

# Top Tips

These are our "Top Tips" for engaging and supporting young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to participate in decision making:



Work with young people as partners – build trust and allow them to guide the 'participation' process as much as possible. They are best placed to know what works and how.



Reflect on your cultural assumptions and biases - what are you assuming about participation with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and how is your cultural context shaping these?



Always be mindful of all aspects of young people's physical and emotional safety, and treat them with respect



Engage family and community members as directed by young people - always ask permission from a young person and take their advice on what this engagement looks like



Take time to explain what the project is, why it is being delivered, the expected outcomes, follow-up etc.



Think about your use of language and use plain English wherever possible. Consider whether you need to use interpreters, or have written information translated into other languages



Wherever possible, offer young people a "menu of opportunities" so that they can choose when, where and how they participate



Remember that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are often managing a range of competing priorities, in addition to those of other young people (managing work, study, family responsibilities, volunteer work and settlement related issues). Factor this in to your time frames, expectations etc



Consider ways to reward young people for their participation and explore this with young people. This could be some form of payment, or by recognising and celebrating their contribution in other ways



Be prepared to offer additional supports and address additional barriers to enable participation for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, considering their age, gender and diversity



Make sure someone in your organisation has clear responsibility for supporting young people's participation, and that they have the time, skills, support and resources to do this well



Recognise and invest in building staff expertise in youth participation



Build strong links with organisations that already have established relationships with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, their families and communities



If possible, go to where young people are and/or where they feel comfortable, instead of expecting them to come to you



Make sure your participation activities are culturally sensitive and appropriate



Make sure your participation activities and events are inclusive and appropriate to the age, gender and cultural background of the young people who will take part



Think about practical and logistical factors that will enable participation - reimbursing travel costs, suitable venues (location, set up, 'feel'), food, structure, etc



Let young people know how their input has been or will be used and what difference it has made



Use methods of participation that don't rely too strongly on English language skills – include visual prompts, interactive methods, games etc



Take time to find out what words and phrases young people prefer to use when describing themselves. For example, some young people are uncomfortable being labelled as refugees, whilst others are proud to be referred to in this way. This will differ from young person to young person, group to group. Similarly, using words such as "at risk" and "vulnerable" to describe young people may be offensive or off-putting



Think about how you can honour the lived experiences of the young people you hope to work with, without allowing their experiences as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers to define and limit them. Support them to build on their lived experience as advocates – lived experience is only one part of their perspective and expertise.



Check in with young people about the process and wherever possible, address anything that isn't working as you go. You may not always get it right but make sure you try to address anything not working as quickly as possible and involve young people in doing so wherever appropriate.