with you.

5.7.3 Collecting informed written consent

For many people, the act of putting their signature can be challenging, and at times terrifying. Some may have had bad experiences of signing papers they did not understand the consequences of and subsequently got in trouble.

Even strong readers can find it difficult to understand what their consent actually entails. When working with young people, particularly young people with limited educational background or from a culture where young people usually have little say, they may just sign without really understanding what they are signing.

Even if the purpose and consequences are shared verbally, people may be nervous and subsequently not pay full attention. Or they may not fully understand the consequences, or they do not dare to say “no, I am not interested in participating,” because of power structures, or because they worry that they may not be allowed to participate in future activities. There may even be peer or family pressure for the person to sign.

Partners may want to follow the following steps for providing information and responding to questions when collecting written consent:

1. Inform the participants about the option of being anonymous even if they have to sign a consent form, during, for example research for monitoring, evaluation and learning, studies, case studies, etc. Ask the young people to provide examples of what “anonymous” means to realise if they understand the term. Allow for discussion and wind up by explaining that anonymity means personal details will be left out when their information is shared with others.

Ask them if they know what “personal details” means to realise if they understand the term. Allow for discussion and wind up by explaining that personal details are their names, the place they live, work and study and anything else they do not want others to know, or that will enable people to guess who a person is.

If one or more participants decides to share their story or photo under their own names, always ask if the participants are aware of the risks of not being anonymous and have written consent.

Allow for discussion and finish by explaining that names, photos and videos may be visible to many people for a long time in publications and online. This may lead to both positive consequences, including new opportunities, but also to repercussions such as bullying, that some people think the participants have access to money, because they participate in the program, and to having negative impact on future job opportunities.

2. If collecting personal details anyway, because of a duty to collect written consent, or for internal references, do make sure that the young people understand that their personal details will not be shared externally, but that names are needed for internal records. Tell them that the information will be deleted after the activity.
3. Inform the participants that they have the right to withdraw consent even after the activity. Remove their information and photos if consent is withdrawn.
4. Informed consent includes careful observations of the respondent's body language; young people who are not yet empowered and who do not yet know their rights rarely say no to adults, and to programme staff who usually will be perceived as being in a superior position. By observing if a respondent, for example has a very closed body language with his or her arms crossed and no eye contact when he or she says yes, stares at the door or hardly responds, we may assume that he or she means no.

Always ensure informed consent and explain carefully what the consent form is going to be used for, why it is important to have the signature and translate the contents into local language.

If the person giving consent cannot read or write it is even more important to go through all sentences and double check if they have understood. Please note on the form that the person was not able to sign and add that the partner personally testifies that the person has given informed consent.

5.7.4 Consent forms

Partners are required to use the forms as provided by GIB.

5.7.5 Collecting informed written consent from young people below the age of majority

If a minor has no parents or a confirmed legal guardian nearby, the partner may ask the young person whom they live with and who is their caregiver.

Explain explicitly how the young person may expect to benefit from the activity, for example new knowledge that may also be beneficial for the young person's studies, and mention that lunch and transport will be paid. Make sure not to create false expectations beyond what the activity will provide and never promise anything that cannot be fulfilled.

Collect consent from the parents/guardian/caregiver first and then, from the young person. Preferably when the guardians are not around, as young people may feel pressured by their guardians to participate because the guardians may expect benefits from the organisation.

Sometimes adults have expectations for further benefits, including money, food and gifts and they may push young people to participate in activities against their will. The young persons should have the option of saying no, even if their parents/guardians/caregiver say yes.

The partner may need to talk to the parents/guardian/caregiver again to explain that the young person has decided that not to participate and that the S²Cities programme respects young people's own decisions.

If working with schools, consent from the head teacher and the teachers involved in the activity is advised. At the minimum, partners should have the verbal informed consent from all the involved young people and partners should do their utmost to also get consent from guardians to youth below the age of 18 years.

General guardian consent for the duration of the programme may be collected by partners as part of community mobilisation activities at the beginning of the programme implementation.

5.8 Mitigating risks

5.8.1 Communication, including photos and interviews

With the internet and social media, information is spreading extremely fast, and it is impossible to control where photos, videos and stories end up. Therefore, it can be risky for young people to let others use their portraits, videos and case stories. They risk bullying, and young people who are already vulnerable risk further abuse. Sharing of personal stories may also impact a person's future job opportunities.

At the same time, data protection laws are in place in many countries, including in EU and Switzerland, and they require written consent to use portrait photos and video focusing on a particular young person. It is not enough to assume that written consent has been taken; it is the responsibility of each organisation using the portraits and video to ensure that there is always a written consent readily available.

Photos or video of situations with many people in public places, such as a marketplace, that do not contain sensitive personal information do not usually require consent.

Unless otherwise agreed with the young person, and the guardians of minors, always change young people's names and avoid mentioning specific locations to protect young people against repercussions. Mention that names have been changed to protect the young people.

If young people insist to appear with their full identity exposed because they feel that this may further the interest of themselves and their peers, discuss very carefully the risks pertaining to this. Including the risk of future employers and friends and spouses finding your information on the internet many years later.

Ensure informed consent as described in the instructions earlier in this document and by using the relevant consent forms as provided by GIB.

5.8.2 Portraying young people with dignity and in line with the programme

When photographing young people, photos should preferably feature a group of young people rather than individuals. Young people should also ideally be featured as active, preferably in S²Cities activities.

Let young people see and approve of the pictures taken and delete pictures they request to be deleted.

Never take or use pictures where any young person comes across as helpless, or where young people are exposed to exploitative, abusive, humiliating or undignified situations, or in shameful situations. For example:

- A young person who is crying alone and without someone to comfort him or her.
- A young person at risk of injury, or who is injured.
- A young person who is exposed to any form of violence or abuse.
- A young person who is not properly dressed in keeping with the local culture.
- A young person in sexually provocative poses.
- Pictures of young persons with captions which are degrading or survivor blaming. For example: “If she had crossed the road using the pedestrian crossing, this would never have happened.”

5.8.3 Collaboration with external entities such as media, other organizations, researchers, trainers, private sector, etc.

It is, to the widest extent possible in the context, important to check the criminal history and other background checks. External collaborators should also review the *Policy for ethical youth participation* before initiating their work with S²Cities. Informed consent from the young people, and whenever applicable, from their guardians, must be obtained if anyone wants to take photos, film or interview young people.

Have staff join the external collaborators and ensure that informed consent is collected before the external collaborators initiate their activities.

Use the relevant checklist ([Checklist: Basic security procedures for external collaborator](#)) and relevant consent forms as provided by GIB.

5.8.4 Digital safeguarding

1. It is advised to never share personal contact information with young people. To communicate with young people as a part of your work, it is advised to inform management and use a work email and a work phone.

If the young person is under the age of 18 years, inform the parents/guardian/caregivers of contact with the young person.

2. If a young person engaged in S²Cities activities tries to engage personal contact you on social media, instruct the young person to connect through the implementing partner's official social media. If the partner does not have any official social media sites, ask management for permission before saying accepting the contact request. The commitments of the S²Cities's *Policy on ethical youth participation* also apply online.
3. It is not permitted to stay in touch secretly with young people through one's work at S²Cities.
4. If young persons have not given informed written consent, it is not permitted to share their portraits, video and personal stories on an organisation's official online sites or on one's own social media.
5. Ask management if you are in doubt about how to act in a specific situation.
6. Inform the authorities and management in case of suspicion that one or more young people are being abused or exploited as a result of their digital lives.
7. If a young person has been promised anonymity, never publish details that could make the young person recognisable. This also applies to the person's first name, which must be changed.

It must be stated in publications and online that the name has been changed to protect the young person.

When someone has requested full anonymity, pictures must be taken in a way so that the person cannot be recognised. Alternatively, the young person may be shown as part of a larger group so no one can know whose story it is about.

For more information, refer to:

> [Relevant manuals and toolkits for further inspiration](#)

Some organisations and media blur the faces of young people in photos, but this makes a photo much less visually attractive, and it makes some people wonder if the young person has done something wrong, because blurring is also used by media in some countries to hide the identity of criminals.

8. One can participate in closed groups with young people on, for example, Facebook, if the group is continuously monitored, moderated and updated by other S²Cities staff, and if membership of the closed group is necessary for one's work; if, for example, one facilitates and supports the group. However to the widest extent possible it is advised to use an S²Cities username rather than a personal username.

9. The adult group facilitators are responsible for monitoring everything that happens in the groups. They should delete all inappropriate content and persons who either do not belong to the group or who violate the *Policy for ethical youth participation* and the rules of conduct adopted by the youth group members.
10. Make sure that outsiders are not included in the group without the approval of the administrator.
11. Children under the age of 13 years are not allowed to participate in groups on social media. If a young person is under the age of 16 years, the parents or guardians must give written consent for the young person to join the group.
12. It may be relevant to follow young people from the S²Cities programme on a public platform, such as Instagram. As always, do this with S²Cities' *Policy for ethical youth participation* in mind. Do not use personal social media accounts to follow young people, only organisational or work accounts.
13. When partners, or when external collaborators, such as media people, other organisations, or others, on behalf of S²Cities take photos, make videos or interview young people, it is important to ensure informed, written consent from the young persons, and parents/guardian/caregiver if the person is under the age of majority. Refer to the relevant consent forms provided by GIB.

The data protection rules are applicable to all young people who participate in activities organised by GIB and partners, also those who are not direct programme participants.

The young person and the parents/guardian/caregiver must provide informed consent, including information about where the young person's pictures and statements can be used.

If this need arises, then the local partners should be present to facilitate the dialogue.

The S²Cities programme cannot prevent the photographer or journalist using photos and information, as this would usually be in violation of copyright acts. However, programme partners have a duty to ensure that external photographers or journalists adhere to the *Policy for ethical youth participation*.

14. Partners are not responsible for assessing whether young people are exposed to violence, abuse or exploitation, but they have a duty to act. This includes notifying the relevant authorities if one experiences or suspects that young people met in one's digital life are exposed to sexual exploitation. This also applies if one experiences that a representative of one's organisation has shown worrying behaviour online. In that situation, also inform management.

5.8.5 Tips for organising meetings, training, workshops, retreats, bootcamps, networking, representation, co-creation processes

1. Ensure that young people understand the value of the specific activity and that they have learned the life skills ensuring that they may participate meaningfully.
2. Build young people's capacity before they engage in decision-making processes through ideation and innovation and triggering system-level changes for safer urban environments as described previously in these guidelines.
3. Ensure there is enough to eat and drink whenever someone needs it and make sure that attentive adults are present at all times. Also ensure bathroom access.
4. Ensure that you have confidentially noted if any of the young people have allergies or dietary needs.
5. Ensure that you have confidentially noted if any of the young people require medicine.
6. To the extent possible, ensure free or discounted and safe transport for all young participants.
7. Ensure informed consent from all young participants, and for those below the age of 18 years, informed consent from parents/guardians/caregivers.
8. Ensure that if some young people have special needs such as sign language interpreter, foreign language interpreter, wheelchair access or other aids that will enable their full participation are provided.
9. Ensure that the content of the activity is youth friendly and meaningful for youth. For example, is it understandable, fun, engaging and activating? Is there anything that could be scary for the youngest participants? Are there plenty of breaks in the programme? Are the topics relevant for young people? Will the adult participants and organisers be friendly and inclusive to young people? Is it provided in formats that are accessible to all young people?
10. Help youth who are in charge of activities and speeches with the preparations and with dealing with nervousness.
11. Brief all young participants, their caregivers and relevant S²Cities staff again about the activity just before starting, so everyone knows the purpose and what will be expected of participants. Make room for questions.
12. Ensure there is a peaceful place where young people who will present or perform have the opportunity to practice in advance.

13. Ensure that all participants have work contact information of the relevant S²Cities staff member.
14. Ensure that you have contact information for all the young participants, and for those below the age of 18 years, also contact information for a parent/guardian/other caregiver.
15. Ensure that you have emergency contact information for relevant authorities, your management and other relevant persons.
16. Ensure that all participants are well. If not, follow up on what is wrong and resolve any issues that may arise. Intervene if there is bullying or discrimination.
17. Be prepared to modify the programme if a majority of the participants are bored.
18. Always carry out an evaluation and give all young people the opportunity to give feedback to ensure that future activities become even better.
19. Sometimes organisations invite young people to stay overnight at, for example a training centre. If the young people have to stay overnight, safe accommodation with doors with locks should be booked and responsible adults to support and care must be present throughout.

Safe accommodation entails that young people only share bedrooms and bathrooms with peers of the same gender and age group, that adults they know, and trust, stay in separate rooms nearby and that the adults are approachable at all times. At least one, and preferable two adults should be appointed to be specifically in charge of the safety, security and wellbeing of young people who stay overnight away from home.

If a young participant feels homesick, sad, lonely, worried or scared, listen and do your utmost to help solve the problem, and, if needed, ensure that the participant may return home safely ahead of time.

5.8.6 Monitoring, evaluation, learning, survey, any other kind of research

Due to “research fatigue,” consider if the research really is necessary, and if necessary, consider how the data collection can be limited to an absolute minimum.

A good outcome of research is only possible if the researchers spend time building mutual respect and trust between researchers and participants. Researchers have to be flexible and consider the young respondents’ other obligations in the families, education and work, and respect the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals, groups and communities.

Data collection should never hamper young people's education, work and other duties, and it, of course always involves informed consent. This applies no matter if the researchers are external or internal, or whether they are experienced, or if the researchers are young programme participants.

Signing consent forms may be uncomfortable or even induce fear, so be very careful when collecting informed consent, go through the form and explain each sentence and explain that personal information will not be shared with anyone. Do not break the trust – it has consequences for the individual and is difficult to rebuild.

Partners are required to use the relevant consent forms as provided by GIB.

5.8.7 Young people's direct participation in conducting monitoring, evaluation, learning, surveys, and any kind of research

Preparing young people for engaging in data collection includes:

1. Fair and transparent criteria for recruitment of young action researchers, including equal distribution of young men and women.
2. That each young researcher is willing to, able to and interested in spending time learning and carrying out research.
3. Clear and honest information about the benefits or lack of benefits to align expectations for both young researchers and for respondents.
4. Adult researchers who are used to working with young people and who are aware of the power relations with adults. The researchers will have to make special efforts to create trust and openness and mutual respect.
5. Enough time to build capacity of the young researchers, including time for peer feedback in the research design process and to respond to questions from the young researchers. Learning through play, exercises and role plays usually works well.
6. That the adult facilitators and adult researchers take the overall responsibility for ensuring that no one will be overburdened or forced to work without payment just because it is cheaper than hiring adult data collectors.
7. Adult facilitators pave the way for young people's research by informing the communities, local leaders and authorities about the research in advance, and they should accompany the young people if they are working in a public and politicised arena to mitigate the risk of unexpected negative consequences.

For inspiration, visit the:

> [Relevant manuals and toolkits for further inspiration](#)

5.8.8 Handling expectations during research

During research you may come across requests for further support. Never make promises you cannot keep. Explain that you are here only to do this research, that you are not in charge of the programme's funding. If someone asks you to provide a personal donation, explain politely that your organisation does not permit personal donations.

5.8.9 General rule of thumb data protection

Anonymise data, only process the data collected for the original purpose, do not disclose personal data to anyone beyond those who really need access, and do not retain data for longer than necessary for the purpose. Destroy all data and all copies as soon as possible and in line with national laws.

5.8.10 Competition and competition-based events

Youth participation programmes often focus on the value of combined efforts as these are more likely to achieve large scale positive and sustainable changes compared to what individuals or small groups can achieve.

One negative aspect of competitions is that they may provide incentives for unethical behaviour aimed at improving one's own position relative to that of competitors. Winning stimulates the human reward system and is associated with feelings of joy and positive self-evaluations. People will therefore behave in ways conducive to winning.

Competition involves a heightening of ego-demands so that the ego-objective is more important than any common objective. Similarly, research suggests that individuals are less concerned about ethical standards when they judge a situation to be competitive. It is therefore important to understand how competitions should be designed to reduce unethical behaviour⁴:

- **Framing of the contest is important:** Framing refers to different ways of designing the structure of choices available to the contestants, which influences how exactly the contestants perceive the competition. For example: When a contest is described mainly as a way for one person to demonstrate superiority and winning in contrast to a contest description that stresses personal development for all participants, task enjoyment and group work.

An example: "For the contest you will have to work with your group, and the primary goal is to have fun and learn and innovate together, but there is also a chance of being granted seed money for the implementation of your group's innovation."

Another example from scientific research: You may frame a contest as a chance to gain in status when winning in contrast to as a risk of losing in status when falling

⁴ Piest, S. & Schreck, P. (2020) *Contests and unethical behavior in organizations: a review and synthesis of the empirical literature*. Management Review Quarterly. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11301-020-00197-3>

behind. Participants prove to be more inclined to cheat in order to avoid losing status rather than to gain in status.

- **Articulation of the risks of cheating, sabotage and plagiarism reduces the risks:** Calling unethical practices by their name appears to reduce unethical behaviour.
- **Choice of words matters:** it is advised to strengthen the focus on innovation and entrepreneurship rather than on winning by substituting “prize” or “award” with “seed money.” Substituting the word “winning ideas” by “innovative ideas” also emphasises that winning is not the primary aim; innovation and new ideas is.

Another way of expanding the competition to be about something larger than egos is by framing the competition as being an important contribution to fulfilling human rights and the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*. A criterion for winning the competition could be that the innovation should benefit all youth in the community and help create sustainable cities and communities as stated in the Sustainable Development Goal 11.

It is also advised to make it a criterion in the competition that all participating youth groups have to include a plan for how they envision to involve other programme participants and young people in the community when implementing the innovation.

Other important elements of competitions are fairness and justice as well as transparent rules and aims. These should be developed in collaboration with the young people well ahead of the competition.

Risks analysis: competitions and competition-b ased events	Likely	Maybe	Unlikely	Specify possible risks	Suggested risk mitigation measures in the specific context
Will the focus be on individuals rather than on group efforts?					
Unethical behaviour					
Unexpected negative consequences and repercussions for the young people involved					

Other risks (fill in if relevant)					
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5.8.11 Management of seed money innovation

Putting money at stake always entails risks of false expectations, especially when working with youth who live under vulnerable conditions where money is scarce. It may be difficult for parents, community members and the young people themselves to understand that the money is reserved for innovation when some of the young people's basic needs may not be fully met.

Distributing seed money as a part of a competition requires careful awareness raising among the young people, in the community and among duty-bearers on the benefits for the community of the innovations that the seed money will cover.

It also requires very clear minimum standards for the use of seed money. Each partner will have to develop guidelines for the seed money in keeping with the local context and in collaboration with young people and share these with GIB. Including:

- What may seed money be used for?
- What can the seed money not be used for?
- Who will manage the money? Including how will you disburse the money to the young people?
- Where will the money be kept?
- What happens if the seed money is not distributed within the timeframe of the program? Who will manage the money if that happens?
- How do you plan to communicate with young people about this issue?
- How do you plan to communicate with young people's families and communities about this issue?
- How do you plan to involve duty-bearers in this issue?
- How to you deal with possible corruption, theft, blackmail, and misuse?
- How do you deal with young people competing too hard, including plagiarism, sabotaging and cheating, in order to get hold of the seed money?
- What other risks may be entailed in distributing seed money? And how will such risks be mitigated and managed?

Never hand out cash – always request invoices

Do not hand over cash to the young people, no matter whether they are above or below the age of 18 years. There are numerous risks associated with cash, including black-mail, theft and misuse. Rather, inform the young people, the communities and the duty-bearers that the S²Cities programme staff will see to that invoices related to innovation will be covered as they emerge.

If the innovation does not take place, the seed money will not be distributed.

Risk analysis: distribution of seed money	Likely	Maybe	Unlikely	Specify possible risks	Suggested mitigation measures in the specific context
Will the focus be on individuals rather than on group efforts?					
Unethical behaviour, including corruption, theft, blackmail, and misuse					
Unexpected negative consequences and repercussions for the young people involved					
False expectations					
Other risks (fill in if relevant)					

5.8.12 Submission of original art or any form of creative output

Using innovation, art and other creative means as a strategy for youth engagement involves the awareness of copy right issues, of protection for original art and of the young artists' safety and security.

Copy right laws vary from country to country, and some countries do not protect intellectual property. But in a globalised world with creative inputs being shared online, it is important to build young people's awareness of copy right laws and the risks of copyright infringements, including the risk of ending up in court and having to pay expensive fines and fees to the original copyright holder.

Different countries have different copyright laws, but a rule of thumb is to always ask for permission before using someone else's creation as a part of your own creation. The only exception from this rule is if it is clearly stated in the colophon of a publication that you may use the text with due credit.

If a copyright holder says no or demand payment, you will either have to respect the no, or you will have to pay. Even when you have received permission to use another person's

creation, you always must mention the person’s name in a visible place near the creation. It may be in a caption next to a photo in a publication or on a plate on the platform under a statue.

Some websites offer copyright-free photos with Creative Commons licences, but even then, you should always mention the photographer’s name. You also have to be quite skilled in detecting which photos are actually totally free and which are not. Otherwise, you risk having to pay a large sum for copyright infringements.

To reduce the risk of potentially very costly cases of copyright infringement, it is advised to include the topic of copyright in trainings and sessions with young people in a youth friendly and easily understood manner. But, ultimately, partner organisation managements are responsible for ensuring intellectual property and copy right compliance.

While intellectual property and copyright laws may seem cumbersome to handle, they are also a protection of young people’s own creations. If, for example innovation ideas from young people consists of a photo exhibition about local safety and security concerns in cities, or public art for city beautification, others are not permitted to copy these items without young people’s permission.

To avoid copyright issues with young creators, the young people must fill in a consent form permitting the partner, municipality or others to exhibit the creation. Refer to the relevant consent form provided by GIB.

When young people’s artwork is put on public display, a risk assessment should also be carried out in advance to reduce the risk of unexpected negative consequences if someone dislikes or takes offense from the artwork.

You also must always check if artwork developed by S²Cities participants are partly or fully plagiarised. You may do this by, for example using by [reverse searching](#) for images on Google, or copying chunks of texts into Google to check if similar texts already exist.

Risk analysis: public display of innovation and art	Likely	Maybe	Unlikely	Specify possible risks	Suggested risk mitigation measures in the specific context
Copyright infringement of other people’s arts and innovations					

Copyright infringement of young people's arts and innovations					
Unexpected negative consequences and repercussions for the young people involved					
Other risks (fill in if relevant)					

5.9 Managing complaints and cases of policy violations

In addition to the programme's global [Complaints and whistleblowing procedure](#), resources are provided below to support partners in developing local reporting and case management processes.

5.9.1 Establishing a local complaints process

Important information to include in a local complaints process is as follows:

- Whom to contact if you are a young person, or you are an adult who suspect that a young person has experienced violence, abuse or exploitation when part of the S²Cities programme. Some organisations appoint a focal point for protection of young persons. Others let the human resource staff, trade union representatives, the board, or the highest-level management handle complaints. It is always good to have a two- or three tier complaints handling procedure, in case the appointed focal person is the one committing the violation. But you also want to ensure that not too many people are engaged as you will have to maintain confidentiality.
- How to contact that person or unit?
- How to contact anonymously? Beware that mails and phone calls can often be traced back to the sender and caller. How will you ensure that young people and others may complain anonymously to persons who actually act? An online complaint box where the complainants may choose to remain anonymous may be the solution. Others may also use such a complaint box to react on concerns, suspicions and actual rights violations.
- How do you ensure that all people involved in the programme are aware of the complaint mechanism?

- How to ensure that all people will have access to and made aware of external complaints mechanisms or a whistleblowing if they do not trust that action will be taken appropriately by the implementing partner or local authorities? Refer to the programme's global [Complaints and whistleblowing procedure](#), where there is the option to report (anonymously) to GIB.
- If you know for sure that a young person has experienced violence, abuse, exploitation or other criminal offenses, you have a responsibility to inform GIB and relevant authorities. However, do talk to the young person affected and the assigned counsellor first to understand if reporting will do more harm than good. Always engage the young person and the assigned counsellor in finding the best possible way forward to ensure that the survivor is experiencing further harm and trauma.

All complaints must be treated fairly without bias, and everyone involved have the right to a fair hearing. Maintenance of confidentiality must be given priority to protect the affected individuals. However, in the case of suspected criminal offenses ending up in the court system, confidentiality will be broken. This has to immediately be made clear to the complainant and the person who experienced the violation.

Although national legal frameworks may have gaps, most countries do have laws on child protection and on criminal offences such as violence, abuse and exploitation. Local partners should develop an oversight of national laws on child protection and numbers to child help lines and include such information in the capacity building of young people as a deliverable in the contract.

If the partner in the location where the incident happened does not take satisfactory action in the event of a suspicious incident, GIB reserves the right to terminate its collaboration with the partner and to take legal action.

5.9.2 Example form for reporting violence, abuse and exploitation

The below form is offered as an example template for reporting violence, abuse and exploitation on behalf of a young person. The template should be adapted to local contexts.

Case management form	
Today's date and time	
Details of partner who completed this form	
Partner person's name	
Partner person's	

phone, email, and address		
Details of young person and family (unless they wish to remain anonymous)		
Name of young person		
Age and sex (if known)		
Name of parents/guardians/caregivers		
Details of concern/suspicion/incident		
Please complete as many sections as possible:		
Incident date and time		
Incident location		
Alleged perpetrator's name		
Alleged perpetrator is	Staff	Volunteer or sub-contractor
	Other (describe)	
Description of the incident including behaviour or signs observed and any other details		
How do you know about the violence/abuse/exploitation?	Told directly by young person	Told by somebody else
	Observations of the young person (strange behaviour/injury)	Other (describe)
Have you contacted anyone about this concern?	Yes	No
If so, who have you contacted?		
Please write your name and your position in the organisation and sign the form		

Name		Position	
Signed		Date	
OFFICE USE ONLY			
Name		Position	
Name of person who received incident report			
Date received			
Action taken <i>Please attach all documentation</i>			

5.9.3 Reporting may put survivors at risk

Handling cases of sexual abuse, violence and exploitation is very sensitive and requires a high degree of insight into the local culture, its institutions and national law.

Not all authorities, including police and courts, are well prepared to care for young survivors of violence and abuse in a supportive manner. In some countries, survivors' identities are not protected, and in some cultures, survivors are blamed for the crime.

Examples from real life show that young women in some patriarchal cultures sometimes are forced by family or community members to [marry](#) the person who raped them. Some countries even have laws [allowing rapists to marry their survivors](#) to escape criminal prosecution. Many countries also still have [inadequate legal frameworks](#) for sexual abuse and violence. Encounters with insensitive and unaware police officers and judges may make an already traumatic experience worse for the young survivor.

With good reason, many survivors fear the effects of reporting sexual abuse.

To protect young people against further risk and trauma, engage survivors and counsellors in finding the way forward. Do this with empathy, sensitivity and ensure full anonymity in the process.

5.9.4 Assessing further risks

This section is offered as an example for completion by the appointed protection focal point, HR or management – depending on the partner.

Is the young person at immediate risk of further abuse?	Yes	No	Unsure
Does the alleged perpetrator still have access to the young person?			
Does the alleged perpetrator have access to other young people?			
Are their protective support persons or systems around the young person such as parents/relatives/friends/neighbours/counselling?			
Does the young person need support from health providers, social welfare or others?			
Do you expect that the local police or other authorities will handle this complaint with care?			
Is the person who has placed the complaint in any way in danger of repercussions?			

5.9.5 Action plan case management

Considering the risks which may be present, the appointed in charge of complaints must specify the actions which need to be taken to support the young person and ensure their safety. It is very difficult to make a generalisation here. It will have to be a matter of judgment based on each case.

In acts punishable by law, it is not up to a partner or GIB to investigate but it should be reported to the authorities. However, please do read [4.3. Duty to act](#) carefully before you take any decisions on how to act.

An action plan must consider:

1. How do you plan to immediately support and take care of the young person and ensure that the young person is involved in taking the decisions regarding your actions?
2. Who needs to be informed? GIB? The authorities? If the young person is not anonymous, and if the young person is below the age of 18 years, the young person's family.
3. Who may be endangered by the complaint? E.g., the young person, the alleged perpetrator, the complainant, others.
4. How will you ensure that the young person, the perpetrator, the notifier, and others are safe from repercussions?

5. Where will the young person stay for protection in the short and long term? Will the young person be safe with the family or in the community? Or will the young person need to stay outside the community in a refuge, a hostel, or with relatives or friends?
6. Is referral to support services necessary, and if so which services? Counselling?
7. The alleged perpetrator will also have to be informed, but only after ensuring the young person's safety and security against repercussions.
8. Reporting to local authorities where appropriate. Which units?
9. Reporting to the police in the country of origin of the alleged perpetrator if the alleged perpetrator is a foreign citizen.
10. Reporting to social welfare where available and appropriate.
11. Managing internally such as through disciplinary procedures if the perpetrator is from within the organisation.

Who will do what?

Action	Responsible person	When
Working out the action plan		
Implementation of the action plan		
Follow up on the young person		

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Yes/no: All documentation is attached Yes/no: Documentation is filed securely	
Name of person who received incident report	
Name and signature of person who is managing the action plan	

5.10 Relevant resources, manuals and toolkits for further inspiration

What is Participation

Fletcher, A. (2008) *Ladder of participation*. The Freechild Project. https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/ASTC/00e37246-8bd9-481f-900c-ad9d6b6b3393/UploadedImages/Ladder_of_Participation_1.pdf

Toolkits

Ladegaard, L. (2016) *A youth participation best practice toolkit. Part one: What to consider when designing youth participation programmes aimed at the social and civic empowerment of vulnerable youth*. Save the Children. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/2016_rb_toolkit_part_01_w205xh297_s1-14og73-74_web.pdf/

More about life skills: Pages 32-33.

Ladegaard, L. (2016) *A youth participation best practice toolkit Part two: Tools, methods, tips, exercises and suggested training workshops for youth participation programmes and projects aimed at the social and civic empowerment of vulnerable youth*. Save the Children. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/youth-participation-best-practices-toolkit-part-ii/>

Passa Youth (n.d.) *Activities from the PASSA Workshops*. International Federation of the Red Cross-IFRC and by Habitat for Humanity International- HFHI. <http://www.passayouth.org/activities>

PASSA Youth is a programme that empowers young people to better understand their environment and reduce their shelter's exposure to risks. The process consists of 8 activities.

Example of methods for participation of youth in research

Ladegaard, L. (2017) *Participatory midterm review promoting child rights in 4 districts and the nation of Rwanda*. SOS Children's Villages. <https://www.lotteladegaard.dk/upl/website/library/AdvocacyprojectmidtermreviewFINAL21.03.17.pdf>

Competitions and ethics

Piest, S. & Schreck, P. (2020) *Contests and unethical behavior in organizations: a review and synthesis of the empirical literature*. Management Review Quarterly. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11301-020-00197-3>

Inspiration for taking anonymous photos

Jardin, V. (2006-2022) *7 Tips for a More Anonymous Approach to Street Photography*. Digital Photography School.

<https://digital-photography-school.com/7-tips-anonymous-approach-street-photography/>

6 Glossary

6.1 Defining meaningful youth participation

Meaningful adolescent and youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between adolescents, youth, and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills, and strengths are integrated into the design and delivery of programmes, strategies, policies, funding mechanisms, and organisations that affect their lives and their communities, countries, and world.

Global consensus statement: Meaningful adolescent & youth engagement

<https://www.who.int/pmnch/mye-statement.pdf>.

6.2 Defining adult support and facilitation

Adults may encourage young people's involvement, share information, model participatory behaviour, assist the young people in developing the skills needed for participation, create safe environments for youths and clear the way to important people who are not in the habit of listening to youths.

Adult facilitators have very diverse responsibilities, such as motivating and helping young people organise, and communicating with all stakeholders as well as in the facilitation of all types of activities, including when young people engage in decision-making processes and in order to trigger system-level changes.

Adult facilitators can also act as intermediaries, or they can suggest solutions the young people may not have considered. Adults can also help the youths obtain important information and propose alternative options so the youths can make their own informed decisions.

Adults are also needed to ensure that none of the activities hamper young people's safety or mental and physical development. Depending on the country, context and culture there may be written and unwritten rules that youth should not overstep. As an adult you are responsible for protection and taking precautions so that young people do not experience repercussions or break the law knowingly or unknowingly.

Adults also have a critical role to play in making sure that all youths have the opportunity to participate irrespective of gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social class and religion.

Adult facilitators also need to be in constant touch with youth to ensure that there are ongoing activities. Otherwise, the young people risk losing interest and leaving the programme.

As the adult facilitators of youth play a main role, the careful capacity building of facilitators is of utmost importance.

6.3 What are intellectual property rights?

Intellectual property rights, or copy rights, are the rights given to persons over the creations of their minds. They usually give the creator an exclusive right over the use of the creation for a certain period of time.

Copyright protects literary and artistic works, such as books, articles, films, photographs, pictures, drawings, art, computer programmes, drama and music. Such works are subject to copyright protection for many years after the death of the one who created the item.

Copyright acts also protect creative artists' performance of, for example sound recordings, films and photographs, as well as TV shows, even if the creation is not entirely made by the creator.

Industrial property, such as inventions (protected by patents), industrial designs and trade secrets, is also protected.

6.4 What does copyright entail?

Without permission from the maker of the item you want to use, you are not allowed to:

- Make physical copies of the work, such as printing of an author's books and photocopying of texts. Copying also includes saving a work in digital form, for example if you store a text or an image you have found on the Internet on a USB key or a hard disk. It also constitutes copying to make a representation of a work, for example by drawing a statue or making a painting based on a photograph. There may be exceptions, for example for educational organisations who contribute an amount for each photocopy, but this may vary from country to country, so it is better to always ask for permission.
- Distribute copies to the general public, including selling, renting or giving them away.
- Display copies to the general public. Display means that you place a copy of the work somewhere for the general public to see. If, for example, you put a photo on a poster without asking the photographer for permission.
- Perform the work in public. Playing music or films to an audience, playing recordings of music and movies, reciting literary works, etc., constitute performance. Performance also includes broadcasting works or posting them on the Internet.
- Usually, uploading work to the Internet does not just entail performance, but also copying, because you store the work on an Internet server.
- You are permitted to use excerpts, but not full texts from publications, books, research, etc., if you add visible credits, including the name of the author and organisation or publisher.
- Even altered, edited and manipulated photos are usually protected by copyrights.

- You cannot use someone's picture to illustrate a report, for example, without asking for permission and giving credit to the photographer, and if you print or share the report electronically, or use it for commercial purposes, you need permission too.

> Adapted from <https://forskerportalen.dk/en/research-and-copyright-admin/>
and https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/intel1_e.htm

6.4.1 Where to find copy right free illustrations

There are many online image resources you may use for free or pay once for the right to use the image numerous times. However, read carefully the text attached to each image; some images may come with conditions. You will always have to credit the creator by mentioning the name next to the image.

Among the online free image resources are:

- Creative commons: <https://creativecommons.org/>
- Unsplash: <https://unsplash.com/>
- Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/>
- Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- FreeImages: <https://www.freeimages.com/>

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