Participation in development: Taking the right to development seriously

*The right to development requires the **active, free and meaningful participation** of individuals and communities in economic, social, political and cultural development. Participation is key to both the process and outcomes of development.*

Active

Recognition of agency, and genuine opportunities to influence decision-making at all stages

Free

Ability to act voluntarily without any coercion, deception, force, intimidation or pressure

Meaningful

Power to shape both the process and the outcome of decisions

How is participation different from consultation?



- Is vertical and involves decision-makers controlling the process
- Is often done after an in-principle decision is made
- Offers people limited influence over outcomes
- Is mostly symbolic to secure legitimacy

- Is horizontal and recognises the agency of individuals and communities
- Happens prior to making a decision and throughout the project lifecycle
- Enables people to shape processes and outcomes
- Seeks to co-create solutions

Why participation matters?

Better decisions	Inclusive development	Ecological sustainability	Trust and ownership	Harm prevention	Risk management
Pooling of knowledge and expertise	Fair sharing of benefits and costs of development	Development within planetary boundaries	Nurturing of ownership and social cohesion	Early identification and prevention of harms	Reduction in project delays and costs

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How to achieve participation?

1



Start engaging early

Involve people from the early stages

2



Adopt a lifecycle approach

Ensure participation from conceptualisation to closure of projects

3



Share accessible information

Share accurate and objective information in an accessible form

4



Ensure participation in design

Involve people in designing processes of participation

5



Adopts a rights-based approach

Apply a rights-based and intersectional approach to identify rightsholders

6



Create enabling conditions

Remove structural barriers to participation and preserve civic space

7



Embed accountability mechanisms

Put in place effective access to remody mechanisms

8



Learn from good practices

Share, and learn from, good participatory practices

Participation at different levels



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