

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Youth and Peace: Youth Leadership Training in partnership with Taiping Peace Initiative

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WELCOME SPEECH BY

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Young people have a right to participate

Participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as one of its basic challenges.

Article 12 of the CRC states that children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard—within the family, the school or the community.

It means that you are a full-fledged person who has the right to express your views in all matters affecting you. Your views should be heard and given due weight in accordance with your age and maturity.

When you have the right to participate, you can have control over important decisions. You will be consulted on issues affecting young people, and you can contribute to the development of your communities and societies.

Your participation is good for others. Other people – kids and adults – may not see what you see, or understand things the way you do. Your insights and priorities can make a big difference to what happens in your community, in the wider community, and even in your country and the world at large.

Participation gives you a stake in the future. It allows you to use your voice to offer bold ideas and creative solutions to make the world a better place for yourself and people around you.

In order to participate effectively, you have to be given knowledge and information – not just in school but outside of school as well. You have to learn skills, such as leadership and

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communication skills. You have to be given opportunities, such as this workshop, to learn, share ideas and express yourself creatively.

Young people's role in promoting children's rights

As young people, you are not the property of adults, not even your parents or teachers. You are human beings in your own right, and you have individual rights and responsibilities to exercise.

You have the responsibility to make sure your own rights are respected by others, as well as to make sure that other children's rights are respected too.

You are not just an individual living within your family or neighbourhood – you are a global citizen. One who exercises their responsibility towards alleviating local and global inequalities, and avoids action that jeopardises the well-being of other individuals or of the planet.

Be a do-er, not a hearer. Be a catalyst for positive change. Learn more about the CRC, educate others around you, organise campaigns and activities to create awareness about child rights, advocate to your community leaders and your members of parliament, and raise funds for children's programs.

Those around you should also give you more opportunities to exercise your rights. In schools and colleges, teachers should try and involve children as much as possible. Governments should also make efforts to give young people a voice at the national level, such as through government polls, fora and youth parliaments.

Participation and citizenship by young people builds a stronger foundation for Malaysia to continue towards achieving Vision 2020 – which envisions the establishment of a united Malaysian with a sense of common and shared destiny, a matured, liberal and tolerant society, made up of one 'Bangsa Malaysia' with loyalty and dedication to the nation.

In 2002, the UN General Assembly adopted a declaration to create a World Fit for Children. Now it is your responsibility to keep an eye on governments and world leaders to ensure that they keep their promise to you.