



# A GUIDE FOR THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF MODELS OF PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR ADOLESCENTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Guide was prepared with the goal of providing practical, evidence based recommendations for improving the participation and social inclusion of adolescents in the work of UNICEF and its partners. Based on the UNICEF Gender, Non-discrimination and Adolescents Regional Annual Work Plan, the Population Council has prepared for the UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LAC-RO) a guide for the operationalization of models of participation and social inclusion for adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. This guide was built on the findings and recommendations that make up the *Regional Guidance on Adolescents: Supporting the Realization of the Rights of Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean* (UNICEF, 2014) for Thematic Area Four: **Participation and Social Inclusion**. It also follows the document's proposed principle that *each country office should adapt its adolescent interventions and strategies to its own reality, capacities, resources, and national and local priorities* (ibid, p.5), emphasizing the importance of designing and supporting **holistic approaches** that include the perspectives of adolescents. The guide here presented is based on past and on-going experiences by UNICEF partners in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Paraguay, Suriname, and Venezuela as well as other projects that constitute valuable experiences for future programme design with strong participation and social inclusion components in the region.

The experiences were documented through a mixed methods approach including text analysis (publications, gray literature, and websites) and interviews with both UNICEF officials in different Latin American and Caribbean countries and their local implementing partners. Contact with the different participants was facilitated by the LAC-RO office in Panama City. The documentation process gathered information under two general components: The first one included the **basic description** of the projects and programmes, including country of implementation, implementing partners, length of implementation, goals, components, methodologies utilized, human rights emphasis (direct or indirect), age range of participants, target population, results and products, and whether a monitoring and sustainability systems had been set in place. Appendix 1 includes a table summarizing the principal components of

each documented project or programme. Basic descriptions allowed the organization of the information based on the types of programmes.

The second general component includes the **six principal elements** identified as key for the successful implementation of adolescent-centred programmes. These elements are enumerated in Table 1, accompanied by a column that indicates this element transformed into guidelines. These guidelines are developed in this document based on participants' input and text analysis. Analysis also identified **three cross-cutting components** that improve success and engagement by stakeholders. These are 1) **tailoring recruitment strategies to guarantee the inclusion of minorities or vulnerable segments of the adolescent population**, 2) **the use of technology** in different aspects of the programme, and 3) ensuring **early and visible programme results** in order to strengthen sustained participation by stakeholders.

*Table 1 Key elements and Guidelines*

Key Elements	Guidelines
1. Adolescent participation in the different elements of programmes (from baseline and design, to endline and sustainability).	Involve adolescents in all stages of programme design, implementation and evaluation
2. Collection of baseline information prior to the implementation of the programme. Existence of a monitoring strategy. Collection of endline data.	Design based on formative research and baseline information, improve and adapt based on sound and simple monitoring, collect end results.
3. Involvement of local authorities and stakeholders in the process.	Involve stakeholders in programmes from the beginning
4. Inclusion of a, rights-based, gender-sensitive approach	Include an explicit rights-based approach that encourages the participation of girls and adolescent girls.
5. Length and frequency of adolescents' exposure to programme.	Ensure that length and frequency of participation are enough to meet programme goals
6. Place of programme within national or regional strategies to increase and guarantee adolescent participation	Plan for Sustainability and Scale

This guide was designed as a practical reference source that maximizes past and present experiences working with adolescents. Its target audiences are both UNICEF personnel involved in adolescent participation as well as UNICEF partners and other local and regional

actors looking for guidelines to maximize investments in this population. This document also includes a **quick assessment tool** (Appendix 1) for those whose tasks often involve assessing complex programmes with multiple components. It was developed and validated during the collection of experiences by different UNICEF offices and its partners and will hopefully become a user-friendly element for standardizing initial programme assessments<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Included in Appendix 1

## INTRODUCTION

This document synthesizes lessons learned and information from programmes and projects working to ensure that *all adolescents participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives and their capacities are strengthened as right holders* (UNICEF, 2014:5). Participation and social inclusion is one of four thematic<sup>2</sup> areas prioritized by UNICEF as growing evidence from the region and across the world has demonstrated that adolescence should be broached differently from childhood. Latin America and the Caribbean have a growing adolescent and youth population that demands equal adaptation on the part of governments and other agencies in terms of designing and implementing programmes that serve this specific group. Progress achieved by investing in children need to be sustained through adolescence, particularly among those more vulnerable because of the socio-economic inequalities experienced across the region. It is important that adolescents learn about their rights and actively participate in fulfilling them, while developing the necessary skills to transition successfully into adulthood, breaking away from stereotypes and discrimination. Adolescents, as agents of change, can strengthen democracy, good governance, and help find creative solutions to on-going problems faced in their communities. They have the advantage of belonging to an age that has seen new and varied ways to learn, interact, build networks, and dialogue (UNICEF, 2011:12). Successful programmes across the region will keep these aspects at the centre of strategies, while adapting these to the cultural and social context of adolescents, their families and their communities. Adults leading adolescent-centred initiatives need to adopt a paradigm that opens programmes to adolescents beyond their participation in activities. The inclusion of their voices, ideas, and strategies is important to guarantee that other key components of programmes are successful and sustainable (UNICEF, 2013:5).

The goal of these guidelines is to provide UNICEF and its partners with a set of recommendations to ensure that programmes developed for adolescents benefit from lessons learned across the region. They are built on the findings and recommendations that make up the *Regional Guidance on Adolescents: Supporting the Realization of the Rights of Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean* (UNICEF, 2014) for Thematic Area Four: **Participation and**

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<sup>2</sup> The other three thematic areas are education, protection and prevention, and health.

**Social Inclusion.** It also follows the document's proposed principle that *each country office should adapt its adolescent interventions and strategies to its own reality, capacities, resources, and national and local priorities* (ibid, p.5), emphasizing the importance of designing and supporting **holistic approaches** that include the perspectives of adolescents. Other important references in the preparation of this document were Chile's *Una nueva Mirada de la participación adolescente* (UNICEF, 2013), a comprehensive guide for adults working in adolescent-centred programmes, and *Una voz frente al VIH* (ONUSIDA, UNICEF, UNESCO, 2014), which also follows the format of brief and concrete recommendations for working with adolescents and youth on HIV related issues.

The guide here presented is based on past and on-going experiences by UNICEF partners in Colombia, Paraguay, Chile, Guatemala, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Suriname, as well as other projects that constitute valuable experiences for future programme design with strong participation and social inclusion components in the region. Programmes used as reference began as early as 2002 (Red Nacional de Jóvenes y Adolescentes Indígenas, Venezuela) but the majority have been developed in the past five years. This document does not constitute an evaluation or comparative analysis of programmes. However, detailed documentation of each programme mentioned below was necessary to identify key components of successful design. Patterns emerged as programme designers and managers shared their experiences and provided candid and wise advice for colleagues planning to work with adolescents in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

This document includes a section describing the **methodology** used to collect and organize the information collected from documents and interviews. The following sections constitute the core of these guidelines. The first part includes the **three crosscutting elements** that, regardless of the demographics of the target population, can improve successful processes of inclusion and participation. The second part is dedicated to the **six principal guidelines** for programme design. Text boxes were included to showcase examples of programmes that implemented these elements successfully or shared lessons learned that later helped to improve on-going programmes.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the creation of these guidelines was divided in two consecutive phases. The first phase consisted of communicating with UNICEF country offices in Latin America and Caribbean that had at least one programme or project centred on adolescence participation and social inclusion in civil society. The team in charge of preparing the guidelines requested from these officers all materials that could help understand the nature of the programmes led by them and their partners. The type of documents received varied from brief internal reports to publications. As documents began to arrive, the team created a matrix to organize information focusing on programme components and noting if these included elements that addressed the most common barriers to participation by girls, adolescent girls, and other segments of the population that face additional burdens and have traditionally been excluded. UNICEF's Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 (2014:18) as well as Population Council's Girl-Centered Program Design: A Toolkit to Develop, Strengthen and Expand Adolescent Girls Programs (2010:13-21) served as reference to identify key barriers to participation including girls' limited safety and mobility, restricted access to information and tools for decision making, reduced participation in social spheres after puberty, excessive chores and workload, and specific expectations, restrictions and stigma specific to girls' inclusion and participation outside the household sphere.

Documents were analysed to identify the following elements:

1. Starting date and duration of the project or programme
2. Theory of change
3. Goals
4. Target population, including age range, sex, in or out of school, urban, rural, indigenous, non-indigenous, afro-descendants, organized youth, adults working with adolescents, etc. Analysis of targeting strategy included whether the programmes included specific steps to facilitate girls' and adolescent girls' participation as well as that of children and adolescents with mental and/or physical disabilities
5. Programme components, including the presence or absence of baseline research or other evidence gathering elements.

6. Methodologies used in the projects or programmes, from formative research to endline evaluation, including in-process strategies to guarantee adolescent participation. Analysis included identifying whether programmes had taken steps to guarantee a gender-sensitive approach that addressed gender-related bottlenecks and barriers as specified in UNICEF's Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 (2014).
7. Pedagogical and didactic methodologies used.
8. Inclusion of a human rights approach in the different aspects of the project or programme, and they explicitly addressed one or more rights or implicitly included them.
9. Programme products such as training and communication materials, toolkits, theoretical approach, etc.
10. Stakeholders involved.
11. Monitoring plan.
12. Sustainability strategies.

These elements were gathered using a **quick assessment tool** for monitoring and evaluation of programmes designed specifically for the preparation of these guidelines. Given its elements of formative research (Schensul, Schensul and Le Compte, 2013:81-91), the first version of the guide was improved and expanded as more diverse programmes and projects were shared with the team. The quick assessment tool, included in appendix 1, pairs questions with examples of elements to document. Most of these elements were gathered during the second phase of data collection, interviews with UNICEF country officers and their local implementing partners. Each interview was conducted after reading and analysing documents shared by the country. This meant that the interview guide included standard questions as well as specific ones corresponding to each particular project. Calls lasted between one and two hours and all participants gracefully shared their experiences and allowed the research team to probe on key issues to maximize the exchanges. Some of these calls were followed up with additional material from participants.

The identification of the three cross-cutting components and six key recommendations emerged from these research elements. Data was classified in these categories. The two sections below were formatted following the reader-friendly structures used by UNICEF in recent similar documents (UNICEF, 2011, 2013, and 2014).

## **CROSS CUTTING COMPONENTS TO IMPROVE AND MAXIMIZE THE PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OF ADOLESCENTS IN PROGRAMMES**

Review of documents provided by UNICEF country offices across Latin America and the Caribbean, paired with interviews made to various key UNICEF officials and their country partners, revealed important elements that need to crosscut programmes and can serve as indicators of successful processes to ensure the participation and social inclusion of adolescents in governmental programmes, UNICEF programmes, local and virtual spaces, and youth organizations. These indicators take into account the different contexts in which adolescents participate or should participate, including emergencies and disasters. They include contemporary spaces such as virtual networks and social media. Finally, special attention was given to the inclusion strategies for adolescents of different needs and minorities.

### **Tailoring recruitment and participation strategies to guarantee the inclusion of minorities and other vulnerable segments of the population**

The most salient cross-cutting topic revealed through the document review and interviews was the need to determine target populations for programmes and projects based on evidence that justifies the selection of specific segments of adolescents. The experiences faced by adolescents and their specific needs to enjoy a healthy life and successful transition to adulthood demand careful planning to ensure inclusive and fair participation. Unless the specific target population is **adolescents in school**, exclusively recruiting via schools will fail to reach one or more of the following segments:

- Out of school adolescents
- Adolescents employed as domestic workers in nearby houses (including those of adolescents enrolled in school)
- Adolescents with disabilities whose needs are not met by local schools
- Married, pregnant or adolescent mothers living with her partner or his family
- Working adolescents

The same principle applies when the main strategy of recruitment is carried out among already **organized youth**. While supporting and helping these groups expand and sustain their activities is very important, limiting recruitment to adolescents who already participate fails to bring into the programmes those who can benefit from participating but currently do not have information and/or access to these spaces.

Example 1: Targeted recruitment **Abriendo Oportunidades**, Guatemala

Abriendo Oportunidades is a girl-centred programme that targets both out of school and in-school adolescent girls from indigenous rural communities. It is implemented by the Population Council and local non-governmental partners in Guatemala and across Central America. It was designed using elements of targeted recruitment such as those described in “Girl-Centred Program Design: A Toolkit to Develop, Strengthen and Expand Adolescent Girls Programs” (Population Council, 2010). One of the first findings during programme design was that out of school girls were often excluded from opportunities of participation because recruitment tended to happen in schools. Because there is very little accurate and updated information on the number of girls in each community, and their specific characteristics the recruitment strategy is community based. Preliminary meetings with community leaders ensure that the programme begins with their endorsement. Local leaders participate in a quick household census lead by previously trained mentors. Leaders’ knowledge of their communities allow for accurate identification of all households. The census also provides an opportunity to present the programme to parents. The information collected represents the universe of girls eligible to participate, avoiding elite recruitment. This information is a key element for monitoring the process and ensuring that the programme responds to specific challenges and barriers faced by least advantaged girls.

In order to improve targeting and recruitment of vulnerable or traditionally invisible populations, programme design needs to include, at a minimum, these basic elements:

1. Identification of basic indicators it wishes to impact and measure
2. Secondary analysis of existing data (demographic surveys, etc.) to determine specific age groups, sex, ethnicity, and other specific characteristics to target
3. Select a methodology to identify those populations in the area of implementation
4. Use this information to select recruitment and inclusion strategies specific for this group
5. Establish communication with families and community authorities, beyond schools

Step by step guidelines to guarantee effective identification of participants exist in numerous publications, including Population Council’s *Investing When it Counts: Generating the evidence*

base for policies and programmes for very young adolescents (2006)<sup>3</sup> and *Girl-Centred Program Design A Toolkit to Develop, Strengthen & Expand Adolescent Girls Programs* (Population Council, 2010)<sup>4</sup> which have successfully been applied by grassroots organizations, national NGOs and government agencies to create, improve or expand programmes for adolescents. The majority of these tools have also been successfully applied with strong participation of youth and adolescents, increasing their engagement in the early stages of programme design.

Current **technologies** such as smartphones, tablets, and software designed specifically for adolescents have opened new opportunities to reach adolescent populations that have traditionally been left out from programmes and have had little or no access to this technology. Exclusion from programmes can be due to geographic isolation, expensive and complicated logistical needs, or high cost of hardware and, sometimes, adults' reluctance to adopt technologies they are not familiar with. Additionally these are powerful instruments for participation, they promote the use of new didactical strategies and administrative

**Example 2: Use of Technology Digital Mapping, Argentina**

“Digital Mapping” of San Miguel, Buenos Aires, was the fourth exercise of its kind, following previous experiences led by UNICEF in Brazil, Haiti and Kenya. In Argentina, it was carried out in partnership with TECHO, a volunteer-based organization that works in nineteen Latin American and Caribbean countries to improve living conditions, social participation, and conduct applied research on poverty, housing, etc. “Digital Mapping” consists on using cell phones to photograph problems in neighbourhoods and work jointly to find a solution. The project aimed to prioritize the perceptions of adolescent boys and girls ages 13 to 19. During weekdays, fifteen participants took pictures of problems they identified in their neighbourhood. On Sundays, they met to discuss solutions as a group. Principal problems included deforestation, pollution, and littering on a nearby river bank, general littering, condition of the streets and street lighting. The group presented the project to the municipality, which provided support for cleaning and planting trees along the river bank.

information practices. (Hart, 2005) Some proven uses of technology for programme design for adolescents' participation and social inclusion include:

1. The use of geographical positioning systems (GPS, via tablets or smartphones) to conduct community mapping and identify relevant spatial data such as
  - a. Areas of high risk due to crime

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<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/InvestingWhenItCounts.pdf>, created with the support of various UN agencies including UNICEF.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2010PGY\\_AdolGirlToolkitComplete.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2010PGY_AdolGirlToolkitComplete.pdf), also available in French and Spanish.

- b. Safe spaces
  - c. Adolescents “actual” communities (where they can walk to, where they interact, etc.)
  - d. Possible spaces for community or municipal investment such as empty lots, abandoned parks and buildings, and other places that represent an opportunity to offer adolescents safe places for meeting, learning and communicating
  - e. Understand differences in perception of safety between adolescent girls and boys
2. Conducting community census and surveys with the use of tablets or smartphones to identify at risk adolescent populations
  3. Designing software to share information and content on adolescents’ rights, peer to peer advice, practical information on services, etc.
  4. Using social networks (Facebook, Twitter) to communicate key messages on rights and services
  5. Using social networks to reach out to at risk adolescents and youth participating in programmes
  6. Providing information in local languages
  7. Enhancing existing distance education programmes with additional elements via social networks, webinars, and online courses
  8. Adolescents reporting via pictures relevant situations in their communities or tracking changes in physical environment as a result of their activities
  9. Getting information to adolescents who have a difficult time moving around and getting to meeting places.

**Example 3** Football as mechanism to challenge traditional gender roles early in a programme: **Metodología Partidi**, Paraguay

Partidi uses football as a strategy to promote safe spaces for adolescents. It was developed in Paraguay by the Centre for the Development of Intelligence and currently works with nine different partners in 17 communities in ten cities. The game is developed by the participants as they define the rules and are themselves referees. The programme encourages conflict resolution. The programme methodology explicitly calls for a gender perspective. Programme experience has demonstrated that when girls are provided equal access to the game, participants question traditional gender roles early in the dialogue phase. Both girls and boys start to challenge traditional ideas through their interaction in the game. A key component to successfully challenge gender norms in Partidí is that the process of critically assessing gender discrimination is an intentional component of the programme. This means that facilitators (“sport mediators”) accompany the process and elicit reflection and critical thinking. Partidi is a very good example of how adult facilitators can help adolescents and children reflect on gender roles.

## Early and visible programme results

While programmes are normally designed to see relevant outcomes after a year or two of implementation, consultations conducted to build these guidelines revealed that successful programmes also often include some short-term, very visible outcomes in their plans. Adolescents are encouraged to continue participating when some activities provide early and **visible results**. These can vary from staging theatrical productions to present rights-specific issues learned in the project, and participation in radio programmes, to drafting of agendas and action plans, and working together to physically transform their communities, like clearing abandoned land to create new recreational spaces.

The positive impact of a few, key early results have also the power to increase support from local stakeholders, particularly community leaders and other local gatekeepers. Adult participants also benefit from in-process results, especially when positive change is associated with active engagement by community and municipal leaders. This is important because adult stakeholders may have prejudices against adolescent participation and their capacity to organize, work together, and contribute to the community. By including some early process outcomes, participating adolescents can demonstrate that they can be role models for their peers. Early visible results give participants the opportunity to prove that they can make relevant proposals and implement strategies to improve people's lives. Gaining the trust of adult leaders and gatekeepers also benefits girls' and adolescent girls' participation by challenging local beliefs that dictate that women should not engage in the public sphere. This element is particularly true when parents see older adolescents and young women from their community or region leading activities. Young women who have successfully challenged gender-based barriers become alternative role models for girls. Early successful results, including peer and adult recognition, motivate adolescents and their parents to continue participating and supporting programmes.

## **BASIC GUIDELINES TO OPERATIONALIZE ADOLESCENT PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

Participants from different countries, as well as recent documents from programmes that focus on adolescents, contributed to the identification of basic guidelines to ensure participation and social inclusion of adolescents.

### **Involve adolescents in all stages of programme design, implementation, and evaluation**

Adolescents are generally more aware of their needs and interests than adults realize. They have clear ideas about what affects their lives at the individual, family, and community levels (Hart, 2005) Incorporating them early in the process, during baseline or diagnostic stages, is key to successful programme design. Programmes based on adolescents' participation send an important message to participants and their communities by acknowledging that they are competent and capable of leading positive change. This awareness motivates them to remain in the process. Participants highlighted the following points as important to successful programming:

1. Adolescents benefit from the guidance of **adults who respect their ideas** but also help them stay on track concerning the goals set for the programme. They will also need adult support to engage leaders and manage other aspects of participation that are new to them. Adults play an important role in facilitating tools and information that can help participants build solid strategies for participation. Existing tools, such as El Salvador's Equipo Maíz' guides for Gender Analysis (Asociación Equipo Maíz, 2005) can be easily used by adolescents with initial guidelines from adults. This material relies on images, uses simple language, and constitutes an excellent resource of proven exercises for gender analysis.
2. Not all adolescents are 100% ready to participate actively in a programme. Different levels of preparedness require **differentiated investment** in participants' skills. Methodologies should include activities and strategies to give voice to those whose individual conditions may limit their self-confidence. Approaches to improve inclusion included relying on art, music and theatre to create spaces where adolescents may express themselves. For example, Paz a la Joven, a programme implemented by

UNICEF and the Government of Colombia's Youth Programme, relied on video, theatre and social media to give adolescents the opportunity to address the impact of conflict on their lives and discuss ways to generate a culture of peace.

3. You will always find **natural leaders**. While it is important to encourage and provide them opportunities to grow, keep an eye out for those whose skills require extra investment. While it is important to support existing groups and organizations and leaders, programmes can also increase social participation by creating opportunities for those who need more investment in communication and negotiation skills, and building self-esteem.
4. Adolescent participation must be promoted through **informed and free consent**. Following research protocols when working with adolescents is fairly new in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Often, themes explored through participatory research are deemed "low risk" for children and adolescents and therefore do not implement strict consent and assent mechanisms. It is strongly recommended that **all** programmes that include elements of formative research,

**Example 4: The importance of keeping adolescents at the centre of the agenda** Paz Joven Regional meetings Guatemala

Adolescent based meetings led by Paz Joven, engage adolescents through a participatory methodology that focuses on their most relevant needs at the family, school and community level. The Roadmap to attend adolescents' needs was designed by participating adolescents from diverse organizations. The 2012 "A jugar por mi salud" (Playing for my health) and other adolescent-centred programmes were designed as a follow up to Paz Joven's agenda. The organization continues to design campaigns and interventions based on adolescents' perception of needs. Language used comes from participatory exercises and an explicit effort to keep programmes approachable has resulted in high participation rates.

evaluation, and/or participatory knowledge building ensure that adolescents understand fully the purpose of the study, the audiences it will reach, and the possible consequences of participation. Additionally, confidentiality and anonymity should be offered in all endeavours. Programme and project implementers can benefit from taking ethics in research courses (certified and free courses are available online) prior to conducting research activities. The same principles apply when seeking adolescents to participate in activities. Programme and project leaders must verify that adolescents enrol and remain at their own will.

Roger Hart's recommendations for engaging primary school children (2005) provide a helpful checklist to verify that adolescents' participation is authentic:

1. Are adolescents aware that they have been targeted for a project or programme?
2. Have they provided consent or assent (for minors) to participate?
3. Do they understand the basic premises of the programme or project?
4. Did adolescents share decision making with adults concerning the elements of the programme or project?
5. Is this an adolescent-led initiative?

Engaging adolescents from the beginning may require more time at the early stages than an adult-led initiative. Participants who have worked to actively engage adolescents recognized that it was challenging but also necessary to ensure participation and sustainability. Fostering participation from the beginning is an opportunity to start building citizenship at the early stages of a programme and ensuring that it is truly adolescent-centred.

### **Design based on formative research and baseline information, improve and adapt based on sound and simple monitoring, collect end results**

The most successful programmes start off with a baseline analysis process, which is followed by programme implementation and a monitoring strategy. Reliable evidence, including, but not limited to basic demographics, provides a solid base to programmes. Interviewed programmes that reported better processes collected information on adolescents' needs and interests prior to implementation. This allowed programmes to focus on the most relevant issues for their participants, guaranteeing significant participation of adolescents. While donors do not always allocate resources for full-fledged research, it is important to include strong arguments in favour of preliminary needs assessments and at least basic baseline data collection.

Having a monitoring and evaluation plan are standard conditions in present day programme and project design. When designing programmes and projects, whether as pilot efforts or as scale-up initiatives, the establishment of an evaluation and monitoring strategy should not only respond to the programme's goals but also to the characteristics of human resources available for its implementation. The following recommendations respond to features regularly found among organizations working with adolescents and youth: enthusiastic and committed, but often limited staff, working with the support of volunteers and participants interested in generating meaningful results. Interview participants highlighted that they often worked with few references of other programmes and had reduced access to design models. The following

recommendations were provided by interview participants and synthesized from written and online documents:

**There is no need to start from scratch:** Rely on existing documentation of programmes similar to the one you hope to develop. Conduct formative research on the subject and talk to colleagues and organizations that work with similar groups. Share this information with relevant stakeholders, get adolescents' input and build a basic outline of your project or programme. Documents used as reference throughout this document are available through UNICEF country offices and many exist online. PDF versions of all Population Council's programme design tools are free at <http://www.popcouncil.org/research>. Other organizations such as International Planned Parenthood Federation have designed tools to promote adolescents' advocacy skills (<http://www.ippf.org/resource/Want-change-world-Heres-how-Young-people-advocates>). Equipo Maiz (El Salvador) has a large selection of toolkits designed to foster youth and adolescent participation, provoke critical analysis of issues like gender, sexual rights, democracy, etc. in friendly, engaging ways (<http://www.equipomaiz.org.sv/>)

1. **Collecting basic information of and from your target population will increase your chances of success:** listening and documenting the views and perspectives of your target population and relevant stakeholders will improve programme design and help you avoid mistakes such as ineffective or expensive recruiting strategies. Make sure you capture the voices of adolescents on the specific aspects of social participation and inclusion you wish to impact. "La Voz de los niños, niñas y adolescentes" (The voice of children and adolescents), a research project conducted in Bolivia by Defensoría del Pueblo and UNICEF, is an excellent example of how increased knowledge of target populations have a positive impact on programme design. It was conducted in three phases and captured children and adolescents' views on wellbeing, different forms of violence, insecurity, and discrimination. Qualitative data collected during the first phase helped build a survey that was carried out at the national level.
2. **Organize your data along the goals you wish to achieve:** This is the simplest way to create meaningful indicators. Your baseline data is the starting point. The changes you wish to see are what you hope to capture at endline. Information provided by your target population will help you identify how to reach those goals.

3. **Be ambitious, be realistic:** Having a comprehensive, well designed monitoring and evaluation strategy is important to not only ensure successful implementation, but to guarantee that the good outcomes are recorded, shared, and used in further programmes. However, these strategies need to take into consideration the capacities of staff and other participants, the available time and economic resources to implement it. Stakeholder participation, particularly that of adolescents, can provide ideas to simplify and tailor your monitoring and evaluation needs to the realities in the field.

### **Involve key adult stakeholders in programmes**

Although adolescent participation is the main element in successful programmes, support from adult stakeholders is also very important to ensure a solid start up, implementation, and sustainability. Shared spaces of negotiation, planning and impact evaluation between adolescents and adults provide valuable opportunities to improve inter-generation communication. As stakeholders come to value the ideas, energy, and work offered by the adolescents, they are more willing to invest community resources in their proposals.

Adolescents who participate in programmes expand their network of friends and allies. Their participation allows them to develop important skills as well as learn about how democracy works. They learn effective work, communication and negotiation strategies with adults, particularly with those with greater possibilities of supporting their initiatives. Adults and adolescents can work jointly:

1. Collecting **baseline data** and analysing its results to identify the most relevant needs of the different segments of the adolescent community.
2. Sharing personal experiences on **community participation** with adult stakeholders engaged in similar topic organizations or institutions.
3. Collecting, analysing and presenting to community authorities **mid and end term results**.
4. Presenting **proposals sustainability** to community authorities and other allies and supporters.

### **Include an explicit human rights-based approach**

Human rights, particularly civil and political rights, were implicitly included in all adolescent-based programmes documented. Other programmes explicitly work on a human rights base,

and participants become knowledgeable of the specific rights addressed. Programmes that are designed and implemented with a human rights-based approach (HRBA), developed by the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, which emphasizes the application of human rights standards and principles, as well as the development of the capacities of both right-holders and duty-bearers on this approach (UNFPA, 2010). This approach focuses in particular on those subjected to discrimination, disadvantages and exclusion, which includes adolescents and youth, while maintaining a strong gender focus (Ibid). UNFPA's guidelines for applying a HRBA to work with adolescents and youth provide an excellent framework to improve and maintain social participation of adolescents in programmes led by UNICEF and its partners. UNFPA's framework emphasizes the importance of remembering that working with children and adolescents should include the application of key human rights principles:

- universality and inalienability
- indivisibility
- interdependence and interrelatedness
- participation and inclusion
- equality and non-discrimination
- accountability and Rule of Law

Under this approach, adolescents are seen and treated as subjects of rights who possess valuable knowledge that can contribute to the improvement of their community on one, or several issues as exercises of citizenship. It encourages critical thinking, negotiation skills, and freedom of expression (UNFPA, 2010). Adolescents and communities benefit from the explicit approach because they acquire a better understanding of their rights, their bases and the actions required to guarantee them. Upon deciding to adopt an explicit human rights-based approach it is important to keep in mind the following elements:

1. An explicit approach automatically addresses **local authorities' duties** towards ensuring respect of human rights. This is an important element to remember during programme

Example 6: **Explicit rights-based approach**  
Child Friendly and University of Western  
Sydney, Bolivia

Child Friendly focuses specifically on children's rights through participatory research. It enquires into participants concerns as well as their perceptions of happiness at the school, community, and family levels. It includes the collection of descriptive and visual data of how Bolivian children experience their community and their visions and dreams. The goal of the project was to turn La Paz into a "child-friendly city", committed to addressing the needs of its children and ensure that public services respond to them. The methodology was built on the premise that children, adolescents and their families are best fit to determine what a city should provide them for their well-being (Malone). This approach is innovative because it was built on the premise that the first opportunity to apply a HRBA is during baseline research for programme design.

design because it implies that staff and participating adolescents will need to engage authorities early in the process and plan strategies to strengthen their capacity to fulfil these duties.

2. Well-designed programmes will succeed in **engaging leaders** once they see evidence that a human rights-based approach is a successful mechanism to increase quality of life in their community.
3. Adolescents' **negotiation skills** benefit when they understand the duties of the state in guaranteeing their rights. Learning to articulate issues of concern from a human rights perspective prepares them to be active adult participants in the development of their communities and neighbourhoods.

The most commonly addressed rights in adolescent programmes and projects concern sexual and reproductive health, education, recreation and children's rights. Existing toolkits to help programme and project designers include an explicit rights-based approach include *It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education* (Haberland and Rogow, eds. 2009) developed by an international group of reproductive health organizations and advised by UNICEF, UNFPA and other international agencies concerned with children and adolescents' wellbeing, offers comprehensive guidelines and activities to meet the goal of developing rights-explicit programmes.

#### What is "It's All One"?

"It's All One" is a resource kit that helps educators and other professionals working with adolescents design a unified study plan that includes sexuality, gender, HIV, and human rights. It is based on evidence about sexual health from around the world. It is aligned to the Millennium Development Goals. It emphasizes a real life approach and has the following seven key components:

1. evidence-based
2. comprehensive
3. based on core values and human rights
4. gender-sensitive
5. promotes academic growth and critical thinking
6. fosters civic engagement
7. culturally appropriate

"It's All One" is divided in two volumes: one that explains the evidence and principles that guide the approach, and a second book that includes practical methods and activities to develop with adolescents. [http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2011PGY\\_ItsAllOneGuidelines\\_en.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2011PGY_ItsAllOneGuidelines_en.pdf)

## Ensure that length and frequency of participation are enough to meet programme goals

Programme length must be enough to reach the established goals. Documents reviewed presented a wide diversity in terms of programme lengths and frequency of activities. Participants recommended setting a realistic timeline to deliver the minimum doses necessary to achieve programme goals. This point connects directly with Guideline 1 *Design based on formative research and baseline information, improve and adapt based on sound and simple monitoring, collect end results*. Having solid evidence and a clear idea of the characteristics of the segment of the adolescent population you wish to reach will help design coherent indicators to measure progress towards your goals. Two additional challenges to consider include funding availability to reach your goals and maintaining adolescents' interest and level of participation high. Given the current funding landscape for Latin America and the Caribbean, a practical approach may include establishing short-term goals that can be measured within time and budgetary limitations. This approach will also contribute to keeping adolescents engaged because they will be able to see changes provoked by the programme from its early stages. Lessons from past and on-going programmes include:

1. Adolescent engagement benefits from **frequent meetings and sessions** while retaining some flexibility to respond to the particular constraints and needs that may arise during the course of the programme.
2. Commit to **weekly meetings**, on a set time and place to improve participation because the programme becomes part of participants' "normal" schedule.
3. Meet at least **one goal each week**, even if it is a small, process goal. This may include learning a specific concept, trying a new activity, or developing a new skill, like speaking in public or learning to open a bank account. This gives participants a sense of achievement and motivates them to return.
4. Do not be afraid of **accountability**. An indicator of success includes receiving comments, recommendations and criticism from participants. Encourage discussions about what is and is not working, revise goals, and allow adolescents to evaluate progress. This is part of building citizen skills!

## Plan for Sustainability and Scale

When adolescent participation programmes have effective results, they have the potential to scale into national strategies that foster responsible citizenship and promote healthy transitions to adulthood. Planning for sustainability and scale is challenging. It requires revisiting evidence of the programme's success, cost analyses, and availability of resources. Basic issues related to sustainability and scale depend on other aspects included in these guidelines:

1. Establish a clear set of indicators that are achievable and measurable within the programmes' reach and goals. Behavioural change takes more time than acquiring certain knowledge and skills. Adolescents increase these assets over time and indicators can and should be aligned to what evidence from other programmes and research concerning the time required to achieve "minimum doses". For example, communications skills and knowledge of their rights are built over time. Including as an indicator "participants know their rights" is vague and probably not achievable in the life time of a project. An indicator that specifies "X% of participants can mention at least three basic human rights" is more realistic and measurable.
2. Identify institutions and organizations that might be interested in the expansion strategy of the programme.
3. Establish alliances with community leaders interested in sustaining the effort started by the programme.
4. Develop effective strategies to include those adolescents most often excluded of traditional participatory programmes. A coverage exercise can provide you with a first assessment of which adolescents are being reached by programmes and which are being left out. For example, coverage exercises conducted in Guatemala revealed that most programmes that work with adolescents are actually working with older participants, more males than females, and more in-school than out of school adolescent boys and girls. This phenomenon is often associated with recruitment strategies. If programmes are announced in schools, or are limited only to adolescents already engaged in some form of civic participation, these will seldom reach the more vulnerable and/or at risk populations. Toolkits like "Girl-Centred Program –Design" include methodologies to ensure that opportunities to participate reach targeted

audiences. For example, the Population Council in Guatemala and its partners in Central America, conduct rapid community mapping exercises that ensure that all households are visited. Household visits include a quick census which reveals the total number of eligible girls and adolescents in the community. Mentors devote time to invite and ensure continuation of out of school girls, girls who do not live with their parents, and married adolescents.

5. Ensure open channels of communication between adolescent participants and adult stakeholders. Argentina's Mapeo Digital (digital mapping of problems from adolescents' perspectives) was based on a mechanism that established periodic meetings between adolescents, municipal authorities, and support staff from TECHO. Frequent follow up meetings allowed participants to report progress and also to ensure that municipal investments took place as planned.
6. Have adolescents participate in tracking and communicating the impact the programme has on their community. "A Jugar por mi Salud", a programme developed by Paz Joven (Guatemala) included follow up activities to discuss lessons learned from peer education initiatives. These initiatives were community-based and their aim was to increase adolescents' participation in communicating about sexual and reproductive rights. It emphasized adolescents' engagement during the entire process, making it an adolescent-led process from design to final assessment.
  1. Foster leadership among adolescent participants that have proved able and interested to continue promoting organization and action among peers. Colombia's "Estrategia Integral del Desarrollo del Adolescente" included the creation of a multi-sector network of adolescents and youth, as well as adolescent and youth committees at the municipal level. Concrete steps like these allow participants to transition from engaging in learning processes to actively impact local policies and politics. Sustainability is possible when programmes are or become a core element of the implementing institution(s)' structure and strategy. Incorporating adolescent-centred approaches can take different forms: Existing programmes adopt components of successful strategies (such as the Partidí sports methodology, or grassroots organizations incorporate rights-based materials validated by adolescents and youth).

2. Existing programmes that incorporate successful monitoring tools to improve tracking and documentation of participation, assets built, and community engagement.
3. An adolescent participation programme is incorporated into national strategies, led and scaled up by governments (For example, Colombia Joven Programa Presidencial para el Sistema Nacional de la Juventud).

## APPENDIX 1 Quick assessment tool for monitoring and evaluation of programmes

Recommended uses of this assessment tool:

1. To evaluate concept notes and project proposals in order to ensure that key elements of success are discussed and included.
2. As a quick monitoring tool during site visits to verify project components included in proposals.
3. To compare across different projects managed or supervised by programme officers.
4. To conduct participatory workshops with local partner organizations (including youth groups) and standardize approaches and strategies.
5. To structure reports to partners and donors.

Note: include an updated organizational chart of staff and other people involved in the project every time you apply this tool.

Elements of enquiry and/or observation	Examples
<p>The project or programme was designed based on one or more of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formative research,</li> <li>2. As scale-up of a successful pilot programme,</li> <li>3. As an adaptation of a successful programme in another country of region,</li> <li>4. As the result of evaluation of an existing programme that demanded changes in approach and content.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An evaluation of an existing government programme demonstrates that at-risk youth in poor, urban areas are not being served by alternative education programmes. The evaluation determines that more local stakeholder involvement is necessary to ensure consistent participation. The programme is restructured to invest more in house to house visits led by local leaders and youth facilitators.</li> <li>2. A successful programme for local government participation through municipal youth commissions is scaled from one region to the entire country.</li> </ol>
<p>Target populations are clearly defined. The selection of these populations is supported by evidence, and the methodology of recruitment and inclusion is explicit and pertinent.</p>	<p>The project is implemented in a region of the country with demonstrated low levels of female participation in local governments. The target population is adolescent girls ages 15 to 18 because this is the age range that sees the most dramatic drop in participation in school and community activities. The project focuses on those adolescent girls not currently involved in any youth group or organization, avoiding “elite” recruitment among the few who remain active in their adolescent years.</p>
<p>Are adolescent populations other than the target one participating in the project?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The project was originally designed to target girls ages 12 to 15 but 20% of the participants are bringing their younger sisters.</li> <li>2. The project does not specifically target adolescents with learning disabilities but project managers detect participants with special needs and make provisions to accommodate them.</li> <li>3. The project’s target population is adolescent boys ages 12-18 at risk of joining gangs. The project is recruiting participants only in secondary schools, benefiting those</li> </ol>

Elements of enquiry and/or observation	Examples
	less at risk and only reaching a small percentage of the original target population.
Which stakeholders are involved and what is their role in the project or programme (including sustainability and scale-up)? Include a brief description of their role(s) during this and anticipated future phases (funder, implementer, target population, etc.)	UNICEF and local NGO; UNICEF and national government agency; UNICEF, local government, local NGO; Government and private sector; Youth organization, local government and UNICEF; traditional authorities (indigenous or afro-descendant leaders), local NGO.
Are specific adolescent rights explicitly included in the project description, methodologies, materials, and activities? If not, indicate if one or more can be inferred from the documents and your observations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The project promotes freedom of expression without providing adolescent participants with the legal framework of this right.</li> <li>5. The project explicitly fosters analysis of the legal framework for adolescents' sexual and reproductive rights.</li> <li>6. The project includes various activities in which adolescent participants conduct peer education methodologies that explain country-specific indigenous rights.</li> <li>7. The project has afro-descendants as its target population but does not include components that specifically increase rights and legal literacy.</li> </ol>
A user-friendly monitoring strategy is in place and functioning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitoring tools are used with confidence by both field and management personnel.</li> <li>2. Activities in the field respond to monitoring results.</li> <li>3. Only the monitoring and evaluation coordinator understands the system and collects information independently.</li> <li>4. Monitoring data is only collected when the donor requests it.</li> <li>5. Monitoring data is only anecdotal.</li> </ol>
What roles do adolescents play in the programme or project?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Only as participants in workshops.</li> <li>2. In programme design and formative research.</li> <li>3. As researchers and evaluators.</li> <li>4. Analysing secondary data on youth and adolescent issues.</li> <li>5. Designing and leading workshops.</li> <li>6. As advocates for policy change or implementation.</li> <li>7. As active members in local governments.</li> <li>8. As research participants.</li> <li>9. As key project staff.</li> </ol>
Who is responsible for sustainability and scale?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. The project is and will continue to be run by a local NGO.</li> <li>11. The project is expected to become a national programme funded exclusively with public funds.</li> <li>12. The project will combine collaboration from public and private sectors.</li> <li>13. The project will become a municipal programme led by adolescent and youth volunteers.</li> </ol>

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