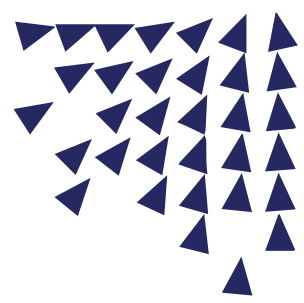




WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS

MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This framework was written across 2023-2024 and reflects thinking, models and practice within youth participation at that time. It was informed by consultant youth participation advisors and WAGGGS Global Team members. It is part of our commitment to mainstreaming this framework to periodically review and refresh it.

MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION & QUALITY GIRL GUIDING AND GIRL SCOUTING

This Framework is a part of the tools and resources the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) offers to support national Member Organisations and the global Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement to deliver quality Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting. It is strongly connected to the Growing and Learning Framework and the Capacity Assessment Tool as explained below:

Growing and Learning

WAGGGS Learning and Development Framework, Growing and Learning, defines the characteristics of a quality experience for both youth and adults in the Girl Guide and Girl Scout Movement. One of these characteristics is “participatory spaces”, whereby meaningful youth participation is a fundamental part of the learning and development environment we create for all our members.

This Meaningful Youth Participation Framework supports and complements the Growing and Learning Framework. It explains what participatory spaces look like, provides more information on what meaningful youth participation is and how we can improve our participatory practice.

You can find out more about the Growing and Learning Framework here:
<https://campfire.wagggs.org/organization/growing-and-learning>

Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT)

Our self-assessment tool - CAT - is designed to support national Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Member Organisations to understand their organisational strengths and identify any areas that may need improvement. It includes indicators for meaningful youth participation that support Member Organisations to self-assess their practice at both a national and local level.

This Meaningful Youth Participation Framework can be used by Member Organisations who identify meaningful youth participation as an area for development through the CAT, to help guide their next steps in improving their practice.

You can find out more about the Capacity Assessment Tool here:
<https://campfire.wagggs.org/dashboard/capacity-building>

Dear Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting friends,

It's a pleasure to welcome you to our new Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) Framework! This document brings to life a core value of our Movement ensuring that young people are truly empowered to shape the present and future of our global Movement. In alignment with Compass 2032, this Framework provides a roadmap for creating the inclusive, dynamic culture we envision. It's not just about having youth at the table, but about building spaces where their voices drive action and inspire lasting change across WAGGGS.

The trefoil model included in this Framework is particularly powerful. It reflects the culture, opportunities, and principles that are fundamental to making youth participation meaningful at every level. Through this model, we are showing our Member Organisations and Global Team that true youth empowerment is both possible and essential.

Personally, I am inspired by the vision of this Framework because it reinforces a belief I hold dearly: that our Movement is at its best when young people are engaged as leaders, decision-makers, and advocates. Together we are building a Movement where every young member has the opportunity to contribute their ideas, lead with purpose, and make their mark on our shared mission.

I look forward to seeing how each of you brings this vision to life within your own team and communities!

With excitement and solidarity,

Candela González

Chair of the World Board

Dear Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting friends,

It is so exciting to be sharing this Framework with the Movement – a practical tool for us to use to work towards our shared Compass 2032 vision for an equal world where all girls can thrive, and to be a Movement led by girls and young women.

However, what is more exciting is what happens next... Seeing how the Framework is used and adapted across the many different contexts that exist in Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting! From local groups to national level, to global programmes and governance structures. Already there is so much youth participation happening in our Movement, it is built into our DNA. An essential part of implementing the ideas in this Framework will come from the sharing of best practice amongst us, to support each other to grow and learn from our experiences.

The power of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting is in our ripple effect of impact. An experience of meaningful participation for a young person can support them to realise their potential and empower them to go on and make the change they want to see in the world.

The magic of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting is in how we share leadership and celebrate everyone for what she brings. Despite having different contexts we work in, different ways of doing things, different challenges to overcome, we are united by our hope to empower any and every girl.

Here's to a Movement led by girls and young women,

Anna Bambrick

Youth Leadership and Participation Lead



WELCOME

Welcome to the Meaningful Youth Participation Framework for the global Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement! This framework exists as a result of youth-led research by the Young Women in Governance research team (2019) which recommended that WAGGGS and its Member Organisations (MOs) mainstreamed Meaningful Youth Participation in all areas of their work. It has been informed by intergenerational perspectives of MO and WAGGGS Global Team representatives on the current stage of youth participation across the Movement. This is the foundation from which our work will continue towards the Movement’s commitment to be girls and young women-led.

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MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

In Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting...

- **Youth participation** means actively and continuously engaging young people in making decisions on issues that affect their lives and communities.
- **Meaningful youth participation (MYP)** means that children and young people are considered the experts in their own lives, and are informed, empowered, safe and valued when they participate.

Trefoil of Youth Participation

- A **culture** that supports youth participation;
- **Opportunities** for young people to participate;
- **Principles** in place to ensure the opportunities offered are meaningful.



Culture that needs to be built to enable meaningful youth participation:

- Its foundation is a safe, inclusive, empowering Brave Space.
- It is a space that builds young people's capacity and where adults respect and value young people for who they are and what they offer.



Opportunities to create for participation to take place:

- **Consultation** – young people are asked for their input to inform decisions made by adults.
- **Collaboration** – young people and adults work together and make decisions side-by-side.
- **Youth-Led** – young people make decisions at all stages of a process, adults may support this, but it is driven by young people.



Principles to follow to ensure that youth participation opportunities are meaningful:

- **Transparent** – young people are fully informed of why and how they will participate.
- **Accountable** – young people know what the outcome and impact of their participation was.
- **Accessible** – the participation experience is designed to support all young people to be able to fully take part.
- **Intersectional** – young peoples' individual needs are met to enable their full participation.
- **Supportive** – young people are equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to participate.
- **Engaging** – the participation experience is interesting and exciting for all those involved.
- **Authentic** – young people have actual decision-making power.
- **Voluntary** – young people can choose to get involved and remove their participation during the process.





INTRODUCTION

This framework provides a guide for how the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement can improve our approach to meaningful youth participation to make sure we work for, by and with girls and young women. It will help us on our journey to our Compass 2032 vision of being a “girl and young woman-led Movement”.

Compass 2032

In 2021, the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement committed to working towards Compass 2032: our vision to be a “girl and young woman-led Movement where every and any girl feels confident to lead and empowered to create a better world together” by 2032.

What does this vision look like in reality?

A Movement led by girls and young women is a Movement where there is meaningful participation of girls and young women. Where girls and young women are driving the direction of their Girl Guiding/- Girl Scouting experience. Where any and every girl and young woman in the Movement has the space to lead, make decisions and is confident and equipped to exercise their power whether at local, regional or international levels.

Find out more about Compass 2032 here: <https://campfire.wagggs.org/topic/compass-2032>

About this Framework

What is its purpose?

This Framework will help us mainstream and strengthen meaningful youth participation practices across the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement. It draws on existing good practice within the Movement as well as learning from the wider youth sector to explain what meaningful youth participation is, why it is important and provides guidance on how to improve practice.

Why do we need it?

It outlines our shared approach to how we can achieve Compass 2032. This will help us to strengthen a culture where girl-led activities, girls’ leadership and girl-youth-adult collaboration are a normal part of the Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting experience.

Who is it for?

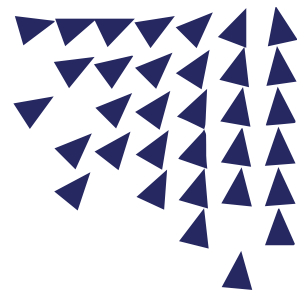
Anyone in Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting who is interested in Meaningful Youth Participation! It is suitable for use by individuals, teams, Member Organisations (MOs) and the WAGGGS Global Team. The framework aims to support both those already doing participation well to continue to improve their practice, as well as those who are new to the topic to start their journey.

How can we use it?

This framework outlines a standard of what good practice looks like. It is designed to be adapted based upon your existing level of experience and your own context.

As a Movement, girls and young women are at the centre of everything we do. Therefore, throughout this document, we refer more frequently to girls and young women. However, our guidance on meaningful youth participation is applicable to all genders.





MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

What is meaningful youth participation?

In Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting...

Youth participation means actively and continuously engaging children and young people in making decisions on issues that affect their lives and communities.

Meaningful youth participation means that children and young people are considered the experts in their own lives, and are informed, empowered, safe and valued when they participate.

There is no single definition of youth participation across sectors and languages. Other terms such as 'youth engagement' or 'youth empowerment' are also used and sometimes interchangeably. WAGGGS has decided to use 'meaningful youth participation' because it communicates that young people should be engaged, empowered and playing an active role in making decisions.

Who do we mean by 'youth'?

There is no universally agreed definition of young people or youth. Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the legal definition of children is anyone below the age of 18 years. Meanwhile 'youth' typically means someone aged 15-30, although this varies across contexts.

In this document we use the term youth participation to include both children and young people's participation. We understand that children and young people are not a homogenous group: the way we involve differing age groups, particularly younger children, will need to meet their needs to ensure participation is appropriate, safe and enjoyable.

Meaningful youth participation can and does exist **at all levels** of the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement. It can take place in relation to big decisions or small decisions, from local group level, to programme design and delivery, right through to MO and global governance.

However, it can only take place when there is a **culture** that supports youth participation **accessible opportunities** for young women to participate and **principles in place** to ensure these opportunities are genuine spaces where young women can use their power. As set out in the 'Trefoil of Youth Participation' which is explained in more detail in section 3 of this framework.

Meaningful youth participation puts young people in the driving seat and equips them for the journey. When young people are meaningfully included, they are not passive recipients of adult action - or inaction - but are powerful agents of change.



Why is youth participation important?

Across the youth work sector, there is a lot of research and literature that points to four key reasons 'why' youth participation is important.

1. Participation is a human right

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. For under 18s, this right is reflected within Article 12 of the United Nations Rights of the Child, which says 'every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.'

2. Participation helps to shift power imbalances

Meaningful participation can bring power to groups of people who are often excluded. That could be 'children' or 'young people' as a whole, but also other groups such as girls, or young people with disabilities. It can also act to shift and readdress power balances within society or organisations.

3. Participation improves outcomes

Participation ensures initiatives designed for children and young people work FOR them. This improves the impact and efficiency of a programme, initiative, idea or organisation. This is an argument that is particularly strong with policymakers and funders.

4. Participation supports young people's development

Through participating, young people build skills and confidence. When done well, it can be a transformative experience.

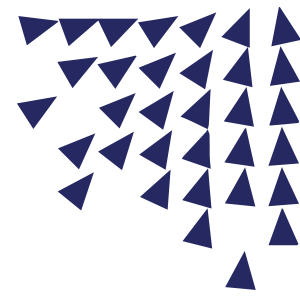
Meaningful youth participation is part of a quality Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting experience.

In some ways, it is already built into our approach:

- The **Girl Guide and Girl Scout educational method** creates an environment where girls and young women can take the lead in their learning and make choices about what they do in the Movement.
- The **Girl Guide and Girl Scout leadership model** values leadership at all ages. Leadership is not about who is in charge or has the power, it's about creating a space where everyone feels valued and can be their best self.
- We create **brave spaces**, where girls and young women can make decisions and make mistakes in a safe, supportive environment, giving them the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

In our efforts to strengthen youth participation in all spaces across the Movement, we are staying true to the intentions of the Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting experience as set out in the **Growing and Learning Framework**.





HOW DO WE DO MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

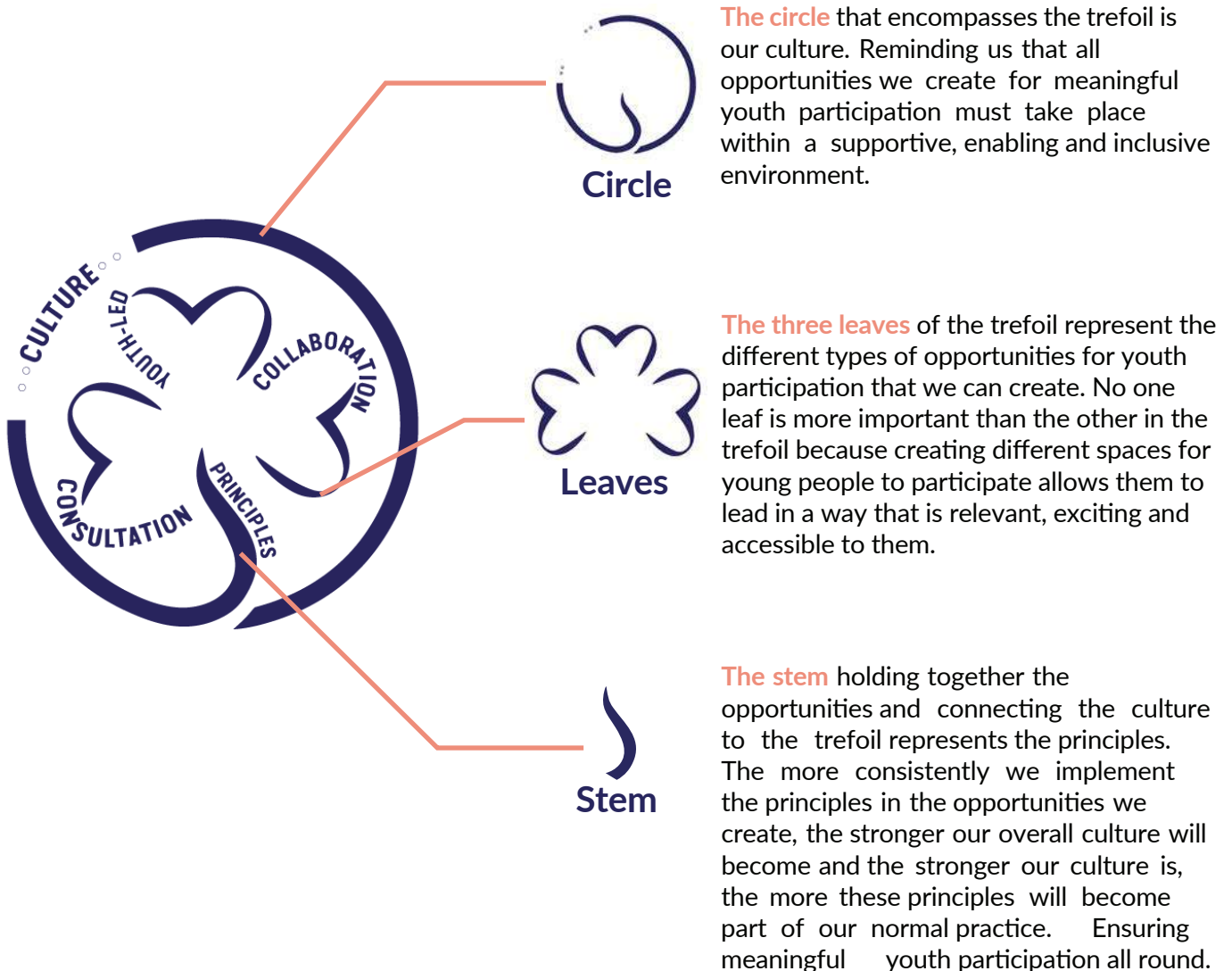
Meaningful youth participation is not easy; it requires a commitment to build a culture for it to take place, to create multiple opportunities for it to happen, and to follow guiding principles to ensure a space where girls and young women can use their power.

The 'Trefoil of Youth Participation'

Meaningful youth participation can happen when there is...

- A **culture** that supports youth participation;
- **Opportunities** for young people to participate;
- **Principles** in place to ensure the opportunities offered are meaningful.

The Trefoil of Youth Participation links these three key parts together visually through a symbol that is unifying for the Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting Movement, just as we are unified in our Compass 2032 vision.



The 'Trefoil of Youth Participation' is a visual framework for how we can achieve meaningful youth participation in the Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting Movement. There are a variety of child and youth participation models in the sector. Our model draws on some of these models: Hart's (1992) Ladder of Youth Participation, the Lundy Model (2013) and especially the Flower of Participation by CHOICE (2017), as well as insights and existing practice from across the Movement.

This model has been developed as guidance for the Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting Movement for how we can continue to foster and facilitate meaningful youth participation. What this looks like in reality will be different for every Member Organisation and context. For some people the ideas behind this model may be completely new, for others these concepts may be more familiar or almost second nature. You can identify what you need to take from this, and how you can adapt and apply it to help grow and enhance your current practice.

Remember - the best people to determine what meaningful youth participation is and feels like will always be the girls and young women you are working with.





Building a Culture that supports meaningful youth participation

Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting should be a 'brave space' for all members. That is a safe and supportive environment in which all members feel confident to step out of their comfort zones and challenge themselves to learn, grow and take the lead.

This brave space is the foundation of a culture that nurtures meaningful youth participation, it is:

- **Safe** - everyone is valued, respected and free from violence, discrimination and harm.
- **Inclusive** - everyone is able to meaningfully participate and feels an equal part of the space.
- **Empowering** - everyone has the confidence to be themselves.

To build on the brave space and have a culture that supports youth participation, we need:

- Adults to value and respect young people's perspectives, opinions and decisions, adopting positive behaviours and attitudes towards young people making decisions, treating them as their equals.
- A flexible and youth-friendly environment built through policies, planning and financial resources all of which is informed by youth experiences and realities.
- Adults and young people to have a good understanding of what meaningful participation is, and the skills and resources to effectively support participation.
- Young people to be supported and trained where necessary so they can make informed decisions.
- Young people to have continuous opportunities at differing levels to participate meaningfully make decisions and shape their paths.
- A safe space for experimenting, making mistakes and learning, where sharing knowledge and experience is encouraged.

What is a culture that does not support Meaningful Youth Participation?

In our world, there is a lot of bias that depicts young people as a 'group', who might be less valuable and less deserving of power than adults. This belief that adults know more or make better decisions than young people leads to comments or actions taken by adults that harm young people and their potential.

This is described as 'adulthood'.

Adulthood prevents many young people from being able to meaningfully participate and harms the brave space foundation.

What does adulthood sound like?

"Ah she's great, for a young woman!"

"You're too young, you'll understand when you're older."

"Youth are the future."

"Children should be seen and not heard."

"She's too young to have enough experience."

What does adulthood look like?

- Young people only being given a certain role based upon what an adult thinks is appropriate for them.
- Young people are assumed to be interested in digital-related areas, such as social media.
- Young people being excluded from conversations because adults decide that they would not understand, and do not offer any opportunity for young people to learn more to be able to understand.
- Young people do not use their voice in spaces where they are included because they are scared of getting something wrong and being dismissed and labelled as 'too young'.
- Young people push themselves to do more than they have capacity for to 'prove' themselves to adults.
- Young people are not given enough time/space/context to be fully informed and involved because adults think that they are not 'proactive' enough.



Reflect and challenge yourself

- Do you recognise any of the above in yourself?
- Think of 1 time when you saw the power of young people. Remind yourself of this when you notice you are doubting a young person's potential.

For girls and young women to truly be able to make decisions and meaningfully participate, adults need to be prepared to step back, take on different roles and share power.

The culture we want to create is one that is based upon **intergenerational leadership and shared power**. By 'intergenerational leadership' we mean, older and younger generations working together to bring about positive change in their own and others' lives. For intergenerational leadership to be successful, space must be created for everyone to practise leadership, regardless of their age. This means that:

- Young people have a seat at the table - they are in leadership positions, have genuine decision-making power where they use their knowledge and expertise, and enjoy this experience.
- Adults bring their knowledge and experience, sharing it in a way that supports the growth of all.

Everyone has a part to play in creating this culture – girls, young women and adults alike. In the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement, our vision to be girl- and young woman-led shows a commitment to creating this culture. The challenge is to ensure we change current culture to make this happen. For participation to take place, we need to build a culture across the Movement, at local, national and global level, that is supportive of it. By drawing on the knowledge, resources and perspectives from different generations we can empower and inspire each other.





Opportunities for young people to participate

For youth participation to take place, there must be spaces and opportunities for it to happen. There are different types of opportunities for participation, with differing levels of youth leadership.

These can be categorised as:

- **Consultation** – young people are asked for their input to inform decisions made by adults.
- **Collaboration** – young people and adults work together and make decisions side-by-side.
- **Youth-Led** – young people make decisions at all stages of a process, adults may support this, but it is driven by young people.

Opportunity	What does this look like?	Examples
Consultation	<p>Young people are appointed to roles, asked their opinion and informed about decisions.</p> <p>Adults set-up the space and use the information gathered to inform their work and decision-making.</p>	<p>On a national or regional level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth advisory panel ▪ Youth consultations to decide on programme topics and/or future strategy <p>At a local level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Girls are asked to choose between different activities proposed by adults
Collaboration	<p>Young people and adults work together and share power. This can happen in multiple different ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Young people and adults make decisions together ▪ Youth-led decisions shared with adults ▪ Adult-led decisions shared with young people. <p>Adults' power changes in these different contexts – from playing an equal role, to being more supportive, to being more dominant.</p>	<p>On a national or regional level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board with young people and adults ▪ Co-creation of an educational programme <p>At a local level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Youth-led camp with adult support and supervision ▪ Adults and girls decide together on activities for the year/term
Youth-Led	<p>Young people set the direction, make all decisions, and plan & execute the majority of actions.</p> <p>Adults Young people may invite adults to join or be consulted, but they hold no decision-making power.</p>	<p>On a national or regional level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board is made up of young people only ▪ Educational programme is designed, created and delivered by young people only <p>At a local level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Girls decide on the full process of activity together, from budget to delivery, in a democratic way and lead the activity

Some practices are more applicable and/or appropriate depending on context, setting, and the group of children or young people we are working with. Therefore, we do not always have to be striving to be completely youth-led. By creating opportunities for participation across each category we ensure that young people are supported adequately, are not burdened with complete responsibility for everything, and are able to engage in a way that is appropriate for them.

What opportunities are not examples of Meaningful Youth Participation?

Manipulation: Adults use young people to support their own projects and pretend they are the result of young peoples' inspiration.

- *Adults organise a fundraiser for a charity they have chosen and advertise it as something the girls and young women care about but only ask girls and young women to support running it.*

Decoration: Young people help implement adult's initiatives. It seems that there are young people in the decision-making structures but in practice all decisions are taken by the adult advisors.

- *Girls and young women are told to participate in a social media campaign without any possibility of influencing its content, no information and no explanation of its context or consequences.*

Tokenism: Young people have little or no influence on their activities. They are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.

- *One girl is invited to a Board/Committee meeting to express 'the views of girls and young women' of the Organisation, without prior consultation, preparation, representative structures and willingness to follow up on the demands.*

These are all examples of non-participation or seeming participation, that is not genuine or meaningful. If you are familiar with Hart's (1992) Ladder of Youth Participation, these are the bottom three steps of the ladder.

When deciding on the most appropriate type of opportunity for participation we may also take into account the goal(s), design and resources of the programme or activity.

Overall, our intention should be to increase the number of opportunities across each of the categories, all levels of our work.

In Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting, we want to:

- **Stop** any practice that includes no or non-meaningful participation.
- **Start** to upskill and share existing and upcoming learnings around collaborative and youth-led methodologies, demonstrating more practice in this space.
- **Continue** good existing practice in the consultation space and build this into everything the movement does.

Reflect and challenge yourself

What do you need to stop, start and continue doing to help create more opportunities for meaningful youth participation in your work?





Principles of 'Meaningful' Youth Participation

To ensure meaningful participation, we should follow a set of principles to guide and help us through the experience from planning to the evaluation stages.

Just having young people involved is not enough for an experience to be considered **meaningful youth participation**. When we practice meaningful youth participation, we want young people to have a quality experience that is Relevant, Exciting, Accessible, Learner-Led (REAL) for them. Participation should be a space of learning and empowerment for the young people involved, having a positive impact both for the individuals and the organisation.

The best way to determine what is going to be meaningful for the children and young people you are working with is to ask them directly and agree a set of principles/guidelines that you follow together.

This Framework sets out some recommended principles to follow based upon existing research into what makes children and young peoples' participation meaningful. When we are engaging girls and young women in opportunities to participate, we must make sure it is transparent, accountable, accessible, intersectional, supportive, engaging, authentic and voluntary. The table below shows what each of these principles looks like:

Principles	What this means in practice
Transparent	Participants are given information about their right to participate in an age-appropriate format. The information includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How they can participate.• Why they have the opportunity to participate.• The scope of their participation.• The potential impact their participation could have.
Accountable	After they have participated, young people receive follow-up information and/or feedback that clearly explains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How their views have been interpreted and used.• How they have influenced any outcomes.• What further opportunities exist.
Accessible	Young people do not face barriers to their participation, because steps are taken to ensure their involvement at all stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age-appropriate approaches are used to ensure that participants are well prepared for their role and can contribute meaningfully to activities.• Participation approaches and methods are designed or adapted based on ages and abilities.• Financial needs for participation are considered and reimbursement given.• Adults are sensitive to the cultural and social context of the participants involved in participation activities.



Principles	What this means in practice
Intersectional	<p>There is no ‘one-size fits all’ approach, any and every child and young person are included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants are representative of the whole group impacted. For example, if it is something aimed at 18-30-year-olds, participants across this age range, from different socioeconomic backgrounds, from various geographical locations are represented in the chosen participants. • Time is taken to understand the needs of every individual participant. • Adaptations are made continuously throughout the process to support participants as needed.
Supportive	<p>Young people are prepared and feel welcome in the participation space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are equipped with the tools and knowledge to be able to participate effectively. • The participation process meets them where their capacity is and helps them to build it at their own pace. • Adults examine their own unconscious biases, beliefs, judgements and practices, as well as those of the organisation, and how these may influence how they work and engage with girls and young women.
Engaging	<p>Wherever possible, youth participation is innovative, active and enjoyable – just like any other Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are excited to take the lead and make their voices heard. • It is a learning opportunity for all involved - everyone develops skills that are relevant in different areas of life.
Authentic	<p>Young people have actual decision-making power:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They act independently and are responsible for their decisions. • Adults recognise that this can mean taking a step back, letting go of power and playing an active role by helping to build the capacity of young people.
Voluntary	<p>Participation is always a choice, meaning that young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the level of their engagement and can withdraw if they wish. • Are not coerced or pressured into participating or expressing their views.

These principles have been adapted from Lansdown, G & O’Kane, C (2014) Toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluating Children’s Participation. One major adaptation is the incorporation of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of Intersectionality into one principle to encourage an equitable approach in our work on meaningful youth participation.



What can an experience of participation that is not meaningful look like?

Scenario

1

A group of adult leaders want their next regional camp to be youth-led. They put out a call for girls (aged 11-14) to join the organising committee. Once the committee is selected, the adult leaders quickly realise that the girls do not know many things related to planning a camp, especially understanding what will be realistic to achieve in their timeline and within budget. The adult leaders start to take actions and make decisions based on what they know is feasible, such as creating a list of activities and designing a possible menu, and then ask the girls for their 'approval' before proceeding with organising these.

Here, the intention of the adult leaders had been to foster a **youth-led** space, however, by not taking into account what would be appropriate for the age of participants it became an instance of **decoration** where adults make most of the decisions with the girls as the face of the event. The principles of **accessible** and **authentic** were overlooked.

Scenario

2

A local commissioner wants to decide what activities her area should offer girls in the next year. She decides to hold a consultation for all members aged 5-14, which she asks adult leaders to carry out in regular unit meetings and send the responses back to her. When running the activity, adult leaders don't give girls a choice of whether to take part or not, they don't explain how girls' answers will be used, and mostly just read the options out, inviting girls to put their hands up to answer. Later, when the final activities are announced, adult leaders tell the girls this was decided by them in the voting activity they did months earlier.

In this scenario, what the local commissioner intended to be a **consultation** has become to some extent **tokenism**. By not giving girls a choice in whether to take part or not and by not fully explaining the purpose of asking these questions – the adult leaders have inadvertently removed girls' capacity to give a genuinely informed decision. Their participation experience also was not very engaging, the questions could have been asked in a more interactive way for the girls to want to participate in consultations again in the future. The principles of **voluntary**, **transparent**, **supportive** and **engaging** were overlooked.

Scenario

3

A Member Organisation is setting up a partnership with an environmental charity to design a new programme badge. They set up a co-creation team of young women who care about climate action and adult staff & volunteers who are in contact with the charity. The adults are fully informed of the charity's needs from the programme but choose not to share this information with the young women because they don't want to limit their ideas. When discussing possible activities for the programme, the adults only agree with the suggestions that will match the charity's needs. The young women don't fully understand why some ideas are chosen over others but are happy that their ideas are being used.

In this scenario, the co-creation team was intended to be a **collaboration** between the young women and adults, however, it became **manipulation** when the adults did not share what they knew about the charity's needs. Whilst it was well-intentioned, it meant that the young women were not fully informed, and the adults had already decided what activities would be suitable as they knew the full context but gave the illusion of choice to the young women. The principles of **transparent**, **supportive** and **authentic** were overlooked.





Reflect and challenge yourself



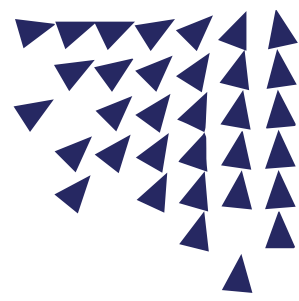
- Which of these principles do you think it will be hardest to adhere to?
 - Which will be the easiest?
 - Which are you most surprised by?
- How could you adapt the different scenarios above to make sure they adhere to all principles?

If we follow these principles the experience of young people should be **REAL**:

- **Relevant**: their experience of participation makes sense to them; and they can see its impact both on the wider world and themselves.
- **Exciting**: they chose to take part throughout and enjoyed their experience.
- **Accessible**: they felt able to get involved without extra obstacles to overcome and included in all activities throughout the process.
- **Learner-Led**: they made decisions both in relation to the topic of the participation and to help shape how the participation process worked.

Meaning that we have delivered a quality Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting experience!





BECOMING A GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN-LED MOVEMENT

In the introduction of this Framework, it is noted that ‘a Movement led by girls and young women is a Movement where there is meaningful participation of girls and young women’. This meaningful participation can be realised through intergenerational leadership that creates spaces for participation across the Movement.

This Framework is something for MOs and the WAGGGS Global Team to use and apply in a way that is relevant for their context. This journey will be different for each MO and different parts of the WAGGGS Global Team **but no matter what – we’re all in this together.**

Mainstreaming Meaningful Youth Participation

Becoming a girls and young women-led Movement means mainstreaming meaningful youth participation across all areas of our work, from local to national to global level. This will look different for each local group, Member Organisation and Region. When we talk about mainstreaming, we mean looking at all areas of our work and determining how they both enable and incorporate meaningful youth participation.

Programme

How are girls and young women included in the designing and decision-making of their own Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting programme?

For example, adult group leaders ask young people what activities they would like to do in their meetings.

How do programmes build capacity and encourage participation of girls and young women?

For example, through learning by doing young people feel able to make mistakes and learn from them.

Operations

How are HR and finance systems set up in enable participation of girls and young women?

For example, where appropriate adverts for volunteer roles focus on interest and enthusiasm over years of experience so young people feel able to apply. Or the organisation’s expense claim process is designed in collaboration with young people.

How do girls and young women inform decisions related to HR and finance?

For example, when interviewing for a role, a ‘young people interview’ is part of the process for young people to give their input. Another example could be a youth-led grants panel, where young people decide how money is allocated.



Governance

How are girls and young women a part of the governance of Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Organisations?

For example, an organisation's board includes young people as sitting members with voting power.

How are the needs and wants of girls and young women informing decision-making around the organisation and its direction?

For example, a working group developing the next organisational strategy includes young people who play an active role in informing, writing and reviewing it.

External Advocacy/Relations

How are girls and young women able to represent the organisation and its needs?

For example, they have the opportunity to talk directly to the government ministry about issues that affect girls and young women in the organisation.

How is the organisation representing the needs of girls and young women?

For example, a survey asking girls and young women what impacts them and what they want to see more, to inform how the MO externally represents and talks about these needs.

Monitoring & Evaluation

How are girls and young women involved in reporting on the impact activities have had on them?

For example, at the end of an activity or project young people get to decide how they share their experience.

How is the organisation sharing the impact of meaningful youth participation?

For example, articulating and evidencing why youth participation is important for the success of the organisation.

Communications

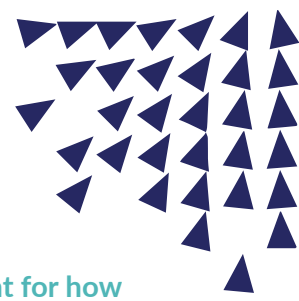
How are girls and young women involved in creating and designing communications?

For example, an organisation runs a communications campaign that young people decide the focus of and create the content for, whilst adults support by checking the content and posting it on the appropriate channels.

How are organisational communications designed to support the participation of girls and young women?

For example, plain, simple language and explanations of jargon or specialised terminology is standard practice in writing communications.





NEXT STEPS

This framework sets out to provide a guide to the Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement for how it can improve its approach to meaningful youth participation to make sure we work for, by and with girls and young women.

Now, it is over to you to put this theory and the ideas into practice. You may feel excited at the opportunity to now go and improve meaningful youth participation in your work or perhaps overwhelmed by the prospect of starting on this journey. You may also feel that you are already supporting good meaningful youth participation practice. However you feel, we all have a role to play in becoming a girls and young women-led Movement.

Self-reflect	Thinking about your role in the Movement: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What can you do to nurture a culture that encourages meaningful youth participation?• How is your meaningful youth participation practice?• What part of the trefoil of participation do you feel you are already doing well and where do you feel you can improve?• Where in your organisation do you have the power to influence further action on meaningful youth participation?
Do the training	On Campfire you can find more training on Meaningful Youth Participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the WAGGGS Global Team (those with a Campfire account) there is an online self-guided course.• For Member Organisations and individuals who do not have a Campfire account there is also an open version of the course. Both can be found via this Campfire page: https://campfire.waggs.org/dashboard/meaningful-youth-participation
Use the toolkit	To accompany this Framework, we have created a toolkit to help you implement Meaningful Youth Participation initiatives. The Toolkit is due to be launched in 2025 and will be available via this Campfire page: https://campfire.waggs.org/dashboard/meaningful-youth-participation
Contact WAGGGS for Capacity Building Support	Member Organisations can complete the Capacity Assessment Tool to identify areas for their organisation to grow capacity in and WAGGGS can support this process. Find out more here: https://campfire.waggs.org/dashboard/capacity-building
Send us your examples	If you have an example of Meaningful Youth Participation you would like to share with us, please send it to us via this form: https://campfire.waggs.org/form/meaningful-youth-participation





REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Here you can find the ideas and documents that informed this Framework. If you would like more inspiration for further reading on Meaningful Youth Participation, visit our Campfire page: <https://campfire.waggs.org/dashboard/meaningful-youth-participation>

Wider WAGGGS resources related to meaningful youth participation

- Growing and Learning Framework (2025)
- Capacity Assessment Tool
- Compass 2032 (2021)
- The Girl Guide and Girl Scout Leadership Development Framework (2021)
- From Paper to Practice: How to apply the Girl Guide and Girl Scout Leadership Model in your organisation (2021)
- Finding Our Path Toolkit (2020)
- Young Women in Governance Research (2020)
- The Girl Guide and Girl Scout Leadership Model (2018)
- Prepared to Learn, Prepared to Lead (2014)

Models of Youth Participation

- CHOICE (2017). The Flower of Participation. [online] CHOICE. Available at: <https://www.choiceforyouth.org/assets/Toolkits/MIYP/Flower-of-Participation-Narrative/20171122-Flower-of-Participation-Narrative-2.pdf>
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- HeadStart Learning Team (2022). Youth participation: models used to understand young people's participation in school and community programmes. UCL. Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/sites/evidence_based_practice_unit/files/headstart_evidence_briefing_participation_models.pdf
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- United Nations (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. *UNICEF* [online]. Available at:
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- UNSCEB (2017). *Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development*. *United Nations*. Available at:
https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf





Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting is the largest voluntary Movement dedicated to girls and young women in the world.

Our diverse Movement represents over ten million girls, young women and women from 153 countries. For more than 100 years Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting has transformed the lives of girls and young women worldwide, supporting and empowering them to develop their fullest potential and become responsible citizens of the world.

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts gives our 153 national Member Organisations tools, connections and the global voice they need to keep their organisations thriving, united and growing.