

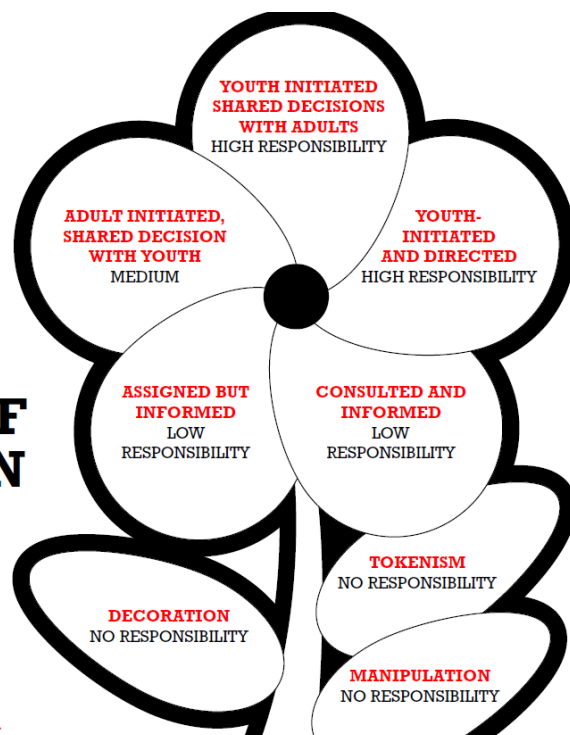
# FLOWER OF PARTICIPATION

Young people have the fundamental right to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes when it comes to programs or policies that affect their lives. Meaningful participation should take place in all stages of decision-making: during development, implementation and evaluation. No matter if the program/policy is big or small, young people should be included.

Young people not only have the right to participate, there's also an advantage of their involvement: if the voice of young people is heard, programs and policies can become more effective and can be adapted to the actual needs of young people. Most programs that are developed for young people are not developed *by* young people. This limits the effectiveness of the program.

## THE FLOWER OF PARTICIPATION

BASED ON THE THEORY OF THE LADDER OF  
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DEVELOPED BY  
CHOICE FOR YOUTH & SEXUALITY AND YOUACT.



## HOW TO USE THE FLOWER

The Flower of Participation could be seen as a ladder. The lowest steps are the leaves. These are forms of youth involvement that cannot be described as Meaningful Youth Participation. The flower petals represent the different variations of responsibility that young people can have or take but all are based on equality. This shows that there are different forms of participation that in practice work differently and lead to different results. The form of participation must fit the program/project and the objectives of the program/project. Even more important: it must fit the needs of the young people involved. Because of this the different forms of participation can even take place simultaneously within one organization or program. The form of participation and the amount of responsibility of young people depend on several factors. The most important factors are:

- Level of training (knowledge is power)
- Available time
- If these people are volunteers or getting paid for their work
- Available funds
- The level of investment of adult organizations in all of the above

## THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

### 1. Manipulation

We speak of *manipulation* when adults use young people to support a good cause and at the same time pretend the good cause is inspired by young people. *Example: when an AIDS-orphan is shaking the hand of a President to make him invest more in orphans.*

### 2. Decoration

We speak of *decoration* when young people are being used to support a good cause, or give it more zest, even though the adults don't give the impression as if the good cause is inspired by youth.

*Example: when young people are singing to the delegates at the opening of a conference on youth.*

### **3. Tokenism**

We speak of *tokenism* when young people seem to have a voice, but in reality they have little to no choice in what they do or how they get involved. *Example: when children are taking seat on conference panels or when youth is participating in a delegation but not allowed to say anything.*

### **4. Assigned but informed**

We speak of *assigned but informed* when young people get a specific role and get informed on how and why they are involved in the program or project. *Example: a community activity which was planned by adults, but young people join in.*

### **5. Consulted and informed**

We speak of *consulted and informed* when young people give advice on projects or programs developed and executed by adults. Young people are informed about how their advice will be used and what the outcome is of the decisions the adults have made.

### **6. Adult initiated, shared decisions with youth**

We speak of *adult initiated, shared decisions with youth*, when projects or programs are initiated by adults, but decisions are shared with young people.

### **7. Youth initiated and directed**

We speak of *youth initiated and directed* when young people initiate and execute a program or project. Adults are only involved in a supporting role.

## **8. Youth initiated, shared decisions with adults**

We speak of *youth initiated, shared decisions with adults* when programs or projects are initiated by young people whilst decisions are shared with adults and young people. These projects are supportive and motivational for young people while, at the same time, young people can profit from the experience and expertise of adults.