



SRH Serbia
IPPF member

Strategy for meaningful participation of young people in SRH Serbia's work

Belgrade, Serbia 2017

OUR VISION

All young people have the right to participate in decision-making about their own life. This is not limited by ability, age, ethnic background, gender, personal circumstances or behaviour. SRH Serbia is working towards increasing the opportunities of young people to express their opinions and have these opinions meaningfully considered, in discussions about the type of services and/or information they, and other young people receive, thus enabling meaningful participation and involvement of young people in various aspects of social life.

OUR GOAL

Our goal is to enable the environment for valuing young people's opinions and proactiveness thus advancing their participation in all areas of SRH Serbia's work.

HOW WE UNDERSTAND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

For SRH Serbia meaningful youth participation means that young people are empowered to take an active role in decision-making at various levels in the organisation and within different stages of programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to ensure meaningful youth participation. It must fit the organization mission and values, the programme objectives and the needs of young people. Each context and each youth group requires different strategies. Simply having young people present does not result in 'meaningful' participation. Young people must have a certain level of empowerment, responsibility, and decision-making power to participate meaningfully.

The participation of young people can be focused on matters and decisions that relate to them as individuals or to them as a group. Individual matters and decisions include those relating to the immediate circumstances of young person, their day-to-day care and support, and their life course. This includes the informal interactions between young people and those involved in their day-to-day care and lives. Group matters and decisions include those relating to service planning and development, service improvement, development of policy and procedures and review and development of legislation.

Participation is most usefully viewed as a multi-layered concept. Its dimensions include the uniqueness and diversity of young people involved, the matters being discussed, and the decisions being made, the relationships and the young persons preferences for how, and to what degree they want to be involved. This makes participation as an ongoing process of engagement and involvement, not an occasional event.

KEY SRH SERBIA'S APPROACHES

SRH Serbia's development paradigm has shifted from a "needs based" to a "rights based" approach, which has refocused programming to identify and challenge the underlying and social causes of exclusion of young people from decision making process.

To build opportunities for greater participation of young people, we will:

Enable environment that supports and values the participation of young people in SRH Serbia governance as well as in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SRH Serbia programmes and activities

Develop structures that support young people's participation in the key organizational departments and processes to ensure that our planning and service delivery takes account of young people's perspectives.

Strengthen practice by improving our ways of engaging and working with young people to support their participation individually and as a group.

Establish review processes that allow us to evaluate the impact of young people's participation in the decisions we make and the outcomes on young people. Reflection and review is a critical part of the participation process. Ongoing reflection and review by young people, and adults about what happened, how it happened and what worked, strengthen relationships and contributes to improved practice. Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system allows the integration of lessons learned and building relationships upon identified success.

Participatory approach –In SRH Serbia's work young people's opinions are taken into account. Meaningful participation is designed to empower young people especially those from vulnerable groups. The participatory approach builds partnerships with young people of all ages and backgrounds by promoting meaningful participation through structured dialogue. Separate discussions with girls and boys, young women, and men, including adolescents, enable SRH Serbia and its partners to gather accurate information on the specific protection risks that different groups face, identify underlying causes, understand young people's capacities, and hear their proposed solutions. This kind of methodology helps target groups to take action to enhance their own protection and provides the basis for implementing rights- and community-based approaches.

Deciding Together –young people are involved in decision-making through their engagement in SRH Serbia governing structures: young people and adults discuss their views, identify options and make a decision together. The adult in the process holds ultimate responsibility but young people steer decisions.

Acting Together –young people share power and responsibility for decision-making: young people and adults decide together and take action to implement the decision together.

Supported –young people make autonomous decisions: young people make their own decisions and carry out the actions with the support of adults. This may still be in a framework of adult structures, processes and resources.

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) can be understood as an active commitment by SRH Serbia to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to and being held to account by the people they seek to assist – in this case young people. SRH Serbia has made five commitments to AAP. They have undertaken:

- **Leadership/Governance:** Demonstrate commitment to accountability to affected populations by ensuring feedback and accountability mechanisms are integrated into country strategies, program proposals, monitoring and evaluations, staff inductions, trainings and performance management, partnership agreements, and highlighted in reporting.
- **Transparency:** Provide accessible and timely information to affected populations on organizational procedures, structures and processes that affect them to ensure that they can make informed decisions and choices and facilitate a dialogue between an organization and its affected populations over information provision.
- **Feedback and Complaints:** Actively seek the views of affected populations to improve policy and practice in programming, ensuring that feedback and complaints mechanisms are streamlined, appropriate and robust enough to deal with (communicate, receive, process, respond to and learn from) complaints about breaches in policy and stakeholder dissatisfaction. Specific issues raised by affected individuals regarding violations and/or physical abuse that may have human rights and legal, psychological or other implications should have the same entry point as program-type complaints, but procedures for handling these should be adapted accordingly.
- **Participation:** Enable affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them through the establishment of clear guidelines and practices to engage them appropriately and ensure that the most marginalized and affected are represented and have influence.

- Design, Monitoring and Evaluation: Design, monitor and evaluate the goals and objectives of program with the involvement of affected populations, feeding learning back into the organization on an ongoing basis and reporting on the results of the process.

SRH Serbia, in its program, fully follows the principle of accountability, which requires to involve persons of concern meaningfully in key decisions and processes that impact them and ensure transparency by constant communication.

SRH Serbia will systematically employ participatory assessments that involve targeted persons. This includes their direct involvement in the realization of the base assessment at the very start of the project, which should provide us with most relevant findings that will be properly integrated into the project interventions. In addition to that, direct work of the health mediators with the target population will provide us with shortest response to the services delivered, and thus guiding us to adapt the actions initially planned, if necessary.

By continuously consulting persons of concern and allowing them to participate in decisions that affect their lives throughout project activities, SRH Serbia can ensure that its response is accountable.

AAP is therefore an essential element of SRH Serbia quality assurance (programming, monitoring and evaluation, reviews, organizational learning), alongside to gender equality-centered programming.

TYPES OF PARTICIPATION

The four types of participation covered by this strategy are:

Individual participation, where young people are involved in the planning and design of his or her own service plan, including for example care pathways, personal education and health plans. Ensuring the individual young person has a say in decisions about his or her life and service provision is the bedrock of good participation practice.

Social participation, for example through engaging with services or through specific social action projects, community-based youth and workshops or school-based programmes where young citizens are motivated to be involved in their community and participate in the design and delivery of activities and programmes. Active citizenship skills are developed, and service providers have opportunities to engage with children and young people in their own environment.

Public participation, typically through involvement in forums or councils, participation in surveys and consultations or through activities linked to quality assurance and improvement of services, and representation on boards and committees. This work has the potential to make strategic as well as operational impact, with young people helping shape decision making at senior level.

Participation of young people in SRH Serbia governing structures includes the active involvement of young people in the work of the Executive Board in the capacity of Board members representing voices and interests of young people as well as General Assembly meetings.

Our strategy aims to ensure children and young people have opportunities for meaningful participation across all three contexts, depending on the needs and aspirations of the individual, and to demonstrate through clear evidence the impact their voices have on improving services and the quality of provision for young citizens.